

# READ ALOUD

WEST VIRGINIA

WINTER 2023



Madison students enjoy their new Read Aloud books.

## 107,000 Books and Counting

Partnerships and volunteers make it work

By Amanda Schwartz

**T**his past summer, we broke 100,000 books given to West Virginia students and families since the establishment of our database in 2016. Currently, we are up to 107,395 books distributed. This accomplishment would not have been possible without the support of local volunteer chapters across the state and partnerships with 147 schools, helping to put our books in the hands of their students.

One of many such partnerships is with  
**107,000 BOOKS** continues on page 3



Hand-drawn thank you cards from Madison Elementary students.



SAVE THE DATE!

March 9, 2023:

## Binge on Books

By Amanda Schwartz

**W**e invite you to join us in uplifting the success of our Summer Book Binges at **Read-A-Palooza 2023: Binge on Books on Thursday, March 9 from 5:30-7:30 pm in the University of Charleston's Riggelman Rotunda**. The event celebrates the significant impact of giving books that children choose before summer break, preventing and even reversing the loss of reading proficiency that sets back many students when school is out of session.

Heavy appetizers, beer, and wine will be served. A small silent auction will be available, as well as our popular Wine Pull. For \$20 per pull, this activity sends participants home with a bottle of wine selected blindly from an array of options, all worth \$20 or more.

Proceeds from Read-A-Palooza help fund Read Aloud programs throughout West Virginia, which are designed to engage all members of our communities in motivating children to want to read.

**Tickets are \$35, available for purchase at [readaloudwv.org/tickets](http://readaloudwv.org/tickets).** Corporate and individual sponsorships, as well as donations in lieu of sponsorship, are all gratefully accepted.

**READ-A-PALOOZA** continues on page 8

# Books for kids is about their journey, their identity

**C**olby Sharp, then a third-grade teacher in Parma, Michigan, tells a story of a new student in his class. The child's mother introduced him as a kid who does not like to read.

That was the child's first encounter with his new teacher in his new school. Not surprisingly, he stopped at the threshold of Sharp's classroom at the sight of hundreds of books filling bins and lining shelves.

Sharp is coauthor with Donalyn Miller of the new book from Scholastic: *The Commonsense Guide to Your Classroom Library: Building a Collection That Inspires, Engages, and Challenges Readers*. In a closing keynote address at the West Virginia Reading Association's 66th annual conference in November, he described strategies for making books inviting and accessible.

His classroom library is organized in a way that makes sense to kids. They can find what they are looking for and put it away when they are done. They follow book events, such as the Caldecott Award. They read all the nominees, make their own arguments

for which book should win, and hold a mock election. Then they pop popcorn and watch the announcement of the actual winner.

Choice is motivating, so Sharp's students read whatever they want.

"They read at least 30 minutes a day. Every single day. We never don't read," he said. "It is a non-negotiable."

His students discover books that they want to read. They learn that they are readers.

"The goal of independent reading as an instructional practice is to build habitual readers with conscious reading identities," says a November 2019 "Statement on Independent Reading" from the National Council of Teachers of English.

That statement is one of the most important things he has read in 10 years, Sharp said.

"It is not to make them work on the skill we taught in the mini-lesson," Sharp told teachers. "It is not to have them do something while we are grading papers."

"Independent reading is to help kids fall in love with reading and help them figure out who they are as readers.

"Independent reading is not about us. It is not about the administration. It is about the kids and their reading lives. And we must find a way to take that back. If we do not, reading is going to be school's. School is going to own reading. And none of them are going to read when they leave."

Sharp's students write and draw about their own reading lives. The little third grader was in Sharp's class again in fifth grade, where he wrote about his reading journey.

He didn't like reading in kindergarten, he wrote. "Too hard."

But then Mr. Sharp suggested he try *Elephant & Piggie* by Mo Willems. "I loved it," he wrote.

The child worked with a reading specialist and kept finding good books in third grade.

"When I got to fourth grade, I lost my reading track. I went back to being very good at math and did not read. I came back to fifth and got back on track. I love reading as much as I did in third grade," he wrote.

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

## IN MEMORY OF JIM TRELEASE

# The inspiration for Read Aloud West Virginia

By Mary Kay Bond

**O**n July 28, I lost a friend and mentor who changed my life when Jim Trelease, the author of *The Read Aloud Handbook* and inspiration for Read Aloud West Virginia, passed away. He changed the lives of countless others in West Virginia and throughout this country – and even the world. As I read the email from his wife Susan, I felt the way many of us do when we lose someone. It was as if a giant tree had fallen. Why hadn't there been physical changes in the world? It would only have been fitting because Jim was a force of nature.

Jim was one of those high energy people whose enthusiasm was infectious. He had a ready smile for everyone, a prodigious



Jim Trelease

memory, and an insatiable curiosity. He also did not mince words if he felt some policy or action was wrong. Jim was a journalist and cartoonist who went into a classroom on a career day to discuss his profession. He

emerged appalled by the fact that children in this pricey private school could not name a book they had recently read for pleasure. They were so stymied they began pointing to mandatory reading in textbooks. Jim left the classroom determined to do something about it and used the family vacation money to self-publish the first *Read Aloud*

*Handbook*.

Short story: the book took off, and a new career was born.

Jim became an investigative reporter on education with an emphasis on childhood literacy. His journalistic background made complex research accessible to busy parents and teachers. Throughout his career he had one basic tenet: If you want to raise a reader, you need to motivate them to WANT to read. He acknowledged learning to read comes easier for some children than others but argued that those who struggle need that motivation even more. He offered practical advice for making the reading/pleasure connection for ALL children.

I first "met" Jim Trelease when I called to rent his (reel to reel!) film to show

**TRELEASE** continues on page 3

*Many children experience barriers to owning their own books despite the fact that research clearly shows a link between book ownership and reading achievement.*

**107,000 BOOKS** continued from page 2  
Madison Elementary School in Wood County. There, Assistant Principal Cindy Oxender is in annual contact with our state office, requesting books and coordinating their transportation from Kanawha to Wood County.

This fall, we gave them 305 assorted books for a Halloween distribution event.

Oxender took the traceable letter books we provided to Kindergarten with a mini-lesson on how to use them and where to write their name on the bookplate on each book.

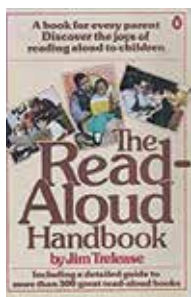
One little girl exclaimed, "It is good you told us about this because my mom told me never to write in books!"

It came out later that most of this child's books at home come from the library, and she does not have many books that are hers personally. She was so excited to have a new book of her very own, and writing her name inside reinforced that pride of ownership and positive connection to reading. This is why we include bookplates in every book we distribute.

Many children experience barriers to owning their own books, like this child, despite the fact that research clearly shows a link between book ownership and reading achievement. That's why free, choice-based book distribution programs like ours are essential to serving the literacy needs of West Virginia students. Children need access to books they're interested in if they are to build their reading skills independently and become lifelong learners.



**A Madison Elementary student checks out her book.**



**TRELEASE** continued from page 2  
throughout Kanawha County. Shortly afterward he agreed, in a typically generous gesture, to waive his fee and address our fledgling organization while he was in town speaking to teachers. A friendship was born that continued past both our retirements. In recent years, even though he was ill, his interest in education remained constant. He lamented the learning loss he knew was going to result

from online classrooms and was hopeful we would emerge from the pandemic with a greater respect and appreciation for educators.

Every visit and conversation with him was a joy – both entertaining and enlightening. He led me to read Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, and I think of that now. Surely, Jim Trelease lived an incredibly meaningful life. His passions were straightforward – his family and raising generations

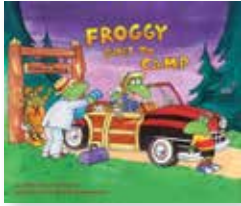
of avid readers. He sought to be a good steward and to leave the world a little better than he found it. Certainly, he did both.

Thank you, dear friend, for enriching so many lives. You are sorely missed, but your legacy lives on in all those you inspired to follow your footsteps.

**Mary Kay Bond is a founding member of Read Aloud West Virginia and longtime Executive Director who retired in December 2019.**

# Teacher's favorites

At the West Virginia Reading Association's 66th Annual Conference, participants from around the state shared some of their classroom favorites:



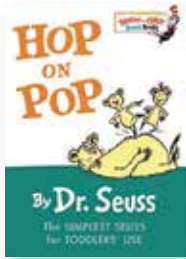
## Froggy Goes to Camp

By Jonathan London

Grades PK-K

Third in the Froggy series, with lots of jumping, flipping, and onomatopoeia.

Gwen Lyons, Title 1 Reading Teacher, Wyoming County



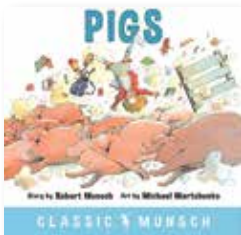
## Dr. Seuss ABC and Hop on Pop

By Dr. Seuss

PK-2nd

Classics, but still good for beginning and early readers.

Amber Janicker, Ashton Elementary School, Mason County



## Pigs

By Robert Munsch

K-2nd

Feed the pigs, but don't open the gate. Pigs are smarter than you think.

Diane Binder, Title 1 Reading Teacher, New River Primary School Fayette County



## After the Fall

By Dan Santat

K-3rd

Humpty Dumpty is famous for falling off a wall. This is the story of when he decided to get back up.

Leslie Boyd, Shepherdstown Elementary School, Jefferson County



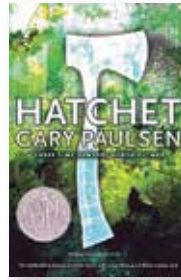
## The Good Egg The Bad Seed and others

By Jory John and Pete Oswald

PK-5th

Being good is hard. As the other eggs in the dozen behave badly, the good egg starts to crack from the pressure.

Allyson Varlas, Central Elementary School, Marshall County



## Hatchet

By Gary Paulsen

4th+

"I'm here because of this book," said closing keynote speaker Colby Sharp, an author and teacher. "It changed my life forever. I would get lost in that story."

Colby Sharp, 5th grade teacher, Parma Elementary School, Michigan



## The First Cat in Space Ate Pizza

By Mac Barnett and Shawn Harris

3rd-6th

Friends Barnett and Harris created an animated strip during the Covid shutdown, and the book version just published this spring can take over a classroom.

Colby Sharp



## Where the Red Fern Grows

By Wilson Rawls

4th-6th

First published in 1961, the story of Billy and his two hunting dogs still moves readers and listeners.

Linda Childers, retired 5th grade teacher, Cabell County



## The Book Thief

By Markus Zusak

6th+

A foster child living outside Munich, Germany in 1939 steals to survive, and encounters something she cannot resist – books. She learns to read and shares her stolen treasures.

Cara Dorsey, 9th and 10th grade English teacher, Nicholas County High School



## The Most Magnificent Thing

By Ashley Spires

K-5th

Making your most magnificent idea is anything but easy. In fact, it is frustrating. A good book for social-emotional development.

Kandi Kaiser, Blue Ridge Elementary School, Jefferson County

# County chapters have stayed busy



Casey Willson (right) celebrates his award for outstanding service to Berkeley County students with wife Meg Kinghorn.



Families enjoyed new books and blankets at Smoot Elementary's Snuggle and Read event in Greenbrier County.

## Berkeley County

Berkeley County Chapter Co-Chair Casey Willson received an award from Berkeley County Schools for his outstanding volunteer work and, of course, for reading to students! Thanks to Gerrardstown Elementary principal and teachers for nominating him. The Berkeley Chapter also participated in a Trunk or Treat at Valley View Elementary, which put over 300 new books in the hands of students.



Thanks to Valley View Elementary staff in Berkeley County for including a Read Aloud book giveaway in this festive Trunk or Treat event!



## Greenbrier County

Read Aloud of Greenbrier County collaborated with Smoot Elementary School to provide a Snuggle & Read event for 30 students and families.

## Harrison County

Our recently founded Harrison County chapter is growing! North View Elementary and Nutter Fort Intermediate have both enrolled for Read Aloud's free literacy supports and volunteer readers are already reading to K-4th classes at North View.

## Jefferson County

The Jefferson County Chapter participated in the Ranson/Charles Town Christmas Parade on Dec. 3, and held an informational session for the community to learn more about Read Aloud on Dec. 6.



Jackson County's chocolate themed book basket raised \$500 for local literacy efforts in a Chocolate Festival raffle. Well done, volunteers!

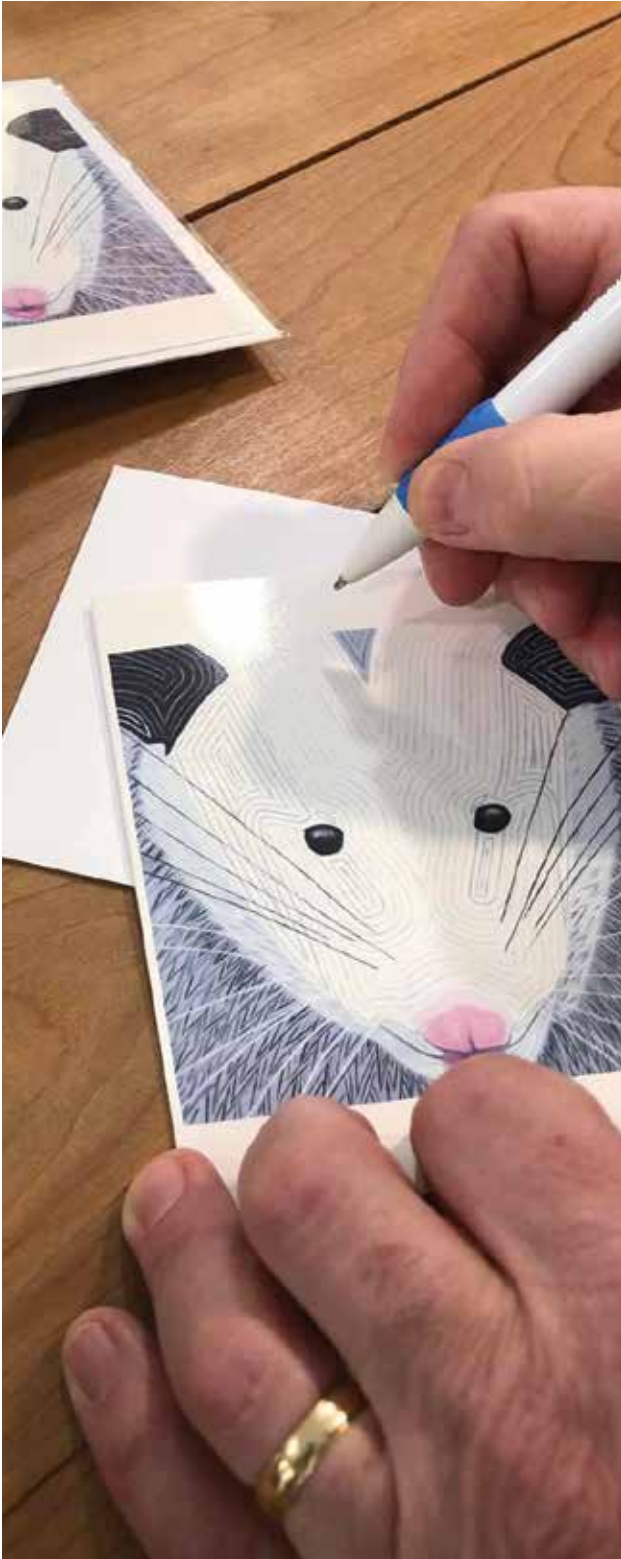
## Jackson County

Read Aloud of Jackson County received generous grants from the Jackson County Community Foundation and the Parkersburg Area Community Foundation to help ensure the continuation of their One Grade, One Book and Summer Book Binge distributions. The chapter also raffled off a basket of chocolate themed books in the previous Chocolate Festival to raise money for local literacy efforts.

## Nicholas County

Nicholas County handed out around 300 books to Summersville Middle School students on Halloween this year! County Chapter President Lauren Jarroll also visited the Nicholas County Career and Technical Center to talk about Read Aloud to their education classes.

# Read Aloud bookstore partner launches WordPlay Connects nonprofit



Nigel the possum was created by WV artist Sue Ryan, who donates 100% of proceeds from these cards sold at WordPlay to Read Aloud West Virginia.

**M**arlene and Tom England, owners of WordPlay, an independent bookstore in Wardensville have announced the formation of WordPlay Connects, a 501(c)(3) organization with the mission of inspiring a lifelong love of reading among young residents of the Potomac Highlands region. The new nonprofit is committed to broadening access to authors, illustrators, and books for young people in Hardy, Hampshire, Grant, Mineral, and Pendleton counties.

WordPlay is one of nine bookstores nationwide, and the only bookstore in West Virginia, to receive generous funding from a national philanthropic organization to support the nonprofit's launch. Projects underway include author visits to area schools, where students will receive free copies of each author's book, as well as Book and a Movie Nights at WordPlay, where youth who attend can choose free books to take home with them. Until finalizing its 501(c)(3) status, WordPlay Connects is temporarily operating under the fiscal sponsorship of Eastern Regional Family Resource Network in Moorefield, West Virginia.

"Our goal is to work alongside

local schools, libraries, and other organizations to connect young people with authors and illustrators and to put more books in these kids' hands—at no cost," explains Marlene England, who grew up in West Virginia and returned to the state in September 2020 to open WordPlay with her husband Tom. The couple also own Curious Iguana, an independent bookstore that opened in Frederick, Maryland, nearly a decade ago.

"The publishers we work with at Curious Iguana and at WordPlay are very excited and supportive of what we're trying to do here in our area of West Virginia," England adds. "They're already fine tuning plans to send award-winning authors and illustrators our way—because they know, as we do, that helping young people have robust libraries at home, filled with books kids want to read, will have a positive, lifelong impact not only on young readers but also on their families and their communities."

**To learn more about WordPlay Connects, visit**

**[wordplayconnects.org](http://wordplayconnects.org), email [wordplayconnects@gmail.com](mailto:wordplayconnects@gmail.com) or contact the Englands through WordPlay, 50 West Main Street, Wardensville, WV, 304-897-2233.**

**This newsletter is made possible by the generous, ongoing support of:**



**READ-A-PALOOZA** continued from page 1

Significant sponsors of last year's Read-A-Palooza include Moses Auto Group and The Elliot Foundation. Thank you to all businesses and community members who have contributed to the success of this fundraiser in the past. Your support is essential to continue to grow research-based reading interventions like Summer Book Binge.



Summer Book Binge is just one of the choice-based book distributions Read Aloud does that has helped us put over 20,000 books in the hands of students in 2022. The method is based on research that showed that six self-selected books given to students prior to summer break could motivate children to read for fun, helping to combat

learning loss that occurs when students don't practice their skills during school breaks. This loss of reading proficiency is most prevalent with low-income students who have fewer opportunities outside of school to practice reading than their middle- and high-income peers, putting them at a disadvantage when they return to school. Learning loss is cumulative, and over time, it can set students back years behind their classmates.

Summer Book Binge showed promising results combating this proficiency loss in three schools we served in spring of 2022. The first two were Cottageville and Gilmore elementaries in Jackson County, where 84% of rising 4th graders either increased or maintained their Lexile level over the break. These distributions were made possible by support from the Jackson County Community Foundation.

Last year, we also worked with Chesapeake Elementary School in the upper-Kanawha valley to bring their students Summer Book Binge thanks to a grant from The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation. We selected Chesapeake as a partner for program expansion because approximately 77% of Chesapeake students were not proficient readers in 2020-21.

After providing all students with six freely-chosen books to read during break, over half (53%) of the students gained or maintained their reading skills over the summer. Of those who experienced skill erosion, 38% were already reading above grade level prior to break and remained above grade level in the fall.

That means that 71% of Chesapeake students tested before and after summer break had a positive result in their reading proficiency scores following Summer Book Binge.

We know from past experience that the positive impacts of this program are cumulative, much like the learning loss it's designed to prevent. As we continue to work with Chesapeake, Cottageville, and Gilmore, we anticipate consistent gains in reading proficiency that will build on each other, setting students up for long-term success in reading.

We hope you will join us at Read-A-Palooza on March 9 as we promote and celebrate the importance of choice-based book distributions on the literacy of West Virginia students.

***Amanda Schwartz is the Read Aloud WV Communications & Development Director.***

**Want to make a donation? Coupon on Page 8**



## Book Festival

Allyssa Painter of Poca, reads to 3-year-old son Gavril at the West Virginia Book Festival, Oct. 21, 2022. The cozy reading spot at Read Aloud's booth was provided by Colonial Interiors of St. Albans. A comfortable spot stocked with books and a good light helps a family to form regular reading habits with children.

### CONTACT US

Executive Director Dawn Miller  
[dmiller@readaloudwv.org](mailto:dmiller@readaloudwv.org)

Send any inquiry to  
[stateoffice@readaloudwv.org](mailto:stateoffice@readaloudwv.org)

Letters and newsletter submissions:  
[newsletter@readaloudwv.org](mailto:newsletter@readaloudwv.org)

P.O. Box 1784, Charleston, WV  
25326  
304-345-5212

[readaloudwv.org](http://readaloudwv.org)

Follow us on social media!



## WINTER 2023 IN THIS ISSUE



In memory of  
Jim Trelease,  
inspiration for  
Read Aloud  
West Virginia

Page 2

Save the Date for  
Read-a-Palooza 2023  
Page 1



Updates from Read  
Aloud chapters  
around the state

Page 5



NONPROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
PERMIT NO. 2879  
CHAS., WV 25301

## Thank you to Peoples Bank Foundation

**W**e had the pleasure of meeting with some fantastic supporters from Peoples Bank. Their foundation is helping us to continue to expand our school book distributions, putting books in children's hands across the state. Read Aloud is so grateful to have partners like this making our work possible!

**Do you want to help fund trained volunteer readers and free book parties for West Virginia students?**

**You can:**

- Mail the remittance slip below with a check to donate or purchase a ticket to our upcoming Read-A-Palooza celebration on March 9 at the University of Charleston's Riggleman Rotunda.
- Visit [readaloudwv.org/donate](http://readaloudwv.org/donate) to give via Square.
- Contact [stateoffice@readaloudwv.org](mailto:stateoffice@readaloudwv.org) about opportunities to make large, planned gifts.



Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosed please find my gift of \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Please make check payable to  
Read Aloud West Virginia, P.O. Box 1784, Charleston, WV 25326-1784  
or visit us at [readaloudwv.org](http://readaloudwv.org) to make a secure payment. Thank you.