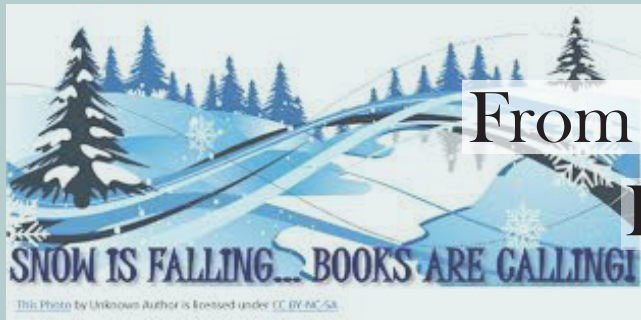


LITERACY BI-MONTHLY

McLit, Marathon County Literacy Council, Inc.

Issue 9, January 2022



A Message

From the Executive Director



We have been as busy as ever. Our Breakfast with the Grinch was a huge success. Then we answered all the letters to Santa. Our only problem with that is about 50 letters had no return address. We were very disappointed about letters that we were not able to respond to. Hopefully next year we do a better job in reminding little boys and girls that Santa forgets where they live, so it's important to include a return address.

Then the refugees started arriving. We are busy learning about their needs and about the huge culture shock they are adjusting to. We have met some of the kindest and most gracious people you would want to know. One had family members shot as they were loading the plane, and they witnessed that. One gave up a family member's seat on the plane to

save the life of an American soldier, who if the soldier had gotten off would have been shot by the Taliban. We have single people who have no family, relation or connection to America, and are scared to death. I hope you and friends will be considerate and helpful.

On a lighter note, I do not think there is a better time of the year to read. I love to curl up with a blanket, hot chocolate and chocolate chip cookies and I could read all day. Some people cannot do that because they never were able to read or were not very good readers. We would like to help anyone who finds reading a chore, difficult, or not interesting at all. If any type of communication whatsoever is a struggle, see us for free help. Please have a safe, warm, COVID-free winter.

Connie H.

Introduction

Welcome to our January newsletter! In the following pages, we share updates from McLit, local literacy news, and feature profiles of our hardworking learners, volunteers, and team members.

As always, McLit has continued to support local literacy through its education center, outreach, and partnerships.

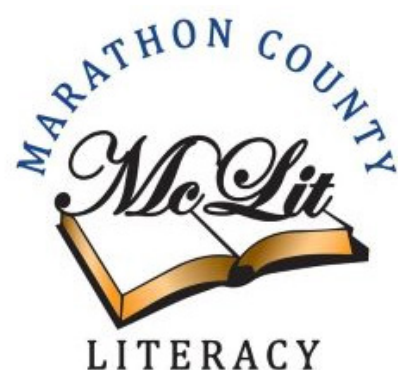
These past two months were a busy time for McLit, which held its first Breakfast with the Grinch fundraiser in early December. It was a great opportunity to connect and share McLit's mission with the community. McLit also held its second annual Letters From Santa (and the Grinch) program, which allowed community members to receive hand-written responses to letters sent to Santa and/or the Grinch. January also has proven to be an exciting time for McLit, with lots of new faces, including families from Afghanistan. Read on to find out more in this month's edition of our newsletter. 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.





McLit's Santa, Grinch letters a great way to promote literacy skills

By Johanna Nelson

This past December marked McLit's second annual Santa letters campaign, with a new twist. In addition to writing letters to the North Pole, children also had the chance to send messages to "just north" of Who-ville, which is of course home to the infamous Grinch.

The campaign officially kicked off during McLit's first annual Breakfast with the Grinch... And Santa Too fundraiser, held in early December. Attendees had the chance to meet Santa, the Grinch, and enjoy a pancake breakfast in addition to writing letters at a special crafts table set up especially for the event.

Not only was the letter-writing activity a great way to get into the holiday spirit, but it also provided an opportunity for children to practice their literacy skills. Spelling, grammar, and formatting a letter were valuable skills that were integrated seamlessly into the activity. It also was a bonus to have parents on hand, as it gave families a chance to work on building literacy skills together.

In addition, specially designed Santa and Grinch

stationary and McLit mailboxes were placed in various local businesses, restaurants, and stores. This made it easy for kiddos to write and mail their letters throughout the month of December. In total, McLit received more than 200 letters from writers young and old, local and out-of-state.

Luckily, McLit had a dedicated group of volunteers who made sure that each and every letter got an individualized response. Thank you to everyone who helped out - we couldn't have done it without you!

The McLit team already is looking forward to next year's campaign, which is sure to bring a little extra magic and Christmas cheer to the holiday season. In the coming months, a new section will be added to mclitof-wausau.org, where more information will be available about the Santa letters campaign, including where to pick up stationery, mail out letters, and how to volunteer.

In the pages ahead, we have compiled a few "best of lists," featuring some of our favorite comments, questions, and toy requests. We hope you enjoy them as much as we did! ■

Santa, Grinch 'Best of...' lists



Most Popular Toy Requests

Roblox	Dinosaur toys
Dragons	Barbies
Nintendo Switch	LOL toys
Legos	Hoverboards
Pokemon gear	Fidgets
Fortnite extras	Melissa & Doug toys
Baby Yodas	Paw Patrol toys
Slime	Thomas the Tank Engine & Friends
OMG dolls	

Most Unique Toy Requests

Elvis Presley CD	Rainbocorn
Cat treats	A lock box with fake gold money
Kinetic sand	A remote-controlled fairy that can fly
Raised garden bed	A mermaid tail
Ryan Reynold's poster	Round bale wagon
My sister and I want to start a band - I need drums	Grain cart
Anything cow print	Predator call
Axolotl plush	Big round bales
Backhoe	Sprayer



Santa, Grinch 'Best of...' lists

Sweetest Messages

To have mommy, daddy happy this Christmas this year.

All I want for Christmas is more love and by you knowing all of my memories, like when I went to the park.

I will leave you a popsicle and the reindeer 5 carrots.

Help all the people that are homeless this year.

Can I please have a nice letter about how awesome my mommy and daddy are?

A letter to thank my parents.

Give kids without anything something to have this year.

If people do not know the true meaning of Christmas, please help them know the true meaning of Christmas.

I've been a good boy. I gave my brother tissues when he had a runny nose.



Funniest Toy Requests

I want a pug to name Clumsy

All of the bubble gum in history

A new cousin

A baby brother and sister, for real life

White Cheddar Cheese (it's sharp)

A plump ham that I can use for sandwiches

A little claw machine

Please don't give my sister anything (To Grinch)

Tooth necklace

Manure spreader

Santa, Grinch 'Best of...' lists

Best Questions

What is your favorite kind of cookie?

How are your reindeer?

Do you even have any elves that work for you or do you do all the work? Circle wich wone!

Do you get free time to spend with Mrs. Claus?

Do you wear pants? (To the Grinch)

I've kinda been a little bad but sometimes good, can I still have presents?

Can I help you destroy Christmas? I have a lot of metal for your contraptions. Lastly, I have blueprints for better reindeer. (To the Grinch)

Why are you green? (To the Grinch)



LITERACY EVENTS JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2022

Saturday, February 12, 9:30 A.M.-10:30 A.M. (and possibly beyond). Universalist Unitarian Church, 504 Grant St., Wausau. **McLit tutor training/roundtable.**

Monday, February 14, 5:30 P.M. McLit Learning Center, 515 N. 3rd St., Wausau. **McLit board meeting.**

Thursday, February 17, 10:00 A.M.-11:00 A.M. Greater Wausau Children's Museum, 10101 Market St., Rothschild. **Preschool science/STEAM.** A drop in, hands-on program exploring Science, Art, Engineering, Math/Music, and Sensory Play especially designed for older toddlers and preschoolers. <https://www.facebook.com/events/618552746069922>

Wednesday, February 23, 11:00 A.M. The Landing, Woodson YMCA, 707 N. 3rd St., Wausau. **The Landing Literacy Book Club** will discuss *This Tender Land* by William Kent Krueger. Call McLit at 715-679-6170 for more information.

Saturday, March 12, 9:30 A.M.-10:30 A.M. (and possibly beyond). Universalist Unitarian Church, 504 Grant St., Wausau. **McLit tutor training/roundtable.**

Monday, March 14, 5:30 P.M. McLit Learning Center, 515 N. 3rd St., Wausau. **McLit board meeting.**

Wednesday, March 23, 11:00 A.M. The Landing, Woodson YMCA, 707 N. 3rd St., Wausau. **The Landing Literacy Book Club** will discuss *The Bad-Ass Librarians of Timbuktu* by Joshua Hammer. Call McLit at 715-679-6170 for more information.

Saturday, March 26, 9:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M. Marathon Park East Gate Hall, Wausau. **Children's Festival.**

Thank you to our generous sponsors!



McLit would like to extend a most heartfelt thank you to the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin. Through various local donations and grant opportunities, the Foundation helps to ensure that McLit has the financial means to continue providing literacy services to Wausau and surrounding areas free of charge. Recently, support for the McLit Learning Center was provided through the **Nils Folke Jr. & Jean B. Becker Legacy Fund of the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin**. The grant will be used to procure the necessary educational tools and computer lab upgrades to make sure the needs of our learners continue to be met.

A Typical, Magical January Day at McLit

By Jodi Schreier

A few minutes before 9 am the first McLit employee arrives to open the Marathon County Literacy Council. One homeless man is waiting outside and is excited to come in for some warmth. He goes to the kitchen area, usually meant just for employees, but being a regular, we allow him to heat up his nachos in our microwave and sit at our table for a snack. A moment of normal relaxation is a simple gift for everyone.

We have two volunteers on staff this morning. Shannon works with our regular student, Nancy, and together they do a science experiment. Seeds are placed in a wet paper towel and then put into a Ziploc bag to germinate. Watching the process of turning a seed into a plant will be wonderful to track over the coming weeks. We sometimes take for granted that not everyone got to experience a traditional childhood education, and some may have missed out on the fun of elementary school science. Shannon and Nancy then move on to a math workbook filled with many visual counting exercises. Our volunteer, Jenna, assists a walk-in who is wanting to print a form for his unemployment. Not having a computer or a printer at home, he has asked if he could use our center to get the hard copy document. Jenna helps him to sign in to the website and together they find the form. The gentleman is happily on his way and Jenna moves on to sort donated books for us.

Speaking of books, we have acquired some excellent titles that will be used for teaching our newly arrived Afghanistan refugees. One in particular, called *The Proudest Blue*, has been a hit with all of our students. This New York Times bestseller is a children's picture book about immigrant children in school. *The Proudest Blue* is a great inspirational read that shows the reality of newcomers trying to fit in at school. Look for multiple readings of it online or buy a copy from our neighbor, Janke Bookstore.

Today is also a day to start setting up a specially cho-

sen efficiency apartment in anticipation of a new refugee's arrival. Donated bathroom and kitchen towels are placed on racks, an alarm clock is placed in the living area and a wall clock in the kitchen. Everything from dishes to sheets and a bed will be needed. Some refugees arrive with nothing but a few clothing items. Through donations we are hoping to see this empty apartment transform into a comfortable home.

Afternoon is usually a quieter time at McLit. First, we do some cleaning and disinfect chairs, computer tables, and our coffee station. Operating during COVID and having so many people in and out, we are definitely cleaning constantly. We go through a lot of Clorox wipes and Lysol containers. Luckily, we also have volunteers who are willing to help out with cleaning duties, even vacuuming and sweeping up winter salt. Any donations of cleaning products and rubber gloves are always appreciated.

Downstairs we have a tutor assisting a couple who are working on residency status for the boyfriend. There are lots of forms to fill out and copies to be made, information to fill in, and that satisfied feeling that comes with a job done. Now the waiting begins, which is the hardest part. Not knowing if the couple will have an easy path of remaining together in the United States is very stressful. We wish them comfort during this time of unknown.

The days at McLit begin and end with many helpful community members offering to tutor or offering to bring free supplies. Each and every day we experience a wide range of gender, age and nationality when it comes to our regular students and our walk-ins. Today we saw everything from a nearly retired veteran needing help searching for an apartment to a woman fighting alcoholism wanting a safe place to "just be." Everyone has a story and it is such a pleasure to learn and grow with those who use our literacy center. What better way to start the new year than with new perspectives and new acquaintances! ■

McLit in Pictures: December 2021-January 2022



Feature Profile: Jenna, McLit office volunteer

Did you grow up in Wausau? If not, where did you spend your childhood?

I grew up just north of Wausau, in Merrill, WI.

How did you first learn about McLit?

While I was volunteering at the Neighbor's Place, someone there had mentioned that with my background, maybe to volunteer at McLit.

Tell us about some of your favorite things?

Animals! I love all things little, big and furry, spending time with family, painting, cooking, although I CANNOT BAKE yet.

Favorite animal?

Platypus, although I consider the flamingo my spirit animal. LOL

Favorite subjects to learn about?

Art History, Psychological Statistics

Favorite person?

Clint Eastwood. LOL In my world, my family and my dogs Daphne and my angel now, Lola.



Favorite hobbies?

Creating cartoon strips, all things art related, volunteering in different places.

What are your goals for the future?

Continuing education in every field I can. Eventually move to Hawaii and go fishing every weekend.

What makes you smile?

My dog, meeting all the amazing people through volunteering, making someone else smile, and cake. ■



CELEBRATING A MILESTONE: Mother and son enjoy reading a book together during a session of McLit's **Share A Story**, a preliteracy educational program open to all parents/guardians with small children, ages 1 to 5. On this special day, Joshua was excited to get a free backpack in recognition of his first four visits.

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