

# Rhode Island Center for the Book



At Rhode Island Council for the Humanities



## Nomination for the 2016 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize

The Rhode Island Center for the Book at the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities is proud to nominate the 2015 Kids Reading Across Rhode Island Program for the 2016 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize.

Kids Reading Across Rhode Island (KRARI) is a partnership between the Rhode Island Center for the Book, the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, public libraries, and school libraries that connects school and summer reading to support a love of reading and learning in Rhode Island children. In 2015, the Center for the Book dramatically expanded the program's reach to new and underserved audiences through increased outreach, innovative uses of technology and media, and new partnerships. KRARI was transformed from a small program to a movement promoting the importance and fun of summer reading.



### Project Description

*The multi-sensory exploration of each book, provided by Kids Reading Across Rhode Island programming, allows children to engage with the theme with their entire selves, increasing their understanding and creating a vibrant statewide community of readers.*

-Cheryl Space, Youth Services Coordinator, Providence Community Library

Kids Reading Across Rhode Island (KRARI), is a multiplatform, "One Book, One State," statewide reading initiative that promotes summer reading for students in grades 3-6. Offered in partnership with the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services' Summer Reading Program, public libraries, and school libraries, the program aims to prevent summer learning loss, bridge connections between school libraries and community libraries, and instill a lifelong love of reading and learning.

Founded in 2010, the program is modeled after the success of the Center for the Book's Reading Across Rhode Island statewide community read program designed for teens and adults. KRARI encourages students across the state to read one, special book and engage in community discussions and programs throughout the spring and summer. KRARI goes beyond simply distributing free books by leveraging a network of passionate volunteer teachers and librarians to engage young readers through community discussions, reading resources, and programs in diverse and underserved regions of the state.

A volunteer committee of teachers and librarians choose the KRARI book selection to align with the national summer reading theme, determined by the Collaborative Summer Library Program. Spring programming begins in classrooms and school libraries, including opportunities to connect through online discussion groups. Teachers, librarians, and students – often with their parents, siblings, and friends – then come together for a unifying May Kick Off Event at the Rhode Island State House. They meet the author, hear them speak, receive a free, signed copy of the book, participate in workshops related to book, and learn more about summer reading programs in their communities. Programming continues in public libraries throughout the summer, expanding into summer reading programs that introduce new books and encourage continued reading beyond the assigned school curriculum. The program reaches a diverse community of youth readers, ranging from students of means from independent schools to students benefitting from free and reduced meal programs in underserved public schools.

### Program Goals

KRARI aims to **prevent summer learning loss**, the phenomenon where youth lose academic skills over the summer, and the most significant cause of the achievement gap between lower and higher income students. According to Rhode Island Kids Count, Rhode Island has one of the largest gaps in reading proficiency rates between low- and high-income fourth graders. In 2013, 19% of low-income fourth graders scored at or above proficient on the *National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)*, compared with 55% of higher-income fourth graders. Overall, 38% of fourth graders scored at or above the NAEP proficiency level.<sup>1</sup>

KRARI addresses this challenge by serving as a bridge to **connect school libraries and community libraries**, introducing kids to local, free learning resources, and encouraging them to remain engaged with books and libraries during the summer months. Children's librarians around the state report that participation in summer reading programs drops after the early elementary grades. KRARI engages youth by giving them the opportunity to engage with summer reading in creative, reflective, and collaborative ways.

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<sup>1</sup> *Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*. Providence, RI: Rhode Island Kids Count, 2014.

KRARI brings literature to life through engaging, multiplatform programs, and promotes the importance and fun of summer reading, serving to **instill a lifelong love of reading and learning** in Rhode Island's youth.

### **2015: From a Program to a Movement**

2015 was a turning point in expanding the reach and deepening the impact of the KRARI program. The Center for the Book won the opportunity to connect with the platform and message of the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, and won major funding support from TD Charitable Foundation.

#### Outreach through National Ambassador Kate DiCamillo

The 2015 KRARI book selection was *Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo, a 2014 Newbery Award Winner, 2013 Parents' Choice Gold Award Winner, *New York Times* bestseller, and the 2014-2015 National Ambassador for Young People's Literature. Sponsored by The Center for the Book at the Library of Congress, the Children's Book Council, and Every Child a Reader, the National Ambassador position was created to raise awareness of the importance of young people's literature as it relates to lifelong literacy, education, and the development and betterment of the lives of young people.

As National Ambassador, DiCamillo traveled the country to visit key programs that resonated with her core message: "stories connect us." The Center for the Book applied for and won the opportunity to bring DiCamillo to share her message with Rhode Island families, teachers, and librarians at both the Kick Off Event and a special live Rhode Island PBS event. DiCamillo's position as National Ambassador afforded KRARI with a special opportunity for outreach and promotion, not only because she was a draw as a well-known author, but because her role as the National Ambassador increased the visibility of the KRARI program to a national level.

*I had \*such\* an amazing time participating in Kids Reading Across Rhode Island. As National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, I've been traveling across the country working to deliver the message that reading stories together connects us, and working with Kate Lentz and her team, I feel like we did just that: we connected with young readers all over Rhode Island. From start to finish, it was a delight.*

- 2015 Kids Reading Across Rhode Island author Kate DiCamillo

#### Major Funding Support to Expand the Program

In 2015, the Center for the Book also won major funding support from TD Bank and the TD Charitable Foundation, launching the KRARI program to a whole new level. Prior to 2015, the program focused its limited resources primarily on the Kick Off event at the Rhode Island State House and the distribution of book sets. While all Rhode Island libraries and schools were

invited to participate in programming, some communities could not partake due to limited resources.

This public-private partnership gave TD Bank the opportunity to achieve their goal of reaching families and communities throughout the state while enabling the Center for the Book to expand the KRARI program with targeted services for the first time – including increasing book set distribution, creating resources guides aligned to the Common Core curriculum, providing transportation funding, and sponsoring free programs in underserved libraries.

These expanded program components, along with new and innovative uses in technology, allowed the Center for the Book to increase program reach to underserved communities and to engage new partners and ambassadors including authors, media outlets, performers, schools, and libraries.

KRARI became more than just a program; it became a movement to catalyze the power of reading for children and for communities throughout the state.

### **Increased Outreach to Kids and Families**

#### Expanded Book Set Distribution

Increased funding support meant that the Center for the Book could distribute expanded book sets to underserved schools and libraries – 1,800 books were distributed to 55 libraries and classrooms in 2015, compared with 400 books in 2014 – increasing the reach of the program and putting more books into the hands of students. These books are for students to keep, not just to borrow; for many, this is the only new book that they received that year. In addition, one hundred audio recordings of the book were distributed to reluctant readers and students with reading challenges, enabling even more students to participate in the program.

#### Common Core Curriculum Resource Guides

For the first time, volunteer teachers created *Flora & Ulysses* Resource Guides aligned to the Common Core curriculum. Two hundred Resource Guides were distributed to classrooms across the state. These guides enabled teachers and school librarians to incorporate the KRARI book into classroom activities, and advanced the program goal of strengthening the bridge between school and library programming.

#### Free Transportation to the Kick Off Event

The 2015 May Kick Off Event at the Rhode Island State House drew a record audience of over 600 children, parents, siblings, librarians, and teachers. New and critical transportation funding expanded participation and deepened the diversity of participants, allowing students and teachers from under-resourced schools to attend the event.

Lieutenant Governor Dan McKee welcomed families and encouraged positive reading habits, and DiCamillo spoke to a packed audience of children and their families about her early realization that stories have the power to unite communities. Families learned about local summer library programs, and had the opportunity to meet DiCamillo and receive a free, signed copy of *Flora & Ulysses*. For many children, this was the first opportunity they had to meet a living author and the only book signed by an author in their home.

Connecting to the book's themes of heroes, poetry, and nature, and tying in to the 2015 national summer reading theme of "Every Hero Has a Story," activities at the State House made the book even more exciting and relevant for kids. Programs included crafts, a poetry station, photo ops, and superhero creations with illustrator Eric Fulford. Rhode Island 4-H showed children how to use body heat, their own "superpower," to make a bean sprout, while the Wildlife Rehabilitators Association of Rhode Island introduced kids to several live baby squirrels.



High school actors from the Stage Write ensemble, a program of Trinity Repertory Company and Providence Public Library, performed a preview of their original, hour-long stage adaptation of the KRARI book. Their lively performance was a favorite among attendees, second only to meeting DiCamillo. The full-length production became part of the engaging summer library programs, touring five public libraries throughout the state.

#### EnRICHment Summer Library Programming

For the first time, the Center for the Book was able to support free KRARI Summer Library Programming for public libraries with limited resources. Coordinated through the Council's EnRICHment Speakers' Bureau, eight libraries offered a total of eleven programs at no cost to participants. Workshops brought to life the themes of *Flora & Ulysses*, and every child in attendance received a free copy of the book. Big Nazo Labs Workshops, a hands-on, visual arts performance group engaged over 250 children in programs visualizing themselves as superheroes and creating colorful costumes culminating in a parade at their library. These programs brought the story to life, and enabled students to explore the book beyond the text in a dynamic, creative, and collaborative atmosphere.



### **New Uses of Technology to Reach New Audiences**

Increased outreach and communications, made possible by new funding support, introduced KRARI to new audiences in more communities, expanded visibility of the program, and encouraged more students and their families to participate.

#### Promotional Music Video

NEH Chairman William “Bro” Adams and U.S. Senator Jack Reed appeared in KRARI’s first-ever promotional music video to announce the selected book. Created with students from Lincoln



School and featuring guest appearances by local celebrities, storytellers, and political leaders, the video parodied Taylor Swift’s “Shake it Off,” showcasing the book selection and telling Rhode Islanders to “Check it Out!” Radio station 92 ProFM, several publishers, political leaders and Rhode Island libraries participated and shared the video on their Facebook pages. The video

catapulted to the national stage when the Library of Congress Center for the Book posted the video to its listserv and DiCamillo featured the video on her Facebook page. With over 12,000 unique views, the video raised awareness and dramatically increased the outreach of the KRARI program. This innovative use of social media engaged students and their families online, where they live so much of their lives. By participating and sharing the video, political and cultural partners had fresh, dynamic content to share with their constituencies.

Link: <http://ribook.org/2015/04/22/kids-reading-across-ri-video/>

#### PBS Pilot Show *Inside the Author’s Studio* with Kate DiCamillo

For the first time, KRARI partnered with Rhode Island PBS to produce an exciting program that leveraged both television and social media platforms to expand KRARI’s reach and impact. Teachers, librarians, and children’s book enthusiasts comprised a live studio audience of over 100 for the taping of *Inside the Author’s Studio with Kate DiCamillo*. Rhode Island PBS host and producer Margie Reed interviewed DiCamillo about the power of



stories to unite communities. This hour-long program aired on Rhode Island PBS twice shortly after its production and is the most viewed posting of all time on the Rhode Island PBS YouTube channel. John Schumaker, notable Scholastic Ambassador for School Libraries, launched the program to the national stage by sharing the video on Twitter and featuring it as the video of the month on his blog, [Mr. Schu Reads](#), where he discusses his favorite children's books and authors.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M3ZX28fOQrs>

### Media & Community Outreach

Articles and interviews featuring KRARI appeared in The Providence Journal, Providence Business News, Rhode Island Monthly, GoLocal Prov, KidoInfo, WPRO, and various local blogs. Information about the 2015 KRARI program was distributed on the listservs of the Office of Library and Information Services, School Librarians of Rhode Island, and the Rhode Island Department of Education. In addition, 300 posters and 9,000 KRARI bookmarks were delivered to 200 public, private, and academic libraries, as well as bookstores across the state.

### Connecting Schools

Another new addition in 2015 was an online discussion board created by the volunteer committee of teachers and librarians. Featuring a five-week countdown to the Kick Off Event, the blog engaged student participation and heightened the anticipation for the event. Each week, discussion questions were posted and students in library class as well as after school library book groups from across the state exchanged their thoughts online. This innovation allowed participants to interact with one another about the book in real time, and connect digitally before and after the Kick Off event.

### **Activating Partners and Ambassadors**

The 2015 KRARI program deepened existing partnerships with the Office of Library & Information Sciences, state government, school libraries and teachers, and public libraries, and leveraged the support of a new, major funder to expand the network of participating libraries and schools, media partners, literacy organizations, and community partners like Rhode Island PBS, Big Nazo Labs, and Trinity Repertory Company's Stage Write.

### Book PALS

KRARI also partnered with BookPALS (Performing Artists for Literacy in Schools), the Screen Actors Guild Foundation's children's literacy initiative. Volunteer performers brought the magic of books to children in schools to inspire the love of reading. Actors read DiCamillo's books to students, shared information about the Kick Off event, and delivered donated books to classroom teachers and librarians.

### Program Ambassadors

KRARI also partnered with the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), an organization dedicated to community improvement through volunteer service and the founder of more than 75% of our nation's libraries. GFWC volunteers served as ambassadors to schools and libraries across the state, promoting KRARI, the Kick Off event, and summer reading, and delivering book sets to schools.

Ambassadors and promoters of the program increased exponentially through the broad engagement achieved by the promotional music video – the video participants, from television news anchors to local students, became a part of the summer reading movement and were transformed into ambassadors for the KRARI program.

### **Financial Structure**

In past years, the KRARI program was supported through support from the Rhode Island Office of Library and Information Services, the Rhode Island Library Association, and the School Librarians of Rhode Island, and the financial structure relied heavily on NEH Operating Support Grant funds. However, the financial structure for the KRARI program changed dramatically in 2015 due to new corporate sponsorship and foundation support through TD Bank and TD Charitable Foundation, as well as through ties to DiCamillo's National Ambassador status, which included travel support through the Library of Congress. This new influx of support enabled the Center for the Book to expand the KRARI program impact through investing in and distributing new resources to a wider community (books, workshop fees, etc.), growing the program expenses from \$4,000 in 2014 to \$20,000 in 2015 and program support from \$1,800 in 2014 to \$18,000 in 2015.

This new support served not only to grow the program's financial resources, but also opened the door to a greater platform and visibility for the program, allowing the Center for the Book to leverage additional in-kind support and volunteers. KRARI generates a remarkable return on donor, volunteer, and community investment by leveraging a wide volunteer network including not just librarians and teachers, but authors and community leaders who recognize the value of this program. With a combination of bulk purchasing and negotiations with publishers, the cost of books is a fraction of their retail price. KRARI also utilizes large public spaces such as the Rhode Island State House and public libraries to accommodate numerous participants at no or very little expense.

The success of the 2015 program has already led to renewed funding support from TD Bank and TD Charitable Foundation, and has positioned the Center for the Book to pursue additional corporate and foundation support. With additional support, the Center for the Book will build on current innovations and partnerships and explore new opportunities to expand and enrich the program.



## **Public Impact**

*When the public librarian visits the schools to promote summer reading in June, one of the highlights of the presentation in the school library is seeing faces light up at the sight of the book. It's a win-win when school libraries and the public libraries work together.*

- Anne McLaughlin, Head of Youth Services, West Warwick Public Library

In 2015, KRARI grew in strategic, effective ways: increased book sets, reader resources, and programming reached more children and their families in underserved regions in Rhode Island, and new program elements served to build a bridge between school and community libraries.

KRARI engaged 34 new schools and libraries with fresh programming, and provided 1200 more books to libraries, schools, children and their families across the state. Over 60 public libraries and schools across the state hosted book discussions and programming connected with the KRARI selection, engaging students in a quality summer reading experience. The Center for the Book reached more communities and strengthened connections and access to important literary programs. Increased support of KRARI catalyzed growth of this program, building connections through reading, education, and community engagement.

Feedback from the program has been unequivocal that innovative technology and outreach, creative and interactive programming, and interaction with a live author make a compelling impact on engaging and retaining young readers. Having seen the positive impact of the 2015 program, partners such as TD Bank and TD Charitable Foundation, Big Nazo Lab, School Librarians of Rhode Island, Rhode Island Library Association, and Trinity Repertory Company renewed their partnerships for 2016. The visibility of the 2015 program led to increased awareness and demand for the 2016 program. The week after the 2016 KRARI selection was announced, teachers, librarians, and principals requested 400 books; the demand for books quickly outgrew the supply of 2,000 books. The pool of volunteers and ambassadors grew as well, and outreach included even more schools and libraries. The 2016 Kick-Off Event was the most diverse yet, with 47 schools and 26 cities and towns represented.

## **Conclusion**

By linking with a national platform and securing major funding support, the 2015 KRARI program scaled up its successful model to reach new and underserved audiences through expanded resources, innovative uses of technology and media, and activating partnerships and ambassadors. The program advanced its goal of preventing summer learning loss by building bridges between school and library summer reading programs, and expanding access to engaging programming that instills a love of reading and learning in Rhode Island's youth.



# Rhode Island Center for the Book

At Rhode Island Council for the Humanities



## 2015 KIDS Reading Across Rhode Island



Students in KRARI-Big Nazo workshop

*Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures* by Kate DiCamillo, a 2014 Newbery Award Winner, New York Times bestseller, and the 2014-2015 **National Ambassador for Young People's Literature**, is the 2015 KRARI selection.

### Check it Out!

The first ever Kids Reading Across RI **announcement video** for the selected book, featuring Lincoln School students reached **over 4,000** viewers. Rhode Island PBS featured Kate DiCamillo on a new series, *Author's Studio*.

### Over 600 students and their families

attended the **Kick-Off event at the State House** with **local libraries** and community partners, a preview of **Trinity Repertory Company high school students'** readers theatre performance based on the selected book, and a keynote address by the author, **Kate DiCamillo**.

### Over 250 RI children

participated in programming at their local library with **BIG NAZO LAB Staff Artists** exploring themes from the selected book.

### 1,796 Copies of Flora & Ulysses

were distributed to **22** libraries, **33** classrooms, and **over 600** children and their families as part of our book lending program, along with **200** resource guides aligned to Common Core standards to support classroom connections with local libraries.

*The multi-sensory exploration of each book, provided by Kids Reading Across Rhode Island programming, allows children to engage with the theme with their entire selves, increasing their understanding and creating a vibrant statewide community of readers.*

-Cheryl Space, Youth Services Coordinator, Providence Community Library



Kate DiCamillo on Author's Studio with Rhode Island PBS

By Tony LaRoche  
Journal Staff Writer

May 05, 2015 12:01AM

## Award-winning writer DiCamillo to kick off Kids Reading Across Rhode Island

Best-selling author of "Because of Winn-Dixie" and "The Tale of Despereaux" will speak at the State House and sign copies of her new book.

As a child, Kate DiCamillo loved a good story.

Laura Ingalls Wilder. Beverly Cleary. Mary Norton's "The Borrowers." Sydney Taylor's "All-of-a-Kind Family" series. Biographies, especially two about George Washington Carver and Abraham Lincoln.

"Reading made me feel safe," says the two-time Newbery Medal winner in an email interview. "It helped me understand the world that I lived in. And it connected me to people — to my mother (who read to me a lot), to teachers and classmates (during read-aloud time in class), to librarians (who saw me as a real reader and put so many books in my hands)."

DiCamillo is helping spread that love for reading. Carrying two very weighty titles — national ambassador for young people's literature and national summer reading champion — she is traveling around the country talking to children about reading.

**She will make a stop in Providence** on Saturday to help kick off the state's Kids Reading Across Rhode Island — an initiative by the Rhode Island Center for the Book that gets children in grades three through six all exploring the same book. This year's selection is DiCamillo's latest Newbery Medal winner, "Flora & Ulysses: The Illuminated Adventures."

Saturday's event is from 2 to 4 p.m. at the State House and includes a presentation by DiCamillo in the Governor's State Room at 3 p.m., free autographed copies of "Flora & Ulysses" and activities and games provided by local libraries.

Then all this summer, local libraries will hold free programs inspired by the book as part the annual statewide summer reading program, whose theme this year is "Every Hero Has a Story." Which fits right in with DiCamillo's book — the hilarious tale of Flora, a cynical 10-year-old who befriends a squirrel she believes is a superhero. Parts of the story, when Ulysses shows off his superpowers, are told through black-and-white comic-book-style drawings by K.G. Campbell.

**As she travels around the country** — stopping in something like 20 states so far — DiCamillo carries the theme "stories connect us." "It means," she says, "that when we read together it gives us a chance to see each other. We let down our guard a bit when we are in a story — listening together. Reading together makes us a community."

DiCamillo credits reading with playing a role in her becoming a writer — a meteoric rise after a start that seemed doomed on the launch pad.

Reading gave her the feeling that she had the ability to tell stories "if I could just make myself brave enough to try." It took her years to build that courage, working odd jobs and telling herself, backed by a wardrobe of black turtlenecks, that she was a writer despite not actually writing, she says in one online interview.

It took her until she was 30 to really jump in with both feet. When she did, it was persistence in the face of hundreds of rejection letters that kept her going. "I had made up my mind that I couldn't make myself talented," she says in an email. "But that I could make myself persistent, relentless."

Her big break came when she was able to meet face to face with a sales rep for Candlewick Press, who forwarded her manuscript to an editor at the publisher. That led to "Because of Winn-Dixie," which earned a Newbery Honor in 2001. Then came "The Tiger Rising," a National Book finalist, and then "The Tale of Despereaux," her first Newbery Medal winner. Both "Winn-Dixie" and "Despereaux" were made into films.

**And now DiCamillo**, author of six novels among numerous chapter books and picture books, is on her journey as national ambassador for young people's literature for the Library of Congress. Everywhere she goes she asks children what they're reading and what books matter to them, and she tries to remind people about the joy of reading.

"The response," she says, "has been amazing. The best thing is that connection. I am connecting with other readers. It has changed me."

Asked what children will hear when she speaks on Saturday, she writes: "Stories! Reading! Reading together! Impossible things becoming possible!"

*The R.I. Center for the Book has sets of "Flora & Ulysses" available for loan to classroom teachers who contact [kate@ribook.org](mailto:kate@ribook.org). Further reading lists, book discussion guides, the author's website, audio interviews and other material may be found on the Center for the Book's website — [ribook.org](http://ribook.org).*

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"Reading made me feel safe," says two-time Newbery Medal winner Kate DiCamillo. "It helped me understand the world that I lived in."



# TD gives \$12K to humanities council



BLOOMBERG FILE PHOTO/NORM BETTS

By Patricia Daddona (<mailto:daddona@pbn.com>)

PBN Staff Writer

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The TD Charitable Foundation, the charitable arm of TD Bank, has awarded a \$12,602 grant to the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities to support Rhode Island Center for the Book's Kids Reading Across Rhode Island.

The summer reading program for students in grades 3 to 6 encourages students across the state to read one specific book and engage in community discussions and programs about it.

Kids Reading Across Rhode Island is a partnership between the R.I. Office of Library and Information Services and the Rhode Island Center for the Book. The partners provide continuity between school-time and summer reading by collaborating with local libraries.

The grant will be used to provide increased access to reading resources and programming to diverse and underserved areas throughout Rhode Island.

Kate Lentz, director of the RI Center for the Book, said the center will make full use of the grant.

“This grant will allow us to reach more communities, strengthening connections, promoting literacy, and supporting a love of reading and learning in children across the state,” she said.

Rhode Island Center for the Book at the Rhode Island Council for the Humanities is a statewide organization devoted to promoting personal and community enrichment by celebrating the art and heritage of reading, writing, making, and sharing books.

