

READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

SUMMER 2022



A Crichton Elementary student receives his "Binge on Books" tote bag filled with books to read over the summer.

Summer Book Binge returns in person

Students
wrap up school
year excited,
ready to read

By Kristen LeFevers

Students at four schools received some new, special books to enjoy over the summer while they are away from the classroom.

This year, Read Aloud West Virginia offered its Summer Book Binge to schools in Greenbrier, Jackson, and Kanawha counties. The program is

based on a Tennessee study showing that giving children about half a dozen freely chosen, high-interest books prevents summer learning loss better than summer school.

In Greenbrier County, Crichton Elementary students from preschool through fifth grade browsed a sample set of books this spring.

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Backpacks stocked with books and food help Randolph County kids

By Dr. Mary Boyd

Read Aloud of Randolph County President

Since 2018, Read Aloud Randolph County has been putting brand new books in backpacks for children who qualify for the food program that works out

of First United Methodist Church in Elkins. Kids get the backpacks once a week, and the books are put in the backpacks once a month.

We started this program back in 2018 when I went to a Read Aloud West Virginia conference where many ideas are shared by

other counties. Jackson County has a very active Read Aloud program, and they had been putting books in backpacks. I brought the idea back to our board, and it just seemed to resonate with the other folks on

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A time for everything

When they invented TV, we didn't go around and smash all the radios.

That's what Read Aloud Founder Mary Kay Bond says to remind someone that just because something new and exciting comes along doesn't mean that we abandon what is old and effective.

Consider books. And enjoying them in person with kids.

Read Aloud volunteers know, because they see the light in students' eyes. They hear the gasps and giggles as the story unfolds. They field questions and listen to children predict what will happen. They watch children wrestle with a character's predicament.

Volunteers know, as well as parents and teachers, that these are valuable moments. All kinds of learning happens, even if children don't particularly notice it.

We have high hopes for more of those

moments this fall.

Around the state I hear from teachers and volunteers who are eager to get back into their Read Aloud routine, if they haven't already. Many did their best to stay with their classrooms through all the ups and downs since March 2020. Volunteers made recordings and joined classes virtually when those were the only options. They started making their way back into classrooms when possible as schools reopened to them during the past year.

We will have a special push this fall to get readers back into all the classrooms that want one. Readers from recent years will get a note from us, if they haven't already, asking for their status update. Are you reading? Would you like to resume?

As we get back to what is old and effective, we are also keeping what is new and functional.

When we couldn't gather in person, Read

Aloud scheduled new reader orientations by video conference, such as Zoom and Teams. They turned out to be a joy -- increasing the number of people who could attend and bringing together volunteers from all over the state.

Last winter, we returned to in-person orientations, scheduled by request for school parent nights, employers, college and high school classes, for example. We will keep doing both in-person and virtual orientations, depending on what serves volunteers best.

Are you an experienced Read Aloud West Virginia volunteer, or want to get back into it? Let us know your status.

Access a short questionnaire at readaloudwv.org/volunteer-again. Completing it will help us and local chapters make sure classrooms are served.

Dawn Miller is the Executive Director of Read Aloud West Virginia

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the board, so we started looking for ways to pay for it.

With lots of help from Read Aloud West Virginia, we got grants from both the Tucker Community Foundation and the Snowshoe Foundation to get us started. The state people thought getting grants locally was a good idea, and it worked. The money helped us get brand new books with nameplates, so the kids can take ownership of the books. Also, the kids get to choose the books, so they can get what they are interested in.

The program was put on hold in 2020, but in late 2021, the church started the food program back again, so the kids got books in February, March, April, and May of 2022. Since the county chapter did not apply for grants while the program was on hold, Read Aloud West Virginia provided the books from their stock made possible by community contributions and support. Participating schools have been Jennings Randolph, Midland, North, Third Ward, Elkins Middle and High School, Coalton, George Ward, Tygarts Valley, and Harman.

Read Aloud West Virginia started in Kanawha County in 1986 with the mission of



Mary Boyd sorts books in May 2022 at First United Methodist Church.

motivating children to read for fun, helping them become better readers. For many years, the organization was led by Mary Kay Bond as Executive Director. Currently, it operates in 46 counties, with 29 local volunteer chapters. The state Read Aloud office is based in Charleston, where current



Books fill the back of Randolph volunteer, Judie Smith's vehicle.

Executive Director Dawn Miller and other Read Aloud staff make possible projects like this one across the state.

Read Aloud WV did not shut down during the pandemic — it evolved to continue serving students! Over 26,800 books were given out in 2021, a new organizational record for annual book distribution. Read Aloud is on track to break 100,000 books given by the end of 2022, and the Randolph County backpack program will be part of that achievement.

We hope we can continue with this wonderful program. We love putting books into the hands of kids and ideas into their heads.



LORI NUTTER PHOTO

Fourth graders at Mt. Lookout Elementary recently learned about the “Golden Delicious Apple: A Cinderella Apple Story,” during a presentation by WV Read Aloud Volunteer and Master Gardener Lori Nutter.

Students learn the Golden Delicious apple story

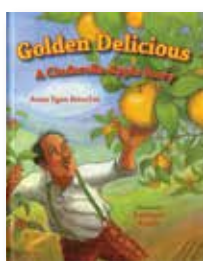
By Lori Nutter

What’s round and delicious and golden all over? The Golden Delicious apple, of course!

As a WV Read Aloud Volunteer and Master Gardener, I had the pleasure in sharing this sentiment with the fourth graders at Mt. Lookout Elementary during the reading of the “Golden Delicious Apple: A Cinderella Apple Story” by Anna Egan Smucker in March.

These 18 enthusiastic students, along with their teacher, Delia Tinney, joined in the learning of the story of West Virginia’s state fruit, the Golden Delicious apple.

Discovered by Clay County farmer Anderson Mullins on his farm in 1905, this apple is the product of a Golden Reinette apple pollinated by a Grimes Golden apple. According to the book, around 1915, Paul Stark of the Stark Brothers Nurseries and Orchards Company in Louisiana, Missouri, visited the farm to see the original golden apple tree for himself after having tasted a



sample that Mullins had mailed to him. Always on the lookout for new apple varieties, Stark and Mullins agreed on a price. Stark bought the rights to the tree and collected branch cuttings, called scions,

that he took back home to graft, or join, with his existing root stocks thus creating more of these trees that were ultimately named Golden Delicious. Golden Delicious apples are a staple in many grocery stores.

In fact, if you eat a Golden Delicious apple today, you are enjoying an apple that is a descendant of the original tree in Clay County.

As part of the reading, the children were able to see a successfully grafted apple tree (though of another variety) and learn about modern day grafting tools and basic concepts of grafting. Grafting is

a horticultural technique of joining plant tissues together so that they may continue to grow together. The upper portion of this combination is referred to as the scion while the lower portion is referred to as the rootstock. What wonderful curiosity and insight these students shared with me.

As a special treat, the reading ended with the kids receiving a Golden Delicious apple or other apple variety to take home and try.

Tinney and the fourth graders are to be commended for allowing me the opportunity to read to them and to my husband, Scott Nutter, for providing the grafted apple tree sample and grafting tools for demonstration.

Check out this book at your local library or find online.

Learn more about becoming a WV Read Aloud volunteer at readaloudwv.org.

Interested in becoming a Master Gardener? You can contact J. Rushin at jmrushin@att.net.

Story originally featured in the Register Herald. Reprinted with permission.

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Comics and graphic novels

We are big proponents of letting children read whatever interests them, including comic books and graphic novels. But some may be surprised to learn that comics, despite having fewer words, can have just as great an impact on vocabulary growth. Research from the University of Oregon found that comic books averaged 53.5 rare or complex words per 1,000. This exceeds the rare word average for children's books at 30.9 and even for adult books at 52.7.

The following titles would be great options to offer a child or teen in your life:



Thea Stilton Graphic Novel #1: The Secret of Whale Island

Written by Elisabetta Dami, illustrated by Raffaella Seccia and Christina Giorgilli
Ages 7 and up

The Thea sisters have arrived at Ratford College for a new school year. Every year, the whales move off the coast of Whale Island, but this time, a savage killer whale threatens the peace. *Series recommended by Marion Tanner, Fayette County*



Coraline: The Graphic Novel

Written by Neil Gaiman, illustrated by P. Craig Russell
Ages 8 and up

Coraline steps through a door into a house similar to her own, only better, and things seem marvelous. But there's a different set of parents and they want her to be their little girl. Coraline will have to fight with all her courage if she is to return to her ordinary life. *Recommended by Becca Revercomb, Kanawha County*



The Last Kids on Earth

Written by Max Brallier, illustrated by Douglas Holgate
Ages 8 and up

After the monster apocalypse, Jack Sullivan has been in his tree house. He's armed to the teeth with catapults and a supply of Oreos and Mountain Dew. Alone he's no match for the monsters, especially not the monster Blarg. *Recommended by Blake Kemlock, age 8, Fayette County*



Sanity & Tallulah

Written and illustrated by Molly Brooks
Ages 8 and up

It can get pretty dull living on a small, out-of-the-way station like Wilnick SS. Best friends Sanity and Tallulah relieve the monotony of everyday space life by finding adventures, solving mysteries, and taking turns getting each other into and out of trouble.



I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912: A Graphic Novel

Written by Lauren Tarshis, illustrated by Haus Studio
Ages 8 and up

George Calder and his sister, Phoebe, are sailing with their aunt on the Titanic, the greatest ship ever built! George explores every inch of the boat, even if it gets him in trouble. One night a terrible boom shakes the boat: The Titanic is sinking.



Bad Kitty Gets a Phone

Written and illustrated by Nick Bruel
Ages 7 and up

Kitty has everything any cat could want -- a warm bed, fresh litter, food whenever she wants! But Kitty isn't satisfied. Kitty wants...a cell phone. And she can have one if she does all her chores with zero complaints. But can she handle the responsibility? *Series recommended by Peyton Ice, Age 12, Marion County*



Girl on Fire

Written by Alicia Keys and Andrew Weiner, illustrated by Brittney Williams
Ages 14 and up

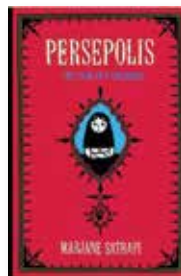
Lolo Wright thought she was a regular girl dealing with regular family drama: her brother struggles with studies; her dad's business teeters on the edge; and her mother left. Lolo's world explodes when she discovers powers she never knew she had. Secrets like Lolo's don't stay a secret for long.



Messy Roots: A Graphic Memoir of a Wuhanese American

Written and illustrated by Laura Gao
Ages 14 and up

After spending her early years in Wuhan, China, riding water buffalos and devouring tofu, Laura immigrates to Texas, which is as foreign as Mars. Laura Gao illustrates her coming-of-age as the girl who just wants to make the basketball team, escape Chinese school, and figure out why girls make her heart flutter.



Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood

Written and illustrated by Marjane Satrapi
Ages 13 and up

Wise, funny, and heartbreaking, Persepolis is a best-selling graphic memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages 6 to 14, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq.



Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal

Written by G. Willow Wilson, illustrated by Adrian Alphona
Ages 13 and up

Marvel Comics presents the all-new Ms. Marvel. Kamala Khan is an ordinary girl from Jersey City until she is suddenly empowered with extraordinary gifts. But who truly is the all-new Ms. Marvel? Teenager? Muslim? Inhuman?

Event links reading, summer book plans for East Bank Middle students

By Kristen LeFevers

Sixth graders filed into their first-period English class in East Bank Middle School's library one morning near the end of the school year.

"I'm your barista today!" called Renita Cook, a reading specialist with Kanawha County Schools. "Coffee or hot chocolate?"

At first hesitantly, and then eagerly, students balanced cups of decaf or cocoa and maneuvered to one of the many high-top tables stacked with Descendants novels, Julius Lester, Rick Riordan, and other volumes.

Cook and fellow Kanawha County English Language Arts Specialist Amy Thompson had put together a special cafe-themed book tasting for students, an opportunity to browse books, sample excerpts, and swap recommendations in a relaxed atmosphere.

They called it Starbooks.

Thompson reached out to Read Aloud West Virginia a couple months earlier about hosting a book tasting at East Bank Middle after hearing about a colleague who had held a virtual book tasting with Read Aloud Executive Director Dawn Miller.

Like many schools, East Bank is dealing with a shortage of teachers and substitutes. Vacancies are difficult to fill. Teachers are teaching outside their areas of expertise. Recent years have been especially stressful, for both faculty and students.

Thompson and Cook chose to play on coffee chain Starbucks to create an environment of literacy and good reading habits. When forming their own habits, developing readers need good models to look up to.

"We were looking to lifelong readers for examples — how do they behave and interact with other readers? We wanted to make reading fun," said Miller. "We knew we wanted a recreational atmosphere for them."

"Amy took this idea and called it 'Starbooks,' and made hot chocolate and decaf coffee for the students."

She and Cook covered the tables and added centerpieces and place mats. Black bulletin board paper became a chalkboard menu sign, tempting students with different



The Starbooks Café at East Bank Middle School's book tasting.

"flavors" — mystery, biography, non-fiction, and realistic fiction.

A local Starbucks donated cups and supplies. A "Starbooks Cafe" banner hung from the ceiling.

Read Aloud supplied the books, a wide selection casually spread around the tables for students to browse.

"The kids loved it," said Thompson. "The event helped us to model lifelong behaviors [of good readers]. It was something practical we could do."

Miller and Thompson each did a couple book talks for the four English classes that rotated in throughout the morning. The rest of the class period, adults and students mingled and chatted about what they had read, and what they were interested in reading.

"We know that students who read for pleasure over the summer prevent summer learning loss," Miller said. "They can even gain skill. We also know that lifelong readers make plans about what they are reading next. They also share what they are reading with friends. We saw students do that at the book tasting."

At first, the event was more structured to prevent behavior problems. But as the morning went by and it became clear that students would engage with the books, Thompson said, they let students move about as they wished, as readers do in an actual bookstore or coffee shop.

"They became more relaxed, and conversations became more natural," Thompson said. "It worked out so nicely."

"Students were so appreciative," Miller added. "It was lovely. I had conversations with students about books, careers, and college plans. A couple students even commented on their own behavior. They seemed surprised that their classmates were so well behaved."

By the end of class, each student was able to choose two books to take home.

"I look forward to doing it again," said Thompson. "I'm really grateful for our partnership with Read Aloud and what they do for our schools and teachers and students."

Kristen LeFevers is a graduate of Marshall University and lives in Huntington, West Virginia.

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Teachers were encouraged to help students find books they would enjoy. Students were able to hold and examine the books before filling out their order forms.

Students received their books at a Memorial Day assembly after a ceremony to honor students' accomplishments and local veterans.

"It was a moving and reverent ceremony recognizing veterans in the Quinwood community," said Read Aloud Executive Director Dawn Miller. "The parents' and grandparents' presence really shows students that the time they spend reading is important and valued. And it is always good for adults to be reminded what an important influence they are."

Students walked up one at a time and received a blue Read Aloud tote bag containing their specially chosen books, each plated with the child's name, an important feature of the project stressing book ownership.

The process was repeated in other schools. In Jackson County that same week, the Jackson County Community Foundation, which funded the project, dressed the Gilmore Elementary School assembly room with festive beach accessories, highlighting the fun, buoyant atmosphere of summer reading.

Jackson County Community Foundation Executive Director Misty Hamon put together a colorful balloon arch for students to walk through as their names were called to receive their personalized Read Aloud book bags.

About 150 third- through fifth-graders at Gilmore and Cottageville Elementary, like their peers in the other counties, browsed sample books ahead of time and chose six books they wanted for the summer, then walked up one at a time to receive their special order.

"We've had so much support from the Community Foundation," said Read Aloud of Jackson County Chapter President Janet McCauley.

"The Foundation really made this book distribution into a special event for these kids," Miller added, "exactly the message kids need to get from the adults around them."

"I got all the books I wanted!" McCauley recalled hearing more than one student say. "The kids were so excited and pleased to get their books. It was so, so personalized for them. If they choose their own books, they're more likely to read them."

The summer reading fun didn't stop



A festive balloon arch and beach-themed decorations courtesy of the Jackson Community Foundation for the Book Binge assembly at Gilmore Elementary.

"The kids were so excited and pleased to get their books. It was so, so personalized for them. If they choose their own books, they're more likely to read them."

**Read Aloud of Jackson County
Chapter President
Janet McCauley**

there, however.

"The state office [Read Aloud West Virginia] is very frugal and are able to order some of their books from their distributors for cheaper than they expected, and get extra copies," McCauley shared. In this instance, that frugality led to "leftovers," or extra copies that McCauley was able to present at other schools throughout Jackson County.

"All of the leftover books have been distributed in the county," McCauley said. "I guess you could call it a book tasting or a mini book binge."

McCauley distributed the leftover copies at elementary schools in Fairplain, Evans, Kenna, and Ripley. Students were able to pick three books of their own.

"Read Aloud is so good at stretching their money, and other students were able to benefit from the leftovers," McCauley said.

At Chesapeake Elementary School in Kanawha County, preschoolers through fifth grade followed a similar process, thanks to a grant from the Greater Kanawha Valley

Foundation. At an assembly at the end of the school year, students applauded each child as their name was called to receive their books. That distribution is part of a larger project with Chesapeake that will include another book give away in the fall.

By preventing summer learning loss, Read Aloud helps students to succeed in school and throughout life. Researchers have documented that children who are not exposed to enjoyable books and other summer learning opportunities will lose reading skill during the summer. They gain again when they go back to school, but over time these losses accumulate, so that by 12th grade, children can be a year or more behind their peers and their potential in reading skill, which affects everything else — including school and job prospects.

Giving children books that they are motivated to read during the summer prevents this summer learning loss. As children spend time with books, they practice skills they learned in school. They also build vocabulary and background knowledge, an important ingredient in reading comprehension at any age. They also discover that they enjoy it.

Read Aloud's first Summer Book Binge was held at Crichton Elementary School in 2016, and within two years, reading scores there rose noticeably, exactly as the Tennessee research predicted.

Read Aloud West Virginia will be looking for opportunities to introduce the Summer Book Binge into other schools across the state in the coming year.

Kristen LeFevers is a graduate of Marshall University and lives in Huntington.

Chapter successes and future plans



THE HERALD-DISPATCH PHOTOS

Elementary students select a book and a blanket to take home, encouraging them to snuggle and read with their families.

Cabell County

Cabell County Read Aloud volunteer Linda Beaver coordinated a Snuggle & Read event for Highlawn Elementary students. Community of Grace United Methodist Church donated the blankets, and Read Aloud provided 300 high-interest books for students to choose from.

Fayette County

Read Aloud of Fayette County's President Aaron Kemlock has come up with a few strategies to help get readers back into the classroom this fall. To start, he and other board members will be calling up former readers to see if they would like to participate this fall. Fayette County is also planning to help schools with their Read Aloud enrollment process by meeting with principals with pre-filled forms, so the principal would only need to sign to confirm their school's enrollment.

Harrison County

Read Aloud of Harrison County will participate in the back to school event the back to school event at the Meadowbrook Mall on August 20.

Kanawha County

Kanawha County chapter board president Derek Hudson participated in the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation's 60th Anniversary STEAM for All event in Slack Plaza, giving out books, magazines, and posters to students and families.



Read Aloud of Kanawha County President Derek Hudson giving away books at The Greater Kanawha Valley's STEAM for All event.

Raleigh County

Raleigh County chapter volunteers met with new Read Aloud Chapter Service Manager Savannah Duncan to discuss what is in store for the chapter this fall. They made plans to get readers back in classrooms and incorporate new community volunteers.



Berkeley County chapter co-chairs Casey Willson and Bob Fleenor, and CASA-EP's Director of Programs Cari Lefeber and former CASA outreach consultant Julia Yuhasz

Berkeley County

Read Aloud of Berkeley County continues to strengthen their partnership with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of the Eastern Panhandle. In the winter, they partnered to serve CASA clients ages 5 through 12, and this summer they are providing toddlers through 17-year-olds (the maximum age of CASA client children) with high quality books. Most of the summer books were donated to Read Aloud in book drives conducted by the Defense Trial Counsel of WV and a local Starbucks. Bob Fleenor, chapter president, estimates the summer donation to CASA to be around 250 volumes. CASA will offer books to children they serve during their regular visits.



Be a literary fashionista

Visit www.bonfire.com/store/read-aloud-wv/ to shop our tees and sweatshirts! T-shirts available in adult and youth sizes.



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Summer-Fall New Reader Orientation Schedule

We have several virtual trainings on Zoom available for new volunteers who are interested in reading weekly to a local classroom. Visit readaloudwv.org/calendar to register for one that works for you!

Wednesday, July 20	12:30-1:30 pm
Thursday, August 11	5-6 pm
Wednesday, August 17	12:30-1:30 pm
Thursday, September 8	5-6 pm
Wednesday, September 21	12:30-1:30 pm

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