



## IRW 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



### A Note from Executive Director

To say that the past 18 months have been a whirlwind of challenges and change would be an understatement. The pandemic has brought new awareness of our interdependence, inequities, and vulnerabilities, as well as inspired our resolve, energy, and creativity. In spite of it all, IRW brought 28 book-centered programs to schools in 2020, 17 programs last spring, with plans for even more visits as the school year begins anew this fall.

Topping the chart of IRW's 2021 achievements is our rebuilt website and the introduction of a robust series of programs offered through our site for educators, families, children and book enthusiasts of all ages. The project was funded by a grant from the C.F. Adams Charitable Trust and meets one of our strategic priorities to expand program reach and visibility, as well as using our website to support operations. We have enjoyed meeting our expanded audience, and since May, more than 180 people from Washington state to Louisiana and Maine have participated in IRW's new virtual offerings.

While children were masked and internet connectivity was spotty, we continued to virtually visit schools over the past year. Our wonderful authors and illustrators artfully engaged children with story and the opportunity to share their ideas and thoughts in writing and discussion, focusing on how those readings related to their lives.

While all of our in-school Book Groups and author-study programs were a success, *Echo Mountain* by award-winning author Lauren Wolk was particularly enjoyed by young readers. Perhaps it was because it was set in Maine during the Great Depression, when families had to adjust to challenges and circumstances not of their making, and pulled together for support and survival. When students were asked what this book made them think about, one said, "that kids can help anyone," and another, "being a kid doesn't limit possibilities." Several agreed that they "couldn't put the book down." Watching Lauren Wolk engage children in conversation, listening intently with compassion as they shared their truths, and responding to their questions with respect and interest, demonstrates what IRW is all about: opening up worlds through stories and helping children relate a story's content to their understanding of self and the world around them. The pandemic didn't stifle that process; in many ways it expanded it, as we worked directly with teachers to creatively connect the content of each book to each reader and their world.

Our thanks to the many individuals and foundations who continue to partner with us to develop the lives of children through reading and the learning it inspires. A film about IRW and its impact during the pandemic produced by former NBC News producer ML Flynn will premiere on Monday, August 16, at 6 p.m. during our virtual Annual Meeting. I hope you will join us!

Gratefully,

Jan Coates

## Welcoming IRW's Newest Board Members



Russ Cox



Katherine Emery



Andrea Gilmore



Jessie Vogel

IRW was fortunate to welcome four new members to its Board of Directors this spring, including children's book illustrator and author **Russ Cox** of Pittsfield, who has worked with IRW since 2016. His unique style can be seen in his book *Faraway Friends*, and in books by fellow Maine author Lynn Plourde, among many others.

**Katherine Emery**, a freelance documentary and portrait photographer, recently relocated with her family from San Francisco, Calif., to Mount Desert, and has done educational consulting and led photography and photojournalism workshops.

**Andrea Gilmore**, a seasonal resident of Hall Quarry and a retired preservation architect, who also serves on the Board of the Mount Desert Land & Garden Preserve.

**Jessie Vogel**, a summer resident of Southwest Harbor, is the director of the North Shore Nursery School in Beverly, Mass., and has a deep background in literacy education.

## Video Launch

IRW invites you to take a video journey with us, to the communities we visit and the people with whom we work. Produced by former NBC News producer ML Flynn and edited by Tate Yoeder, IRW's new video will premiere during our virtual annual meeting from 6-7 p.m. on Monday, August 16! This project depicts the impact of IRW's programs on children and communities, with the help of children's book authors and illustrators, teachers, principals and many others from IRW partner schools. With interviews filmed over the past several months, and photos and footage from years past, this video captures the heart and soul of IRW and its network of incredible school partners, authors, illustrators and, of course, the children at the center of our programs and mission.

## Happy Belated 200th Birthday, Maine!

With Covid-19 derailing IRW's plans to celebrate Maine's bicentennial last year with a book-centered program around Rodman Philbrick's *The Young Man and the Sea*, we belatedly marked this milestone in July. Children read the book and joined in a series of events, such as an art workshop with fine artist and children's book illustrator Rebekah Raye, a book discussion and a presentation with the author. This program was funded in part by the Maine Arts Commission and the Lynam Trust.



# LOOKING BACK – 15 YEARS OF IRW

In 2006, Jan traveled with author Toni Buzzeo to Swan’s Island Elementary School, Frenchboro School and the Northeast Harbor Library for the first official set of IRW program. This would be the first of thousands of IRW’s book-inspired programs since we became an official nonprofit organization 15 years ago. From islands 21 miles out to sea, to the easternmost city in the country, IRW’s programs have brought thousands of Maine children together with books and the people who create them. Take a look back at IRW’s milestones over the past 15 years!



## Piper Curtin

*Piper Curtin, a senior at St. Lawrence University in Canton, N.Y., spent May and June interning at IRW. From creating promotional videos, editing book reviews, designing a virtual program, organizing books and more, it was a joy to have Piper with us this summer. Here, she reflects on her time at IRW.*

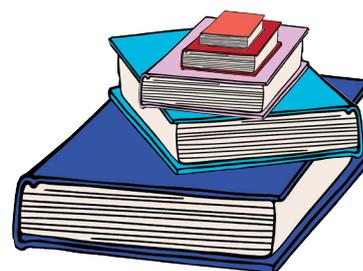
My time at IRW has been, in a word, educational. The overwhelming feeling has been joy, and the state in which I have found myself most commonly is a combination of awe and playful creation. I knew I would love my internship when at our first meeting Jan told me to feel free to come in, grab an office and put my feet up on the desk. Things only got better as I transcribed videos of my co-workers gushing about adorable children and compassionate illustrators. I can say with certainty that I have learned something new every day. I have learned about the island I am starting to call home, the people who live on it and the people who live around it. I have learned about endpapers and the gutter and front matter of picture books. I became reunited with my love for Eric Carle, who sadly passed away during my time here.

Just like everywhere else, IRW is a place of constant change, moving and shifting in order to meet the needs of the communities they serve. Due to Covid-19 I was unable to travel to any of the schools that IRW works with, but I was able to send my virtual self to multiple schools via Zoom. I learned about how Russ Cox creates his characters, I saw Calef Brown create a poem with the help of fourth graders and I got to hear and see Matt Myers’ new book, *Dino Grow*.

To call IRW magical would only be an understatement. The way in which children become excited about the books IRW brings into their lives is unmatched. Not only does IRW get kids excited about writing and reading, but they excited me as well. I am truly grateful for the reminder that writing can and should be fun, that poems can rhyme and drawing should be messy. Thank you to Alison, Taylor, Bev, Lisa and especially Jan for an internship experience that not only prepared me for “the real world” but also re-introduced me to the many worlds inside children’s books.

## Summer Booklist

This summer’s booklist is packed with 30 great reads for all ages thanks to our wonderful volunteers who read and review each and every one. Former IRW intern and rising Colby College senior Tilly Peck’s work in culling and editing the list was invaluable! Thanks to everyone who made this booklist possible.



## Fall 2021 Programs



This fall, the majority of IRW programs will be virtual due to the remaining uncertainty around Covid-19 in our partner schools. Several of our schools are ready and hungry for in-person visits and we are happy to bring Sophie Blackall to North Haven and Vinalhaven schools and to the Islesboro Community Center for *Hello Lighthouse* related programs. Abdi Nor Iftin will also be visiting in person at Charlotte Elementary School. We will be using his memoir, *Call Me American*, with the 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders and will design some age-appropriate activities around related picture books for the younger students.

Jonesport and Pembroke schools will be diving deep across all grade levels into Kevin Hawkes' popular title, *Weslandia*. Children will explore and map their own communities, do some design thinking around a future real or imagined town, and learn artistic technique from Kevin. Older students will have an opportunity to mentor their younger schoolmates and practice their leadership skills.

Six of our partner schools, Beals, Edmunds, Ella Lewis, Lubec, Milbridge, and Sipayik have opted to participate in Book Groups with Lauren Wolk, Gary Schmidt, and Anne Sibley O'Brien. The 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade students will engage in a Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) discussion around the book covers before diving deep to explore the worlds of depression era Maine and North Korea. Writing workshops will allow students to hone their creative writing skills.

Whiting Village, Trenton, Woodland, and Pembroke all have classes enrolled in IRW's Getting the Right Start program, expanding on our multi-layered approach to reading picture books that uses VTS at its core. Beals, Charlotte, Pembroke, and Vinalhaven teachers are scheduled for IRW-sponsored trainings with the Watershed Collaborative, the branch of VTS that focuses on broad dissemination and expanded application of VTS in the classroom, adding the next layer to their practice.

– Alison Johnson, Director of School Programs



## A Note from Board President Debra Lay

Covid-19's attempt to derail the good work of so many organizations was a constant challenge in 2020. The talent and drive of IRW's team was no match, however, and all things Covid were met with fortitude and resilience. 2020 will forever be the year of change. Change, in terms of how we met our mission – with strength and perseverance. I want to congratulate Executive Director Jan Coates and IRW's outstanding team who forged ahead, adjusting to a constantly-changing educational landscape. Our staff managed to maintain their focus and sense of team as they worked virtually and at the office, while observing social distancing and Covid-19 precautionary protocols. Our Board is ever thankful for the resilience and dedication of each member of the staff, which allowed for the continuation of outreach to our partner schools, increased professional development for teaching professionals, and ongoing communication with our loyal supporters.

IRW's elasticity over the last 18 months has influenced our work as a Board. The three main pillars of the Strategic Plan, visibility, sustainability, and bridging, require patience and flexibility as we hit the reset button and begin again. Reflections on what has taken place throughout 2020 have led to our collective embrace of reprioritization. Our Governance Committee will continue to grow its roots and bring us into 2021 with determined growth. We have broadened our Board with four invested individuals who have already brought an abundance of talent to our operations. As we continue to revisit our visibility, sustainability and bridging goals, we examine their pre-COVID meaning, their present status, and future in our planning. We continually ask ourselves; What are the lessons we've learned? What has changes for the better? What needs our attention? and How do we redefine "normal"? I trust that collectively our Board has the ability to emerge and fortify our strategic plan while supporting Jan and the IRW staff wholeheartedly.

Through their tireless efforts, the IRW staff have ensured that our mission has weathered the storm of 2020. This is only possible when both the financial and trusting support of individuals and foundation donors work synergistically with our team. Thank you for ensuring our precious programs continue to stretch imaginations, encourage curiosity and develop creative and reflective thinking in children we serve throughout Maine.



## TREASURER'S REPORT

In 2020, IRW's financial position remained strong due to prudent fiscal management, the receipt of a federal Payroll Protection Program loan and the loyal and generous support from individuals and foundations.

We ended the year with expenses below and income slightly above our revised budget of \$408,400, which was reduced in mid-2020 among Covid-19 concerns. Expenses totaled \$386,538 for the year with 68 percent spent on programs, 19 percent on general administration and 13 percent on fundraising. Increases in health insurance were offset by the absence of in-person school visits. This

significantly reduced the amount expensed for school programs in 2020 compared to 2019. We were pleased to be able to retain all staff during the pandemic.

The accounting firm of Horton, McFarland & Veysey of Ellsworth were retained to review our financial records and to prepare our statements and required 990 Report filing for 2020. Copies are available in our office for your review upon request.



Allison Poteet, Treasurer

## Financial Summary

### Summary Profit & Loss - Fiscal Year 2020 (with 2019 comparison)

	Jan - Dec 2019	Jan - Dec 2020
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grants	129,924	103,455
Contributions	341,413	317,112
Other (net)	13,778	8,026
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$485,115</b>	<b>\$428,593</b>
<b>EXPENSE</b>		
Programs	303,829	262,322
Fundraising	66,856	51,794
G&A	68,676	72,422
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$439,361</b>	<b>\$386,538</b>

### Summary Balance Sheet (As of July 8, 2021)

<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	\$349,504
Fixed Assets	\$437
Long Term Assets	\$61,332
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$411,273</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Payroll Liabilities	\$37
Other Current Liabilities	\$48,646
<i>(includes a PPP loan of 47,898)</i>	
Total Liabilities	\$48,646
Total Equity	\$362,627
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Equity</b>	<b>\$411,273</b>

## 2020 Donors

Anonymous (2)  
Virginia Agar  
Trudi & William Allcott  
Barbara & Mac Allen  
Marlys & Charles Amos  
Elly & Sandy Andrews  
Meredith & Philip Anson  
Ausolus Trust  
Mary & Dave Bagley  
Hilary Baker-Jennings  
Vicki & Peter Bartholow  
Judith Bassnett  
Jane Batzell & Bob Cleaves  
Molly & John Beard  
Lillian Andrews & Gordon Beck  
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Sylvia Blake  
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LeaAnn & Chris Crowley  
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Pamela & Doug Diehl  
Julie DiNapoli  
Elke & Steve Dorr  
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Rodney Eason  
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Benjamin Emory  
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John Favour  
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Ann Grinnell  
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Sarah & Fred Irons  
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Lauren Jennings & George Baker  
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Kathryn Lasky & Chris Knight  
Catherine Lastavica  
Liz Laverack & John Jacobson  
Debra & Doug Lay  
Debra & Paul LeBlanc  
Theresa LeBlanc  
Library of Congress Prize  
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Beth Longcope  
Susan & Scott Low  
Jackie & John Lowe  
Lubec Consolidated School

Ann Luginbuhl  
Pat Lundholm  
Taylor & Donny Mace  
Jeannette MacFadden  
Kate Macko  
Emily McDaniel  
Maine Community Foundation,  
Killick Fund  
Maine Community Foundation,  
Yoakum Fund  
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Pamela Manice  
Maude March  
Anne Mazlish  
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Mimi McConnell  
Linda & Clement McGillicuddy  
Nancy McKelvy  
Lois & Robert McKown  
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Rebecca & Stephen Milliken  
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Nancy O'Connor & Steve Rush  
Linda & Eliot Paine  
Pam Painter  
Quentin Palfrey  
Susan & Robert Peck  
Judy Perkins  
Pfizer Foundation Matching Gifts  
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Polly Pierce  
Carole Plenty  
Anne & Bruce Pomeroy  
Allison & Dan Poteet  
Nancy & Dan Poteet  
Judith Goodwin Pott  
Kathy & George Putnam  
Bambi Putnam  
Hope Putnam  
Scott Redmon  
Geri Reynolds  
Louise Riemer  
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Susan & David Rockefeller  
Sydney Roberts Rockefeller  
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Julia Schloss  
Cynthia Livingston & Hank Schmelzer  
Alexandra & Richard Simis  
John Simonds & Dan Swilley  
Rachel Singh  
Charlotte & Seth Singleton  
Mara Solomon-Auger  
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Roberta Sprague  
Christopher Stevenson  
Val & Cliff Storms  
Paul Strickland

Carol Sullivan  
Swallowfield  
Melissa Sweet  
Patsy Taylor  
Jean & Tim Taylor  
Abby Moffat  
Mia Thompson  
Alexis Toegel  
Edith Toegel  
Barbara Tongue  
Tynan Family Charitable Trust  
Norma Vela  
Robin & Paul Vermeylen  
Peggy Vettese & Ed Benz  
Paula & Howard Vogel  
Ann & Fred Walker  
Candace Walworth  
Courtney Waring  
Heather & Karl Watras  
Jacqueline Weaver  
Cathy & Jim Willey  
Debbie & Jock Williams  
Dennis Wint  
Cass Wright

### FOUNDATIONS

C.F. Adams Charitable Trust  
Catherine Johnson Fund  
Diana Davis Spencer Foundation  
Florence V. Burden Foundation  
Leonard C. & Mildred F.  
Ferguson Foundation  
Maine Arts Commission  
Maine Community Foundation,  
Washington County Fund  
Onion Foundation  
Sumner Scholarship  
Endowment Foundation, Inc.

### GIFTS GIVEN IN MEMORY OF

Helen Louise Brown  
Jennie Cline  
Alida & Don Coates  
Triscuit Coates  
David Dean  
Redmond Finney  
George Putnam  
Nancy Putnam  
Mary Ann Tynan

### GIFTS GIVEN IN HONOR OF

Lillian Andrews  
Catherine Carter  
Jan Coates  
Jean Evans  
Maureen Jennings  
Taylor Mace  
Susan\* & Alan Miller  
Pam Painter  
Anne Pomeroy  
Peggy Vettese



\* Deceased