

LITERACY BI-MONTHLY

McLit, Marathon County Literacy Council, Inc.

Issue 4, March 2021

A Message



From the Executive Director

McLit Information Spewed by the Director:

Spring is in the air and we are ready for the re-birth, renewal, and a darn clean office! If you are cleaning your house, cabin, cottage, or general living and work area, please think McLit! (Marathon County Literacy Council, Inc.) We appreciate all donations. We take all books, office supplies, school supplies, and general house supplies for our students, such as Kleenex, toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates, Styrofoam cups, and all cleaning fluids.



We also are excited that it appears the vaccination

may be loosening up things, and we can again meet more comfortably.

We hope you will stop in to see our new office and spread the word to those who cannot read that we are

half a block from the 400 block.

Phone: 715 679 6170 Email: mcclitofwausau@gmail.com

Connie Heidemann, Executive Director

OPEN!

Our free services continue to include all types and forms of literacy.

Our new address is 515 N 3rd Street, across from BMO bank, next to Janke's,

Introduction

Welcome to our March newsletter! In the following pages, we share insights on virtual learning, updates from McLit, local literacy news, and two feature profiles of our hardworking McLit staff/board members. As always, McLit has continued to support local literacy through its education center, outreach, and partnerships.

In addition, McLit celebrates a number of fun March events, including Dr. Seuss' birthday, National Read Across America Day, and another successful graduating class of Joseph Project participants. We also had lots of fun compiling a list of new vocabulary words associated with the pandemic, including gems like "Zoom mullet" and "coronials."

March also celebrates Women's History Month, and in honor of this momentous occasion, we are sharing a list of worthy reads that highlight some truly fascinating and extraordinary women. Enjoy!



Who we are

Our mission: *Improve quality of life through literacy.*

We are a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the students who enter our program(s). We provide free tutoring services to Marathon County and surrounding areas.

We support and promote literacy at all ages. Areas of instruction include reading, writing, math, finance, health, workforce, computers, ESL/ELL.



One year into the pandemic, school is anything but traditional

With the one-year anniversary of the COVID-19 pandemic upon us, it's a fitting time to reflect on how the virus has changed the ways we communicate and learn. As video meetings and virtual classrooms create a new "normal," connecting remotely poses new opportunities and challenges for education. This sea change also has many wondering what the future will hold - a return to pre-COVID times, or perhaps, a move toward something else entirely?

According to a new NPR/Ipsos Poll, about half of parents indicate their children currently are learning virtually, one-third are in person full-time, and the rest are in person part-time. While each school district has its own best practices for educating during the pandemic, all must accommodate a diverse group of learners. In addition, there is no easy answer when it comes to addressing the concerns of parents and guardians, whose comfort levels about COVID-19 range from very anxious to very relaxed.

As indicated by the NPR/Ipsos poll, solutions often involve creating different pathways for instruction - from completely virtual to completely in-person, or a hybrid of the two. True, this can make for confusing and trying times, but the optimist in us also sees opportunity. Perhaps this past year of proverbial bumps and bruises, trial and error, will lead to richer, more diversified approaches to public education.

An Overview of Online Learning

According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), online learning is defined as education where instruction and content are primarily delivered via the Internet or systems like a video-enabled classroom. It can take place in a school building, a student's home, a location within the community, or some combination of the above.

The two main forms of online learning include synchronous interaction and asynchronous learning. Synchronous designs bring instructors and students together in a collaborative online learning space. This provides opportunity for student-teacher and student-student interaction through the use of technology tools. Conversely, asynchronous learning has no planned online interactive meeting or learning activity. It is less engaging, and as a result, DPI prefers synchronous learning when it comes to education best practices.

Currently, many school districts offer a hybrid approach to education known as "blended" learning. This approach is just what it sounds like - a platform that incorporates both virtual and face-to-face instruction.

- **Teaching in the time of COVID: Opportunities**

According to the NPR/Ipsos Poll, U.S. parents are cautiously optimistic about the academic and social development of their children. In fact, almost one-third of respondents may continue with remote learn-

VIRTUAL, from Page 2

ing, even after restrictions are lifted.

Clearly, for some students online learning is great. And it's not hard to see why. Working from home can be more comfortable, and often much easier to filter out distractions like noisy or off-task classmates. For individuals with ADHD, researchers note they are able to enjoy more autonomy when it comes to recognizing their own needs and self regulating. They are able to take breaks from class when needed so they can move around and release pent-up energy.

Online assignments also can be more clear and accessible because teachers often provide audio, visual, and written instructions for students to follow. For those who tend to miss verbal instructions or just take awhile to catch on, instructions placed prominently on a web page in both audio and visual form (to cater to different learning styles) are extremely helpful. Learners also can rewind videos and audio recordings, reviewing them as many times as necessary. Working at one's own pace, unrestricted by a fixed schedule or other students, of-

See ONLINE, Page 4



COVID lingo: Test your knowledge of new vocabulary, phrases

BCV/ACV: Describes the period of time before and after coronavirus

after three months of sweatpants

Body mullet: What most people wear on Zoom calls: a nice top and, below the waist, sweats or pajama bottoms

Going viral: No longer used

Body Zoom-morphia: Finding your own image on a group video call so unappealing that you are unable to focus on anything else

Someday, Noneday, Whoseday?, Whensday?, Blursday, Whyday?, Doesn't Matterday: Days of the week

Coronacation: Someone forced to stay home and take time off because of the pandemic

Locktail hour: When you get to enjoy your quarantini, perhaps with friends on a video call

Coronials: The predicted baby boom in 2021

Pandating: The new language of love, describing dating during the pandemic

COVID-19 antibuddies: Friends/family who have gotten on your nerves while cooped up together

Quarantini: It keeps the word "quarantine" intact and follows it with just a hint of "martini." Can refer to any type of cocktail

COVID-30: Formerly COVID-15; the amount of weight gained by an average adult during quarantine

Zumping: Coined for breakups during the social distancing era, slang for dumping someone over Zoom

Flattening the curve: Trying to fit into your jeans

Zoom mullet: A camera-ready hairstyle developed in the lockdown. It looks presentable from the front and sides but is dishevelled in the rear

ONLINE, from Page 3

fers a lot of flexibility to an otherwise rigid structure.

Researchers also cite evidence that children with autism tend to do better online. This is because virtual learning takes out the social component. There is no pressure or expectation for face-to-face communication, which alleviates anxiety and provides for a much more relaxed, and ultimately, enjoyable learning experience. Studies also have shown grades improve when kids are not as distracted by stress and worry associated with the physical classroom. In general, there is less bullying and ostracizing when learners are online, removing barriers to learning posed by negativity from one's peers.

In addition, virtual classes are not impacted by weather or unexpected problems like a water main bursting (yes, this actually happened to one of our staff members who also is a student teacher), which eliminates the need to postpone or cancel the school day. While many students might see this as a negative, they definitely will be happy to avoid adding extra minutes to the school day or extra days to the school year to make up for missed time.

- **Teaching in the time of COVID: Obstacles**

While some children with conditions like autism or autoimmune diseases do thrive in online learning environments, there unfortunately are those who do not. From the personal observations of our student teacher, children with disabilities had a tendency to receive inconsistent access to aides, which meant they did not always get support when they needed it. She saw firsthand children with ADHD unable to focus or follow instructions in the online environment. One child spent the whole class wandering around his bedroom, with no adult supervision present - this was especially troubling because he was very young, and in need of assistance navigating the online environment in general. These personal observations are consistent with results from a recent study conducted by the Education Department. The survey, which provided a national view of learning during the pandemic, found that many families of students with disabilities indi-

cate their children receive limited benefit from virtual learning.

The school survey also asked how many hours of live (synchronous) video instruction students were receiving when learning remotely. Results show that 10 percent of eighth-graders and 5 percent of fourth-graders did not receive any live instruction when learning remotely. This is concerning in light of DPI's statements on the importance of synchronous learning, which is the preferred pedagogy to help students increase their achievement levels.

When it comes to social emotional learning, children often experience heightened feelings of loneliness and isolation when they are not physically present in the classroom. Online learning can be a lonely place, and studies indicate that the instances of emotional issues such as depression have increased during the pandemic.

Students miss their friends as well as the social aspects of in-person learning, which leaves many parents concerned about socialization and communication skills, according to the NPR/Ipsos poll. To put it simply, parents are worried their children are falling out of touch with the world around them.

Elementary School



Additional areas of concern include the tendency toward too much screen time with so much of learning done online. While the world wide web is filled with distractions just waiting to derail children from their studies, even educational sites like National Geographic Kids can make it hard for learners to stay focused. During a recent library class at a local elementary school, kids researching state parks on the National Geo site often got caught up in the digital games and interactive visuals sprinkled across the pages. At least in the classroom, teachers can redirect students when this happens, but the lack of oversight in the virtual environment means there is really no way to tell whether children are working hard or busy doing other, less productive things. And the distractions don't stop with the Internet. Children often attend virtual school from households that have competing televisions, video games, and younger siblings - all clamoring for attention.

See *LEARNING, Page 5*

LEARNING, from Page 4

Challenges with the virtual environment also extend to teachers as well. They have had to take on many new roles, including that of IT specialist, able to troubleshoot tech glitches and learn new technologies/apps at warp speed. And then there is the headache of trying to teach new concepts and hands-on activities via an online platform. Not only does online teaching require a new skill set and tech base, but an extreme amount of patience as teachers must juggle a number of factors that often prevent the lesson from running smoothly (or within the time allotted for the class). These factors can include children who miss or do not understand instructions, tech glitches, and Internet issues, to name a few. One struggling student can put an entire class on hold, and teachers must make tough judgment calls on how much time to spend on troubleshooting vs. real-time instruction.

Connectivity also is a big issue, making it extremely difficult for some children to participate in virtual learning. For those who live in rural or remote areas, in addition to families without the means to afford Internet access, the digital divide adds yet another layer of complexity and inequity. And even for those who are able to connect, the online platform can be daunting. Not only do children have to learn a whole new skill set for navigating the online environment, but they also must adapt to a very different classroom experience. Especially for shy children, the prospect of being “in front” of the class for the duration of the lesson is a scary one. Like Hollywood Squares, everyone is on display. In addition, students no longer have the option to ask a question one-on-one during independent work time; every comment is broadcast to the entire class. This means some kids choose not to talk at all, and many teachers can go an entire semester without hearing a stu-

dent’s voice once. For those students who choose not to engage, they show up simply for attendance, and may not even turn their cameras on at all. It is impossible to discern if they are actually there, especially when many do not submit assignments or give any indication of being present. This poses serious concerns for learning gaps as children tune out for most, if not all, of the school term.

Lastly, there is the big issue of equity. Teachers say it is getting harder and harder to make sure kids in the virtual environment are getting the same level of instruction and attention as those in the physical classroom. Teachers often have to plan two separate lessons, one for their in-person kids and one for their online classes. Not only does this take extra time, but the online platform poses additional obstacles because instructors cannot assume virtual learners have access to the same materials as those attending in person. As a result, teachers have to create alternate activities that require little to no extra components (even paper or markers, for example). This is not easy, and the results are not equal.

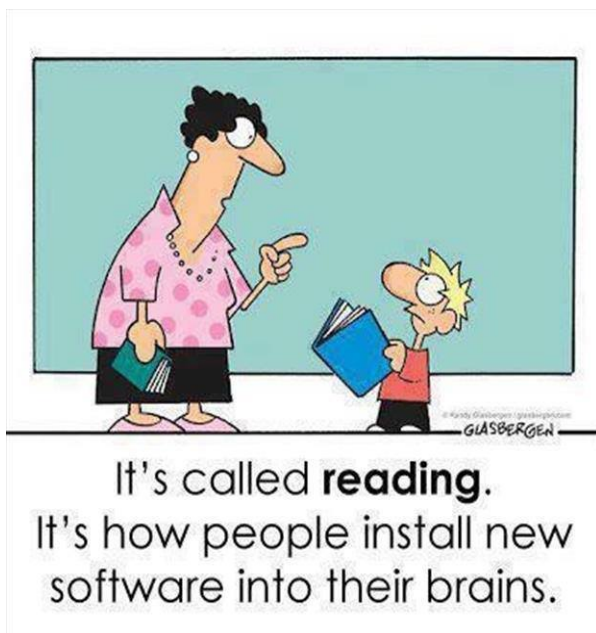
- **Looking ahead**

The NPR/Ipsos Poll found that three-quarters of parents expect their children’s schools to open full-time in-person next fall. About half of those whose children currently attend hybrid or remote learning expect those schools to open full-time in-person as soon as teachers are fully vaccinated. Already, an increasing number of schools have an in-person component, whether it is traditional in-person learning or a variation such as students physically in school, but watching their teachers remotely via digital platforms. In general, research indicates that many districts are continuing to bring students back in, while also offering remote public school or hybrid learning (which may be permanent options moving forward).

In fact, Wausau already has some virtual charter schools in place, including the Wausau Area Virtual Education, or WAVE, that offer full- and part-time enrollment opportunities to students living in Wisconsin. WAVE is a tuition-free program that allows students to work at their own pace, at any time and from anywhere, including the option to take up to two courses at one of the physical campuses in the district. For those students who are self-motivated and work well independently, online schools offer freedom and flexibility not found in more traditional school settings.

Rural Virtual Academy (RVA) also serves students who seek an education beyond the brick-and-mortar school. RVA offers a fully customizable and flexible education program with a curriculum based on individualized abilities and needs. Courses range from core foundations to programs for those with unique challenges to

See EDUCATION, Page 6



Events Calendar

Saturday, April 10, 9:30-10:30 A.M.: McLit training/tutor roundtable (McLit Education Center, 515 N. 3rd St., Wausau, and virtually via Zoom.) Send email to mclitofwausau@gmail.com or call (715) 679-6170 for more information.

Monday, April 12, 5:30-6:30 P.M.: McLit board meeting (McLit Education Center, 515 N. 3rd St., Wausau, and virtually via Zoom.)

Wednesday, April 28, 11:30 A.M.: McLit Book Club at The Landing (hosted by McLit), at The Landing, Woodson YMCA, 707 N. 3rd St., Wausau. The book club will discuss *No! I Don't Want to Join a Book Club: Diary of a 60th Year* by Virginia Ironside. A virtual attendance option will be available.

Thursday, April 29, 7:00 P.M.: Civil War Book Club (offered by The Marathon County Historical Society, online via Zoom.) Professor Brett Barker's Civil War book club will discuss *The Three-Cornered War: The Union, The Confederacy, and Native Peoples in the Fight for the West* by Megan Kate Nelson. Contact Gary Gisselman at research@marathoncountyhistory.org to be a part of the book club and to receive an invitation to participate.

EDUCATION, from Page 5

educational plans for previously under-challenged students (and everything in between).

And while virtual academies are a great option, many parents of online learners prefer to stick with the school their child attended prior to the pandemic. At least for now, they are able to enroll their students in their home school, meaning they will still have access to that particular establishment's curriculum. The question now is, will classroom teachers continue to teach online classes once the pandemic restrictions are lifted, or will online classes be available only through enrolling in a separate program?

Other areas of focus as we begin to (hopefully) near the end of the pandemic, is how to make up for lost "school time" due to a shortened school week. Children currently are attending classes Monday through Thursday here in Wausau, which translates into less learning time compared to years prior. Potential solutions include extended summer school programs or starting the school year early (before Sept. 1).

McLit highly encourages parents, guardians, and students to visit our learning center at 515 N 3rd Street for extra assistance from experienced volunteers and staff. With an onsite computer lab, plenty of learning resources, and ample time for one-on-one tutoring, McLit is ready to help bridge learning gaps and address areas of concern. While our hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., we also are available

by appointment, and are ready to help any way we can! Contact us at 715-679-6170 or e-mail mclitofwausau@gmail.com.

- **What do you think?**

Are you a teacher, parent, student, or community member with insights you'd like to share about online learning? McLit would love to hear from you. Share your stories, comments, rants, raves, or thoughts by emailing us at mclitofwausau@gmail.com.



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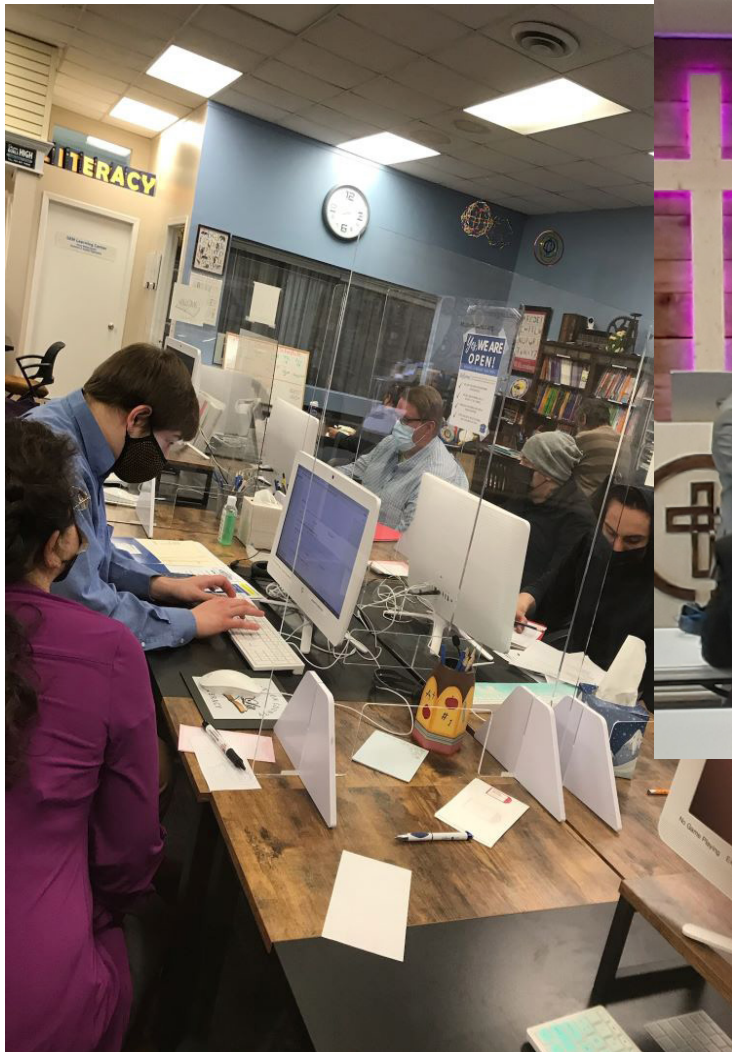
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Congratulations to the March 2021 **Joseph Project** graduates! (LEFT): Participants get some help filling out job applications at the McLit learning center. (ABOVE): Participants shake the hands of JP coordinators and special guest Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wis., at their graduation ceremony. Johnson spearheaded the week-long, faith-based program that connects people to jobs. The local chapter of the statewide program is coordinated by Pastor Yauo Yang of The Cross Church in Wausau and Maggie Cronin, district scheduler.

In Memorium



McLit was saddened to hear of Darrin's passing in March 2021. Darrin often stopped in to our learning center to use our computer lab and chat with staff and volunteers. He was an avid writer, who enjoyed sharing his material as well as his personal stories. One of his biggest dreams was to be published, and to honor this wish, McLit is sharing one of the last stories he completed before passing, *Killing Spree*. The complete work can be found on our website at <https://mclitofwausau.org/>.

We miss you, Darrin.

KILLING SPREE

It is a beautiful summer day June 15, 2008 about 12 noon. An 8-years-old Kim is playing in a small kiddie pool. The shadow of a butterfly dances across the pool caught by the shining sun . She gets out of the pool and grabs her cell phone and starts recording the butterfly, following it around the yard.

“Hello Mr. Butterfly my name is Kim”, she said, “it’s a beautiful day today. Where are you going?”

Her dog Cupcake is chained to the porch lying in the sun, he looks up and playfully barks when Kim runs by. Down the street police officers are making an arrest. In the house, her father makes lunch while listening to the TV in the background, pausing when he hears Cupcake. He looks out the window and smiles. David Stone, formerly Lieutenant Stone, special forces U.S.M.C home, from two tours, and now retired, is enjoying life with his daughter who he’s raising alone after his wife had passed away in childbirth. She is his everything, his entire life. She was all he could think about while serving his country. Now home all he wants to be is a father and leave the hurt and pain of the war and the loss of his wife behind him while trying to raise his daughter.

From behind him he hears a news report of another black child who has been shot by police. He sighs. It seems like everyday there is a news report like this. He looks at the TV and shakes his head. He starts to remember missions his team went on to save children being taken by the government, forced to be sex slaves and killed for no reason but hatred of their race. Day after day he heard about black men, black women and children being killed by white police officers, and the city and state officials responsible, doing nothing about it.

He hears over and over in his mind. It happened

every time a white police officer went on trial. Stone and his unit retired after they could no longer tolerate the senseless killing of innocent children. Stone wipes a tear from his eye and continues to make lunch.

A police woman sees the little girl with the camera and runs to the fence with three police officers following. The police open the gate screaming at Kim, and try to take the camera phone from her.

“Give me that phone” The police woman screamed.” Cupcake, still chained to the porch, jumps up and starts barking. The policemen jump back and pull their gun and start shooting at Cupcake. Kim runs screaming toward Cupcake.

“Stop, Stop, please stop hurting Cupcake, Please the hurting my dog,”

to Cupcake and gets shot several times. Her father hears the Screaming and Cupcake barking, and runs toward the door. He sees the policemen shoot his baby girl and runs out. The police scream at him “ get down on the ground.”

Stone, (military trained) jumps from the porch and attacks the closest policeman to him and snaps his neck, then grabs the policeman's gun and shoots the three remaining policemen in his yard killing them. Stone screaming,

“Kim, Kim, KIM oh my God Kim, my Baby girl please get up.”

When the shooting started the policemen down the street ran toward Stones house. The policemen saw four policemen lying on the ground and began shooting at Stone. Stone (trained to kill) turns and fires and three more officers go down. Then Stone picks up his daughter and starts to run into the house. **(Read the full story at mclitofwausau.org.)**

Feature Profile: Denis Tan

Meet Denis Tan, McLit's new board president.

We recently asked him a few questions about his vision and goals for McLit.

1. What unique talents and insights do you bring to McLit?

My leadership skills have led me to achieve many goals in life. It has also provided me the knowledge to be



entrepreneurial as a business owner and I bring them to McLit to take them to the next level.

2. What is your overarching vision for McLit in terms of goals and growth?

I'd love to see McLit as the One-Stop organization for all literacy needs in Central Wisconsin.

3. What will some of your top priorities be as president?

Some of my top priorities include, but are not limited to, making McLit a home-brand known in the community and working with the executive director in establishing long-term funding programs through networking.

4. How do you hope to achieve your goals?

With our recent strategic planning, we intend to continue to promote McLit at local schools, partner with local-non-profit organizations, and bring awareness of our services with business organizations so that they can continue to

encourage members of the community to be educated and independently literate, giving them a chance to make good decisions in life.

5. When you're not busy fulfilling all of your professional duties, what do you enjoy doing in your free time?

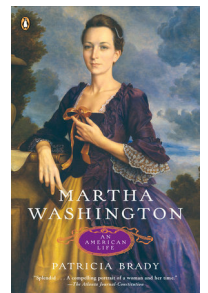
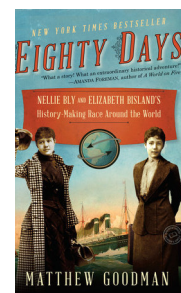
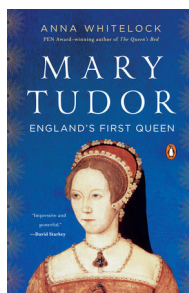
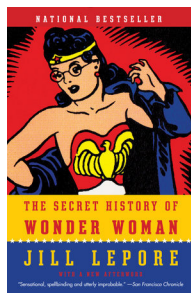
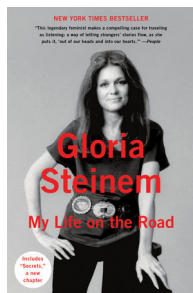
Spending time with my family.

6. Any additional comments?

Growing up, learning has always been a challenge for me. I was neither a bookworm nor did I ever do well in school. I would have the best teachers, best after school tutors, and I would still be barely passing my tests and my exams. But it is the patience that others had for me to continue to push me forward. My achievements today are because of people with strong dedication and the will to help. And that is why I intend to make sure that McLit will continue to provide dedication and support to our community members and improve our overall community literacy.

Great Women in History (list continues on page 10)

March was Women's History Month, and to highlight some of the great women who have shaped our world, Penguin Random House has compiled a list of noteworthy books. We are sharing the list here, and invite our readers to check out the titles for themselves!



My Life on the Road by Gloria Steinem

The Lady in Gold by Anne-Marie O'Connor

The Secret History of Wonder Woman by Jill Lepore

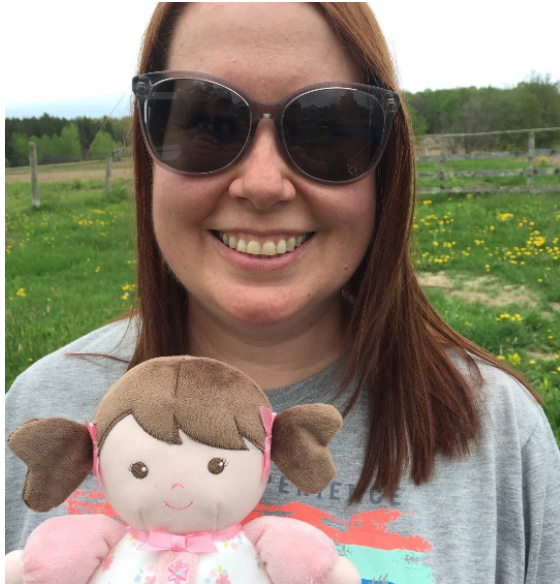
Mary Tudor by Anna Whitelock

Eighty Days by Matthew Goodman

Martha Washington by Patricia Brady

Feature Profile: Jodi Sagstetter

Meet Jodi Sagstetter, the newest addition to the McLit Team. She is the team lead for instruction at our education center, 515 N 3rd St. Here is what she had to say:



My role at McLit will be to oversee the tutoring center. It has been fun meeting our students and volunteers. Teaching English and anything related to reading and writing has always been my passion. Just to be around books and learners makes me so happy.

I started at McLit mid February and began working full time this March.

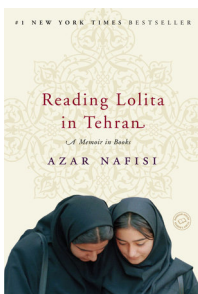
My favorite tasks so far have been working one on one with our learners and utilizing tools like our file folders and the achieve database to become more familiar with everyone's backgrounds and goals. Matching items from our collection of books has also been very enjoyable.

I appreciate the art and beauty of handwriting so one of my favorite personalities thus far has been our regular student Nancy, who is practicing her letters and printing.

I grew up in Wausau but spent much of my adult life in Madison where I went to college. I also have enjoyed spending time in Mexico. My last two visits were in 2015 when I flew away as a "snowbird" for 6 months to stay in Mexico City and in 2016 when I revisited for 2 months. Learning about other cultures and other languages is something I really enjoy. I moved back to Wausau a few years ago to be closer to my aging parents. My father has since passed away. Wausau and the northern part of WI is amazing with all the outdoor options and nature just out my front door. Being in Madison I really missed TREES and forests and even wildlife like black bears. New adventures like kayaking, boating and four wheeling have been exciting.

My personal book collection is very small. I tend to pass books on rather than keep them. The world needs lots of positivity lately and words absolutely help. When the world gets heavy I like the lightness of books like Amish novels, travel books, anything nature, wildlife or inspirational.

Great Women in History *(continued from page 9)*



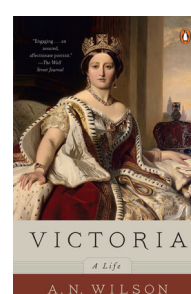
Reading Lolita
in Tehran
by
Azar Nafisi



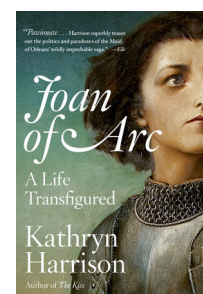
Amelia Earhart
by
Doris L. Rich



Margaret
Thatcher: At
Her Zenith
by
Charles Moore



Victoria
by
A.N. Wilson



Joan of Arc
by
Kathryn
Harrison

Caldecott Award offers a diverse group of stand-out books for all ages to enjoy

With Dr. Seuss' birthday and National Read Across America Day both falling on March 2nd, McLit is happy to support the initiative's outreach to young children by sharing this year's Caldecott Award winners and honorable mentions (announced earlier this year). These are some great titles to share with children as they are awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children to honor the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children.

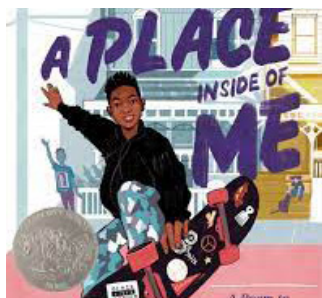
- 2021 Medal Winner:

We are Water Protectors, illustrated by Michaela Goade, written by Carole Lindstrom

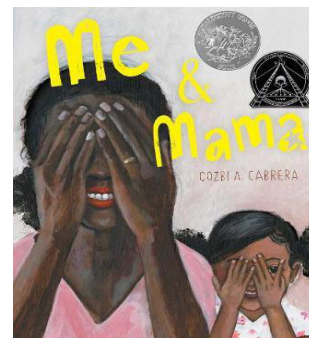
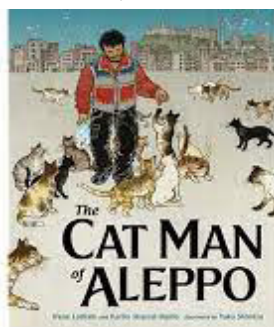


- 2021 Honor Books:

A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart, illustrated by Noa Denmon, written by Zetta Elliott



The Cat Man of Aleppo, illustrated by Yuko Shimizu, written by Irene Latham & Karim Shamsi-Basha



Me & Mama, illustrated and written by Cozbi A. Cabrera

Outside In, illustrated by Cindy Derby, written by Deborah Underwood



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