



# THE READING IS FUN NEWSLETTER

May 2025

## CASDA Honors RIF's Mary Batzinger!

On May 1, 2025, at the Century House in Latham, Mary Batzinger was awarded the **"2025 Friend of Education Award"** by CASDA (Capital Area School Development Association). This honor recognizes Mary's exemplary work for The Reading Is Fun Program as a Reading Partner, Library Coordinator, founder of RIF's Reading Skills Advisory Committee, & member of RIF's Leadership Team.

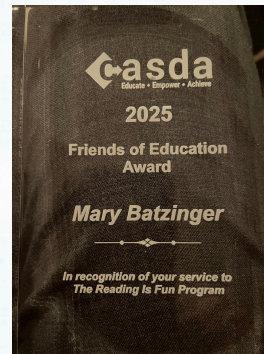
Starting in 2015, Mary began as a RIF Reading Partner and has so far impacted the lives of 110 young readers. A teacher at Woodlawn Elementary said, "Each week, our students look forward to working with Mary. Even the most reluctant reader gets excited each week when Mary walks into the room.... I love working and collaborating with Mary each year!"

As RIF has grown, Mary became the RIF Library Coordinator. Mary has maintained a beautiful space where Reading Partners come to get books and other supplies. Mary & her team organize RIF's books by reading level, subject, & length. The library holds over 1,000 books that RIF distributes to Schenectady students through the program.

In 2023, Mary began a new initiative, reaching out to RIF Reading Partners who had retired from a career in education. They formed the Reading Skills Advisory Committee. This group creates innovative reading games and supports Reading Partners.



At CASDA Ceremony, above: RIF's Al Magid, Sally Magid, awardee Mary Batzinger, Jan Gallas, & Sabrina Ricci. To right: Mary & Tom Batzinger. Below: Mary's award.



Mary is admired by Schenectady students, teachers, & the Reading Is Fun Program. Her quiet leadership, sweet demeanor and can-do attitude are infectious. Most importantly, Mary cares about Schenectady's young readers and wants to contribute to making their futures successful. She devoted over 800 volunteer hours to RIF in 2024 alone! We couldn't do it without Mary and thank her for her service to RIF & Schenectady's young readers. Congratulations Mary!



## SIRIF Coming Next Week!

RIF Events Planner Jan Gallas & her band of volunteers have been busy stickering, folding, sorting, and packing materials for **2025 Spring Into Reading Is Fun (SIRIF)**. Thank you to everyone who has lent a hand! See photos of her SIRIF team hard at work.

SIRIF goes live the week of **May 12, 2025**. That week, RIF Reading Partners will visit every SCSD first grade classrooms to read and distribute packages of books and other gifts to each first grade student. Stay tuned for post-event highlights in June newsletter.



Above Left: Patti Bosen, Kathleen Green, Judy Thorpe, Paul Deltry, & Sally Magid. Above right: Jan Gallas & Judy. Below: Sam, Koh, Balthazar, Emmett & James, sorting & hauling SIRIF boxes.



Above, books purchased for RIF by generous donors. Below, Kathleen from **Open Door Bookstore**, giving new books to RIF Events Coordinator Jan Gallas.



## Thanks to **Open Door Bookstore**, needed books donated to RIF

During the entire month of April 2025, **Open Door Bookstore** sponsored a book drive for The Reading Is Fun Program. Customers chose books to donate to RIF & received a 20% discount. By the end of April, Open Door sold 74 books that were donated for RIF's student readers.

Open Door's owner Janet Hutchinson has hosted this wonderful month-long event for the last 8 years. RIF is very grateful for Janet and Open Door's continued support. In addition, RIF appreciates all of the customers within the community who purchased books for RIF. The lovely new books, including many early reader books & popular titles, will be enjoyed by RIF's Reading Partners & their students in coming weeks & months.



## Please Support Us!

**The Reading Is Fun Is Program, Inc.** is grateful for tax-deductible monetary donations supporting our organization. A gift to RIF to honor someone, in memory of someone, or to commemorate something is a special way to show you care. To contribute, please write your check to "The Reading Is Fun Program, Inc.", & mail it to *The Reading Is Fun Program, PO Box 9437, Schenectady, NY 12309*. Thank you for your consideration.



*Book Worm engrossed in a thriller!*



*RIF student drawing Clifford after reading a book about the Big Red Dog.*

## **Reading Partners: RIF May 2025 Library Schedule**

- Friday 5/2, 11-1
- Tuesday 5/6, 2-4
- Friday 5/9, 11-1
- Monday 5/12, 4-6
- Thursday 5/15, 3-5
- Monday 5/19, 2-4
- Wednesday 5/21, 11-1
- Tuesday 5/27, 3-5
- Friday 5/30, 11-1

Please (1) Return books you are not using, and (2) games you've had for a month or more.

## **The History of RIF's "Book Worm" Mascot by Al Magid, RIF Founder & Executive Director**

RIF volunteer Phyllis Holzhauer came upon the puppet at a local garage sale. The owner offered to donate it to RIF. Phyllis brought the puppet to me, whereupon I dubbed it, anthropomorphically and gender neutrally, "Book Worm" (henceforth to be referred to as she/he, him/her).

Over the years, in presentations to Schenectady City School District Pre-K, Kindergarten, and Grades 1-3 classes and local & regional civic groups, accompanied by RIF's mascot "Book Worm," I used the name "Book Worm" to show how the same word or combination of words can have different meanings and usages, i.e., that the two words book and worm capitalized can signify respectively "Book Worm's" given name and surname and the lower-case word bookworm, a lover of books and reading. On those occasions, I used as a vocabulary-building tool "Book Worm" as a proper name and the words book and worm to form the single word bookworm. And I remarked that since RIF's "Book Worm" is seen as holding a book on whose cover is imprinted the name "Book Worm," it appears that RIF's "Book Worm" is a bookworm. The kids said this was "cool"; civic-group audiences were amused.

## Reading Partner Profiles



*Patty enjoying Alaska's majestic views*

### Patty Bosen

#### **Where and with what age group do you work?**

Van Corlear Elementary School 1<sup>st</sup> grade. I have been with the same teacher since I started!

**Why did you join RIF?** I retired from nursing in May 2021 & was volunteering at a summer lunch program. I was looking for more volunteer opportunities so I asked the other workers what they were involved with. One told me about RIF & how much she enjoyed it, so I decided to give it a try & have been with RIF ever since!

**How do you make reading fun?** I bring in workbooks (ABC dot to dot, Sight Word Fun), games like Boggle & Scrabble to help with spelling, lots of stickers(!!!). I have recently started using *Create A Story* cards by eeboo. I let the students choose what we do week to week. We have a lot of laughs together.

**What are your other interests?** My husband & I love to travel. Iceland was our most recent trip, & we get to Omaha, NE as much as we can to visit our 3 amazing grandkids. We have a camp locally & spend lots of time there in the summer – kayaking, biking, hiking & reading are some of my favorite pastimes. I volunteer at a food pantry & thrift shop at United Methodist Church in Ballston Spa, and at a summer lunch program. I am also a tutor with Tri-county Literacy Program, focusing on adult literacy, serving Saratoga, Warren, & Washington.



*Cheerful Nicholas*

### Nicholas Clay

**Where & with what age do you volunteer?** First graders in Woodlawn & Howe Elementary.

**Why did you join RIF?** I struggled with reading throughout school & stopped reading books altogether by sixth grade. By senior year, I was reading at a middle school level and left part of my English Regents blank because I couldn't compare two books—I hadn't read them. Later, I rediscovered the joy of learning through self-development and healing work, and became an avid reader. I'm committed to helping kids stay connected to reading so they don't limit their growth and education like I once did. I've been involved with RIF for two years.

**How do you make reading fun?** I often read alongside the kids, filling in difficult words to support them without discouraging their effort. Once they learn the word, I have them reread the sentence to reinforce it and build confidence. Sometimes I add character inflections or present small challenges that help them feel a sense of accomplishment.

**What are your hobbies?** I'm fortunate that my career of coaching also aligns with my passion of supporting others. I also enjoy nature trails and hikes in warm weather, and I'm always up for sports—there's usually a basketball in my car. You'll often find me at the gym or enjoying game nights. Some of my best memories come from riding my motorcycle and snowboarding.