

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

NEWSLETTER: FALL 2020

What next?

Do your best to stay on mission, while keeping yourself and your communities safe.

That is the advice Read Aloud volunteers, chapter leaders and colleagues have traded back and forth since spring.

Keep up the good work.

By Dawn Miller

Read Aloud West Virginia continued to work all spring and summer toward the mission of motivating children to read for fun, to nourish their reading skills for life.

Here's how we'll keep doing it.

Classroom readers

In our regular end-of-school survey, teachers overwhelmingly said that they would welcome live, virtual read alouds from a dedicated volunteer, if in-person visits were not possible. Most often, these would occur via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, though individual schools or counties may have other preferences.

To assist returning readers, Read Aloud chapters have been working on their own video-conferencing skills, and developing an updated orientation (delivered virtually, of course) to help readers grow confident for reading this fall.

Virtual orientations can also be scheduled for new readers. Anyone interested in attending either type of orientation may call 304-345-5212 or email stateoffice@readaloudwv.org. Registration is required.



Courtesy photo

Brooks Bower tries out one of the new reading hammocks on the first day of Coda Engage, a project of Coda Mountain Academy in Fayette County. Read Aloud West Virginia is a partner, offering books for children to choose and to keep, and for the academy's growing library.

Some readers and teachers have favored pre-recorded videos. The Fayette County Chapter is establishing a studio for making read aloud videos, but most readers simply use their smartphones. (See tips, right)

Book distribution

Schools closed just when it was time to start one of our most important efforts, a distribution project called Summer Book Binge. Based on research that shows a bag of freely chosen

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Want to share your own video?

1. Pick a quiet spot in your home, where your read aloud won't be interrupted by loud noises or people walking past.
2. Use the best video camera you can find. This may be your phone. Just be sure to turn it horizontal before you start recording.
3. Make sure your camera is stable. If someone else records you, ask them to rest their arm on a table or the back of a chair so the picture doesn't wobble.
4. Follow the rules you normally would for a read aloud session – practice reading the book three times beforehand, use voices (if you are comfortable doing so) to make the story engaging, and show pictures to the camera!

Email aschwartz@readaloudwv.org with any questions or with your completed video. If it's too large to send via email, don't worry. We'll send you a link to a secure, shared folder to upload it.

Once we receive your video, it will be featured on our YouTube channel, Facebook, and website. We'll send you the direct link to share with your Read Aloud class and other children in your life!



Thank you to our Read-A-Palooza 2020 donors and sponsors

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'Trust your instincts': Advice from veteran Read Aloud readers

PAGE 5

Help children to fill their ‘volume’

When schools sent students home for remote learning this spring, my mind immediately went to a 1951 Isaac Asimov short story **The Fun They Had**. I won't ruin it for you. Just know that it is set in a future where kids are taught at home by a "mechanical teacher."

We turn to stories for comfort in times of stress and challenge. Looking for help, our minds riffle through a lifetime of lessons, including those we "experienced" in books. The week before schools closed, I could not have recalled that story. But there it was, waiting in my head when the situation arose.

That well of experiences is filled over a lifetime. Volume matters.

Asimov was not the only past-read that has offered insight for the times we're managing now. Here are a few things I have been reading (and rereading):

■ **The Book Whisperer** by Donalyn Miller is the story of how a sixth-grade Texas reading teacher requires students to read 40 books in the school year, and offers all kinds of choice and help for students so they find books they enjoy. Then she watches their confidence, grades and test scores rise.

■ **Reading in the Wild**, also by Donalyn Miller, is her follow up on efforts to raise "wild" readers, or those who read because they are motivated from the inside, not because a teacher or parent is nagging, grading, rewarding or punishing them.

■ **Book Love: Developing Depth, Stamina and Passion in Adolescent Readers** by Penny Kittle is the advice of a then-high school (now college) instructor who echoes that volume

matters. Children, and then adolescents, and then adults develop those very qualities — depth, stamina and passion. It takes volume, which is possible if students find books they enjoy.

■ **How Humans Learn** by Joshua Eyeler informs on that precise subject. The most relevant chapter at the moment is the one that says anxiety turns learning off.

Students, like all of us, are learning things, whether consciously or not. If children are reading or hearing books they enjoy, they are learning words and facts. This certainly helps them to read better on their own, or when they must read something they don't particularly enjoy.

Children exposed to at least one book every day also learn how language works, how it fits together, which helps them to write better when it is their turn. They learn empathy; and social and emotional maturity are factors in school success. But children, like adults, also store up insights and lessons. If they read regularly and hear books read aloud, they fill a well of wisdom they don't even know they possess. But it will surface when they need it, like the Room of Requirement.

That well is filled a little every day. As with compound interest or growing a tree, time is an indispensable ingredient. So, if there are children around, and your family doesn't have a reading habit, now is the time. Every day matters. Little kids, big kids, grandkids, it is not too late to start. Reading will look different for different ages and families. That's OK.

Take it from Mary Kay Bond and Sara Busse (page 5). I love that interview for the permission to not be perfect. Don't think reading or reading aloud really looks like a carefully posed Pinterest shot. It usually doesn't. Or take it from teacher Karen Golden, writing pre-pandemic (page 4). Even then plans went wrong sometimes. It is OK to change them.

No one knows exactly how the fall semester will go, but it will go differently in different places. Some days, if all that parents, teachers and volunteers can manage safely and angst-free is reading to the children in their lives, or helping them to find books they enjoy, then everyone will be on task and making progress. Research shows reading for pleasure is the most effective way for students to prevent learning loss when school is out. Just as importantly, those students will be adding to their lifetime volume of experiences to draw on some day.

That moment of need could be coping with a pandemic. Or it could be a school writing assignment. It could be navigating a death in the family, or it could be navigating a job opportunity.

Students are soaking up knowledge about something every day. Sometimes, as with me and Asimov, they won't even know they are carrying the lesson until they need it. Then it will just be there. But only if their wells have been diligently filled in advance.

*Dawn Miller
is the Executive Director of
Read Aloud West Virginia*

'WE HELP RESTORE LIVES'

Fayette County Read Aloud goes to drug court

By Calantha Quesenberry

When Marion Tanner asked a probation officer what would help Fayette County's drug court the most, she was told: Incentives.

Defendants who participate in drug court look forward to reconnecting and bonding with their children more than anything else, Probation Officer Jennifer Smith said.

Naturally, as passionate as Tanner is about

early literacy, her wheels started spinning. What better way to incentivize participants to meet their goals and help them to spend quality time with their children than with books? Books provide a loving way to bond with children and build skills that set children up for lifelong success.

Tanner, co-chair of Read Aloud's Fayette County Chapter, worked with Read Aloud's

state office to get 200 books to Fayette County for the adult drug court program last fall.

A list of participants' children (age and gender only) were shared with volunteers. Books were chosen, bagged and passed on to Smith for distribution at participants' October hearing.

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A special thank you to

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David Hager Photography

Read Aloud founding members Nikki Moses (center) and Debbie Faber (left) enjoy catching up with longtime supporter Barbara Hopta (right).

Thank you to our Read-A-Palooza 2020 donors and sponsors



Founding member and honoree Mary Kay Bond is all smiles as she addresses the crowd.

Thankfully, we were able to hold our annual fundraiser Read-A-Palooza before the COVID-19 crisis hit West Virginia. It was our biggest and best fundraising event to date. We had an amazing volunteer committee who helped us create a beautiful celebration of Read Aloud's history and original founders, honoring the past leadership of Mary Kay Bond and looking to the future. We had scores of donors and supporters who purchased tickets and sent donations in Mary Kay's honor. Even on a weeknight, 13 of our volunteer county chapters were represented, some traveling a great distance to attend.

Twenty-six sponsors made this event possible: Bowles Rice LLP, Moses Toyota, The Elliot Foundation, Graystone Consulting, Encova Insurance, Johnstone & Gabhart: Attorney's at Law, The Becker Family, United Bank, Kim & Greg Burton, Steptoe & Johnson PLLC, William Maxwell Davis, CAMC Orthopedic Trauma Group, In Loving Memory of Candy Galyean, Advanced Eyecare, Robinson & McElwee PLLC, Highmark WV, Charleston Pediatric Dentistry, Buckingham Strategic Wealth, Ned & Barbara Rose, Capitol Beverage Company, Juli Hatcher Mock, David & Susan Turnbull, Advanced Physical Therapy, ZMM Architects, and Tom Heywood & Melody Simpson.

DRUG COURT (continued from page 2)

"I love the books. My kids are excited to get them every month," said Paula, a drug court participant.

November, December and February 2020 book distributions followed. Fayette County Read Aloud is currently serving 12 families with a total of 26 children and a distribution of 85 books and counting.

"Fayette County Adult Drug Program is more than just supporting participants in recovery," said Fayette County Circuit Judge Thomas Ewing. "We help restore lives. I see the participants get excited when they receive the books. This tells me we are repairing vital relationships at home. We are helping to facilitate bonding with children. There is nothing better than helping reunite families, one step at a time."

Fayette County's drug court was established in 2016, the 26th in West Virginia. Fayette is the 45th county served by a drug court. Only nonviolent offenders are considered for the program. Defendants spend at least a year receiving intense monitoring and counseling. Addicts are held accountable to the community, their families and victims who have been harmed.

"Everyone around the addict is affected in some way," Tanner said. "Children may be removed from the homes, only to be placed with grandparents or trusted relatives. Others may enter the welfare system and/or the foster care system."

Both children and parents look forward to receiving their books every month, Smith said.

"Sometimes we do not have to do big, great things to enable this," she said. "We are seeing that small suggestions and simple parenting prompts go a long way."

"I see my son every other weekend," said Eric, another drug court participant. "I have to read one of the books every night at bedtime."

*Calantha Quesenberry,
is a Read Aloud volunteer and
member of the Fayette County
Chapter board.*

Thank You Video Readers!

When the pandemic struck and schools closed, we asked our volunteer readers to share videos of themselves reading to keep West Virginia children well-supplied with stories. Several are featured below.



Casey Willson of Berkeley County reads “Are You a Bee?” by Judy Allen.



Nicole Walls of Marion County reads “Pippi Longstocking: Ch. 1.”



Jefferson County volunteer Brian Ellis reads “Sulwe” by Lupita Nyong’o.

These were a great way to support kids through the end of the school year. We’re still adding to that video library and preparing for live, virtual read alouds for many of our readers in the fall. (See page 1)

Visit readaloudwv.org/video-read-alouds/ if you’d like to see more!

The best-laid plans

By Karen Gold

The longer I teach, the more I believe in the value of giving my students choice. Choice in reading, choice in writing prompts, choice in projects. My students fly through books they select themselves and write amazing responses when invited to choose a topic. They demonstrate creativity and innovation when they take the reins with a project.

But what happens when a book I choose doesn’t go as planned?

This year my juniors will read three core texts: **Julius Caesar**, **The Great Gatsby**, and the school’s common book. In **180 Days**, Penny Kittle and Kelly Gallagher discuss the “synergy . . . that occurs when an entire class huddles around a core text,” and while my students love the freedom and the growth that comes from independent reading, I believe in the value of heated discussions, shared experiences, and the connections students make when they listen to their peers. I even love the moments in class when they can’t help but talk over one another in their excitement.

But then, as Penny Kittle writes, “the real world intervened.” The common book was met with mixed reviews. While many enjoyed the coming-of-age story about two girls and their friendship, some of my students described the book as “boring” and complained, “I can’t get into it.” I set aside the first ten minutes of class to read it, and while some dutifully read, soon a few sighed dramatically. (All you need is a few, right?) Before long, those dramatic sighs devolved into outright complaints, poisoning the atmosphere of the classroom. What to do?

I changed my approach completely, inviting students to choose their own books to read 50 percent of the time. Following Kittle and Gallagher’s “Map a Year of Reading” plan, another 25 percent of the class time would focus on book groups and the remaining 25 percent on core texts. Now I wondered if my plan had backfired. Had giving them so much freedom and allowing them to choose their books made reading whole-class texts more daunting?

The reality of teaching is always messier than we plan ... especially in February. How could I salvage the experience for those struggling readers while honoring the experience of those who were enjoying it?

Do my students need to love a book for it to be valuable? Luckily a student posed a question that shifted my strategy: “Mrs. Gold, what do you do when you have to read something you don’t like?”

An honest question and one that allowed me to offer concrete strategies once I grappled with “what do I do?”

First, I admitted something about my relationship with reading: Obligation removes desire. Perhaps an administrator assigns a summer reading book with all the best intentions, but the minute I’m told I have to read something, my inner teenager grumbles, “This is boring. Who picked this book?” My students appreciated my honesty, marveling, I’m sure, at the image of their middle-aged rebellious English teacher. Of course, one inquisitive soul asked, “So what’d you do?” and I admitted I read my assigned reading on the last day of August because sometimes you have to read what you haven’t picked, and, more importantly, there is value in a shared read. I also admitted I skip the boring parts.

Next, I wanted to offer students strategies for reading a challenging book. The librarians offered the audiobook to kids who were struggling or, in one case, concussed. Listening to the book provided a break and, in many cases, gave the students a completely different perspective and experience. Through one-on-one conversations, I was able to clarify areas of confusion, hence speeding up the reading process for those who were falling behind. Quite often, the student who describes the book as “boring” is actually not getting it, and conferencing one-on-one clears up the confusion. Finally, one day I read several pages aloud, and, to my surprise, hearing the book as a group led to a fruitful discussion for everyone — the purpose of a shared core text.

As we finished the novel, I invited my students to read a few book reviews, and to their surprise and in some cases delight, the reviews were mixed! “Wait, so is the book good or not?” one student asked. Before I could answer, another student responded, “Dude, it’s up to you. It’s a preference. Do you like it or not?” When they wrote their own book reviews, they answered that question and elaborated on the why. Students wrote some of their best responses; many of them wrote glowing

(continues on page 6)

‘Trust your instincts’

Advice from Read Aloud pros Mary Kay Bond and Sara Busse

By Kristen Lefevers

With schools closed or uncertain, this is a wonderful opportunity for parents to read aloud to their kids. However, if your kids seem more interested in their toys than story time, or if you’re not used to read aloud, then it can feel uncomfortable. But don’t worry—we have some tips from two read aloud veterans.

“Parents and grandparents need to remember they are really important to the children in their care, and what they say matters,” says Mary Kay Bond, a Read Aloud West Virginia founder and former Executive Director. “The sheer act of picking a book and reading it says ‘I love you’ to the child. When children hear a word, especially in a loving setting, they build their vocabulary toolbox, which is the foundation on which their education is built. Just hearing the words is important.”

Sara Busse, another founding member of Read Aloud and longtime volunteer, said something similar. “Children might not understand the whole story, but they’re hearing well-prepared sentences and vocabulary.” She also talked about how important it is for parents to show themselves some grace. When



Sara Busse

it comes to read aloud, she said, “Don’t press it. Don’t push it. If it’s not working, close the book, and come back to it later. Or if it’s the book itself that isn’t working, pick another book, and don’t feel guilty about it.”

If you’re wondering about the ideal time or place to read to your kids, “bedtime is a good time,” Mary Kay said. “They’re winding



Read Aloud photo

Mary Kay Bond reads aloud to children at a Snuggle & Read event.

down then.”

“Read to them in weird places,” Sara said. “Read to them in the bathtub. It’s a good place, because they’re stuck there.” She used to play a game with her children. Everyone would sit around the kitchen table with a die and a book. If the die landed on an odd number, whoever had the book passed it to the person on the left, who would then read a page before rolling again; and if it landed on an even number, they passed it to the person on the right.

What should you do if your kids still don’t seem interested in read aloud right now?

“We’re all trying to maintain a sense of normalcy, but there’s really no normal right now,” Sara said. “If the kids are getting too much screen time, it’s okay.” She said that parents might have to let the extreme be the normal for right now.

Mary Kay suggested finding something that your child is interested in and then reading about it with them. If your child is interested in baking, for example, you could read a cookbook and bake a cake together. This works especially well for older kids, she said, and teaches them that they can get information from reading.

“But don’t think that every book has to have activities,” she added. Sometimes kids, and adults, too, just need to get lost in a story.

“Trust your instincts when you’re reading one-on-one with a child who knows and loves you,” she said. “Don’t be afraid to be a

little silly. Make voices, make animals sounds. You want to make it fun.”

It’s easy for both kids and adults to feel anxious right now, but Sara says read aloud can help. It helped her family after 9/11.

“My kids were younger then. We turned off the TV and read more. There’s something to be said about laughing through a silly book, or even crying through a serious one like **Old Yeller**,” she said.

The final piece of advice? Let the kids choose, and don’t be surprised if they pick one that seems below their reading level.

“I would encourage people to let children choose the books they want to hear. Choice is empowering,” Mary Kay said.

She also shared a story that a mother shared with her a few years back.

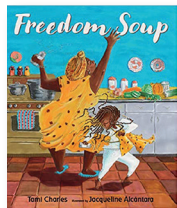
“Her daughter was 15 or 16,” Mary Kay said. “She’d had a bad day at school, and when she came home, she asked her mother to read to her for the first time in a long time. And even though she was in high school, she picked a Strawberry Shortcake book.”

She said it’s important that parents don’t discourage their kids if they choose a book that seems below their reading level. Like the woman’s daughter in the story above, your child may simply associate that book with good memories. And those memories can be very comforting in this uncertain time.

Kristen Lefevers, of Gilbert, Mingo County, is a graduate of the University of Charleston.

Our readers recommend

At the end of every school year, we ask our volunteer readers to tell us about their experience and share some books that worked well in their classrooms. Here are some favorites!



Freedom Soup

By Tami Charles

"I have found children enjoy learning about other cultures."

— *Derniere Marshall, Jefferson County*

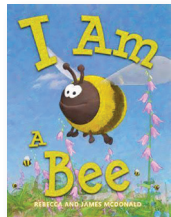


A Week in the Woods

By Andrew Clements

"I highly recommend A Week in the Woods by Andrew Clements! I read this to a 5th grade class after asking the classroom teacher if she had any recommendations of stories she thought her students would enjoy. She was spot-on with this recommendation! The students were mesmerized by the story! Their recall of what they had heard the prior week was amazing... recalling many details and responding without prompts! This story held their interest, had many twists in the storyline, and included humor and compassion."

— *Kathleen (Kathy) Bennett, Berkeley County*

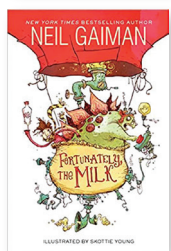


I Am a Bee: A Book about Bees for Kids

By Rebecca and James McDonald

"I used a hand puppet (Bee) and the children (PreK) loved interacting with the puppet. Had I been able to read again I would have used my possum puppet."

— *Paulette J. Buzbee, Raleigh County*

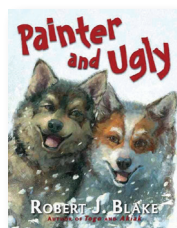


Fortunately, the Milk

By Neil Gaiman

A madcap story with pirates, piranhas, adventure, aliens, time travel and breakfast cereal.

— *Margaret (Meg) Squier, Greenbrier County*



Painter and Ugly

By Robert J. Blake

"I always try to make the kids laugh. I hope my choice of books is interesting so it keeps their attention."

— *Cathy Shaffer, Preston County*

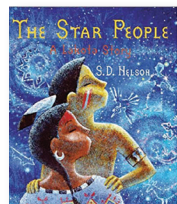


Flat Stanley

By Jeff Brown

"Every year I pick up second-hand books and arrange a couple of situations where I distribute a book to each member of the class... It's especially nice when some of the books I have are ones I've read to the class and the kids are eager to get those titles. This year I read Flat Stanley and then during their Trunk or Treat event at Halloween, I set up a Flat Stanley display. It turned out really cool and I was able to find numerous Flat Stanley books for the kids to choose from and keep."

— *Judy Hurst, Marion County*



The Star People: A Lakota Story

By S.D. Nelson

Two children stray from their village and are helped by their deceased grandmother, one of the Star People.

— *Sandra Summers, Jackson County*



Creepy Pair of Underwear!

By Aaron Reynolds

"I look forward to reading exciting and interesting stories to the children this fall, hopefully, in the traditional classroom setting. It's such an enjoyable experience."

— *Crystal Morgan, Mason County*

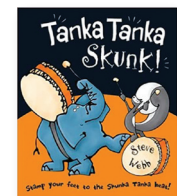


The Cay

By Theodore Taylor

"I always do an activity with the students after reading the book. For example, after The Cay, I brought in coconuts and we cracked them and tasted the milk and flesh. Very few of the students had ever seen a real coconut before. After a book on Helen Keller, I teach them braille and sign language."

— *Sheila Amato, Preston County*



Tanka Tanka Skunk!

By Steve Webb

"A hit with both my first grade readers as well as my fourth grade readers. I brought egg shakers for every student and we made the *Tanka Tanka* beats together. I had to start bringing it every week!"

— *Amy Dinaldo, Nicholas County*

WHAT NEXT (continued from page 1)

books given at the end of the school year does more to prevent summer learning loss than summer school, Read Aloud has developed this project over years, starting in Greenbrier County, and then Raleigh and Fayette and this year Wood and Berkeley. The pre-pandemic model relied on multiple visits to schools and much in-person contact, including a school assembly where the books were delivered with great activity and enthusiasm.

With those options closed, Read Aloud quickly reorganized an order process by mail. A \$10,000 in-kind matching grant from First Book made it possible for Read Aloud to send more than 7,000 books to the homes of 870 children in the five counties. Children got to choose their books, a key ingredient in motivation, according to research.

Lessons from that project, combined with the prolonged interruption to school and uncertainty about fall, suggested a way to serve children and their families this summer and beyond.

In July, we softly launched Read Aloud Families (with the help of partner Energy Express). Based on the same data and methods as our Book Binge, combined with research on habits and motivation, Read Aloud Families delivers monthly books — that children choose — and materials to motivate families to read together through the pandemic and beyond.

Membership is by invitation only for now, but we plan to expand it as capacity allows. Each chapter identifies groups of families to be invited, through schools or other organizations they work with. At this writing, more than 125 families had joined, with more than 250 children, all over the state.

In the future, chapters will organize events for members, virtually, as necessary, but perhaps outdoors if it can be done safely. These events will be opportunities



Ten new reading hammocks invite elementary-age children during Coda Engage, a summer day camp run by Coda Mountain Academy. Elsewhere, masked and physically spaced, children engage in other activities, including robotics and violin lessons.

for children and their families to share the books they love, recommend and receive recommendations, and grow their reading communities.

Meanwhile, chapters are distributing books by other means. Jefferson and Marion are among those providing books for families when they collect school meals. Nicholas and Jackson are making plans to restock Little Free Libraries or other community bookshelves.

Partnerships

Even before the pandemic WVU Extension and Read Aloud were exploring ways to work together on Energy Express, the federal program that provides both literacy opportunities, including reading aloud, and nutritional meals to children during summer break.

This summer, Energy Express staffers



Marion County chapter president Beverly Richards, loads her car up with magazines to distribute via local feeding sites.

attended Read Aloud orientations (virtually, of course). Read Aloud offered the first memberships to Read Aloud Families to Energy Express participants. Families have joined from all over the state, even in counties where Read Aloud has no active chapter. Each one affirms their intention to read with children, just for fun, most days of each week. They agree to give children a choice of books to read and to protect children's reading time.

In Fayette County, thanks to Fayette Chapter President Marion Tanner, Read Aloud has partnered with the Coda Mountain Academy. About 25 children had the opportunity to choose Read Aloud books of their own.

Coda started as a music camp, but has grown into many fields, including science and art. This summer the academy completed its outdoor classroom, just in time for the need for physically distanced and outdoor learning spaces.

Coda President Esther Morey said children were happy and relieved to be outside and to be together, even with modifications and safety rules.

As they were walking toward the first circle game, Morey told us one girl said, "That looks funner than being on my iPad and phone all day."

Keep books in the hands and on the minds of West Virginia children

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BEST LAID PLANS (continued from page 4)

reviews, but the most interesting were those who could explain why they struggled with the novel. By writing a review, they clarified their reading preferences for themselves.

Was it the ideal experience? No, and I'm not convinced there is a perfect book an entire class of adolescents will enjoy. But by offering strategies and coming clean about my own struggles with texts that challenge us, we made some progress.

Karen Gold chairs the English department at the Governor's Academy in Massachusetts. This condensed essay, first published in its entirety by Heinemann Publishing well before the pandemic, is reprinted with permission.

American Electric Power Foundation funds Read Aloud expansion

The American Electric Power (AEP) Foundation has awarded \$50,000 over two years to Read Aloud West Virginia to grow our literacy programs and presence in the Mountain State.

Appalachian Power has long been an advocate of West Virginia literacy, organizing the company's annual "Read to Me Day," which sends employees and volunteers into classrooms across several states to read to students and provide a new book to each classroom they visit. Appalachian Power has also for years



supported the Read Aloud Newsletter, printing it at no cost in the company print shop.

The AEP Foundation's continued support means more books in the hands of West Virginia children, more volunteer readers in their classrooms (physically or virtually), more county chapters coordinating local literacy efforts, and more kids reading for fun!

The gift also makes it possible for Read Aloud to apply for and receive other funding, which leads to even more books and meaningful experiences that nurture lifelong readers in West Virginia.



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Is yours a reading household?

Here's a checklist to build — or strengthen — your family's reading habits

Charles Duhigg, author of **The Power of Habit**, writes that habits have three parts — a cue, a routine and a reward. Something cues us. We perform the routine, and then comes the reward, which may be just a chemical reaction in the brain that feels like pleasure. But the next time we get that cue, we are likely to perform the same routine.

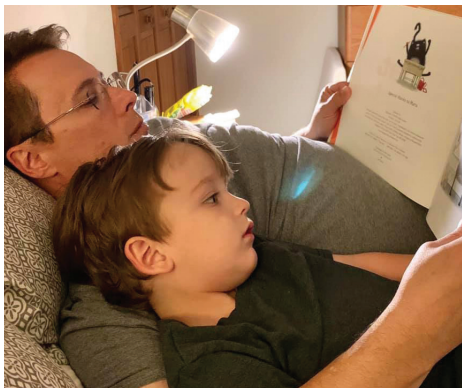
Does your family have reading habits? Experience the pleasure and build yours with this is a checklist of cues and routines:

- Books — some we own, some from the library. Children cannot form a reading habit without books.

- A place for books. It can be a low shelf that children can reach. It can be a box, basket or bin, but they must be handy and in sight (not tucked away out of reach).

- Light, the right light. Be honest. Is the on switch easy to reach? If it isn't, you'll resist turning it on and getting started. Does it glare and hurt your eyes? Is it too dim to see well? If it is a hassle or uncomfortable, it will interfere with building your reading habits.

- Comfortable spot, with room for two



Read Aloud supporter Matt Schwartz reads grandson Alex a bedtime story. Alex's bookshelf is in the corner of the family room.

or three, or even more. Plus other places where children can read on their own, where they can be free of the TV or computer screens long enough to get pulled into a book.

- Time — a set time. Set a reminder if necessary until it becomes a habit. Look for reading cues that fit in your day and into



children's rhythms. Before bed works for a lot of people. During a bath? After a bath? After dinner? First thing in the morning?

- Screens off. Devices away. Make a quiet space for the imagination to take over during a regular time that works for your family, and the cue-routine-reward pattern will have a chance to take hold.

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