



## **History of the Red Clover Award (1995-2018)**

The Red Clover Award Program was founded in 1995 by Windham County Reads, a non-profit literacy organization dedicated to bringing families and books together. Conceived by author Eileen Christelow and named by author Jessie Haas, this children's choice award was designed to help young children experience the unique genius of the picture book and develop a lasting appreciation for excellence in writing and illustration.

Program guidelines and materials were originally developed by Ruth Allard of Windham County Reads and Eileen Christelow, with encouragement from Grace Greene of the Vermont Department of Libraries (VTLIB) and the help of many Windham County librarians, teachers and children's book authors and illustrators. The program was launched from the Windham County Reads Reading Room at the Brattleboro Museum & Art Center, accompanied by an exhibit that introduced children and adults to visual thinking strategies and provided educators with a model for discussing books with children.

*The Eyes of Gray Wolf*, written by Jonathan London and illustrated by Jon Van Zyle, was the award winner during an enthusiastically received initial year in Windham County. Windham County Reads approached the Vermont Center for the Book (VCB) to see if would organize a statewide program, and VCB did so in 1996, partnering with Windham County Reads, VTLIB (under the stewardship of Grace Greene, Youth Services Consultant) and the Vermont Agency of Education (through consultant Leda Schubert). The very first statewide winner was *Piggie Pie!* by Margie Palatini and Howard Fine.

The Frances R. Dewing Foundation provided funding to VCB for the production of an educator resource manual in the first year and sales of the manual helped support the program in subsequent years. An annual professional development conference is held each Fall and registration fees help defray the cost of the conference and program. The Vermont School Library Association has provided financial assistance to the conference. The Vermont Agency of Education provided an annual grant of \$30,000 for administration and to provide a set of the Red Clover Award nominees to all participating elementary schools (virtually all Vermont elementary schools). That funding ended in 2015.

In 2018, VTLIB and VCB co-sponsor the program, with VTLIB in charge of administration. A committee comprised of public librarians, school librarians, educators and other children's literature experts compile the list of 10 nominees each Spring and close to 20,000 K-4 children vote for their favorite. The Red Clover Award Program provides an opportunity to invite all Vermont children into that rich, diverse world where literature and art meet to enlarge everyone's understanding and expression of life: the world of the picture book.

## **Mission**

The Red Clover Award Program is a children's choice picture book award designed to foster awareness, understanding and appreciation of the picture book. The award encourages readers to enjoy, explore and discuss the pictorial, narrative and design elements of the picture book in order to: sharpen critical thinking and communication skills; heighten appreciation of literature and the visual arts; and nurture enthusiasm for reading and promote lifelong learning.