



## Magical Library: Little Read highlights stories for all



*Peter Coyle, director of the Monclair Public Library reading "Clifford The Big Red Dog!" by Norman Bridwell, in the big red chair at the Ninth Annual Little Read marathon featuring celebrities, authors and township officials reading aloud to children, pre-school- fourth grade, in 2017. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

**By GWEN OREL**

When Rosemary Iversen was little in Orange, she liked to spend time in the library.

The Stanford White building was where she spent her time until she went to the movie matinee at the Embassy Theater across the street.

“I had no iPad to entertain me, but the books did,” she said with a laugh.

That’s one reason she’s been a library supporter for such a long time: she was on the [Montclair Public Library Foundation Board](#) for nine years, and has participated in the Little Read, which kicked off last night and runs through Oct. 19, since the community-wide read-aloud it began 11 years ago. She’s a fan of libraries.

“I truly believe a young child has to know there is a library, and a lot of fun to be had at the library,” she said. “It’s not just about books anymore.” She pointed out that libraries offer many different kinds of hands-on activities for children, in addition to stories told by librarians. Libraries also offer internet access for people who need it, especially for job searches, and entertainment and companionship for older people. It’s important to support the library, she said.

[The Little Read](#), unique to Montclair, is a read-aloud marathon, in which all kinds of people including celebrities, neighbors, politicians, read stories to children ages preschool to grade three.

Stephen Colbert has been a reader. So has Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill.

The event is free. Readers sign up for 10-minute slots at either the Main Library or the Bellevue Avenue Branch. They can bring their own books, or tell stories chosen from books available there. The first community storytime is tomorrow, Friday, Oct. 18, at 7 p.m., in the main library auditorium. A woodwind quintet will accompany a live performance of “Peter and the Wolf,” and Mayor Robert Jackson and Library Director Peter Coyl will read bedtime stories.

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[READ: TRANSFORMING IN THE CHAIR; THE LITTLE READ TURNS 10](#)

[READ: LOVE READING, AND RAISE A READER](#)

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One of the special elements of the Little Read is the Big Red Chair, an oversized armchair designed by Montclair theater professor Frank Hentschker.

When adults sit in the Big Red Chair, their feet don’t touch the ground, just as the feet of children don’t when they sit in armchairs. Not everyone was in favor of the chair at first, but he wanted to make something special for the project that would make adults feel like children again, he told Montclair Local last year, for The Little

Read's 10th anniversary.

Today, the chair is a symbol of the event.

Since its beginning, the Little Read, a project of the Montclair Public Library Foundation, has been sponsored by Scholastic Books, who put out the mail-order catalogues children receive in school. Montclair resident Judy Newman, Scholastic president, used to sit on the library board. The Little Read is a children's version of the National Education Association's (NEA) "Big Read," which offers community grants centered around a single selection chosen by the NEA, she explained to Montclair Local last year. Scholastic also donates books to The Little Read.

## OPENING EYES

Iversen has not decided what she will read yet. She reads to her grandchildren, and of



ROSEMARY IVERSEN

course does all the voices: "I'm a former teacher," she said with a laugh. "I like to read something that has big pictures."

She and her husband Alfred sponsored the "Book Nook" room when the Montclair Art Museum's offered an exhibition of Eric Carle's artwork in 2015. Carle's book "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" is one of her favorites.

Her father read to her "incessantly." And on Sunday she looked forward to the comics: what might now be called a graphic narrative. Dick Tracy was her favorite, and his wife, Sparkle Plenty.

She recalled the beautiful illustrations in a book of nursery rhymes she had when she was very small.

"I must have been maybe 4, and I remember asking my mother to read it to me every night," she said. She was born in 1941, and in that period illustrations were very detailed works of art.

A bit later, her favorite childhood book was a book on mythology she got for Christmas. "I couldn't put it down. I learned about all the gods and goddesses in one day. Over the course of one or two moves I lost it," she said wistfully.

At the Montclair Literary Festival last year, George O'Connor, author/illustrator of the "Olympians" series, was a rock star to a packed children's session.

"Books open your eyes to the world, that's my feeling," she said. "If someone reads to you, you have incentive to read yourself."



*Patricia Abad of Montclair, reading "The Spiffiest Giant In Town", in the big red chair at the Ninth Annual Little Read marathon in 2017. ADAM ANIK/FOR MONTCLAIR LOCAL*

## THE LITTLE READ

Free. All donations to benefit the children's department at the Montclair Public Library.

Community storytimes:

- Friday, Oct. 18, 7 p.m., at the main library auditorium, 50 South Fullerton Ave. Bedtime stories from Mayor Robert Jackson, MPL director Peter Coyl, and others, and a live performance of “Peter and the Wolf” by a woodwind quintet.
- Saturday, Oct. 19, 11 a.m., at Fire Station #2, 588 Valley Road. The Montclair Fire Department will read aloud.
- Saturday, Oct. 19, 1 p.m., at the Montclair Art Museum, 3 South Mountain Ave. MAM staff will read.
- Saturday, Oct. 19, 2 p.m., at Fire Station #3, 51 Harrison Avenue (on the corner of Cedar Street near Nishuane Park).