

2013 Michigan Reads! program
WGVU Interview
Wednesday, September 4th

Presenter: Karren Reish, Library Grants Coordinator

Questions:

1. What is Michigan Reads! and how is it different than other "one book" programs?

The *Michigan Reads!* program highlights children's and family literacy, which is at the heart of a child's success in school. The program recognizes the importance of reading and sharing books with children, especially toddlers through early elementary school age children. These years are a vital time for children to learn to read by seeing it modeled. The program also works with libraries because we recognize the vital role of libraries play by providing access to quality books, programs and services to children and families. Experience with and access to books lays the foundation for reading and school success.

Another way the program is unique is that we focus on Michigan by selecting a picture book from a Michigan author, which allows us to have author tour to both schools and public libraries. We then bring as many people and children into the program as possible by developing a full range of materials and activities for local groups, providing as many materials as possible in print for schools, libraries and early childhood groups to use.

2. This program aims to promote early childhood literacy. Why is it so important that parents and caregivers read regularly to young children?

Literacy is more than having books and it starts well before school. Research shows children have a better chance of becoming fully literate adults if reading is encouraged in the home, especially as toddlers. Children model what they see around them and learn to value what adults around them value. Being read to teaches the child that written words have meaning and how to physically use printed text – left to right, etc. When parents and caregivers read to children, it gives the kids significant exposure to and practice in

learning what words are and what reading is, not just exposure to books, which lets them understand and learn more quickly in school.

Michigan Reads! seeks to raise awareness of that intergenerational nature of literacy and the value of sharing books with children. The opportunity to set children on a successful path starts well before they begin formal schooling.

3. Tell us about this year's Michigan Reads! book and why it was chosen.

Woolbur” by Michigan author Leslie Helakoski and illustrated by Lee Harper is the featured title for the 2013. In “Woolbur”, the pages are full of movement and activity as a lamb named Woolbur finds creative ways to go about his day. When Woolbur is asked to do things, he finds original ways to accomplish everyday tasks and shares his ideas with others. The story, the language, the joyfulness of Woolbur's actions, and the wonderful illustrations all come together to make Woolbur a go to book for both children and older readers as they learn how to go about their own day.

4. Who is involved in the program, and what kinds of activities will they be doing?

We send the MI Reads program materials to each public library building, to each public and private school with a K-2 classroom, to each tribal library, to each Headstart program and to each Great Start Readiness program. This year we have a new pilot. We are working with the groups that train and certify day care providers. In total, we send out approximately 5,500 kits. Each group or classroom can plan their own activities, but we provide the book, an extensive programming guide with activities for a range of ages based on the book, bookmarks, stickers, etc. and encourage reading programs for families and children through September and October. We also arrange visits from the author or illustrator at 12 sites throughout the state. We encourage schools and libraries to have local media people read the book at children’s programs in their community on the official launch day of September 9th. This year, the Lions Club of Michigan is partnering with the program by volunteering to read, assist with activities and do vision checks in their communities.

5. Is the Michigan Reads! program applicable to community issues other than childhood literacy?

Yes! Childhood literacy is important in and of itself, but it is encouraged by promoting parenting skills and intergenerational activities and by providing children an environment rich in varied experiences. The theme of this year's book also encourages children to be innovative.

6. How is Library of Michigan able to provide Michigan Reads! materials to all of these locations around the state?

We are able to continue the Michigan Reads program through generous sponsorship from Target. Target is interested in children's literacy programs and through this program, they have been a great partner for Michigan. We also have assistance from the Library of Michigan Foundation, HarperCollins Publisher and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

7. How can our listeners and their children take part in Michigan Reads! and find resources to help get kids engaged and excited about books?

Listeners can contact their local public library to ask about programs they may be doing and also their elementary schools, Headstart or Great Start programs. Here at the Library of Michigan, we have the MI Reads web site at www.michigan.gov/michiganreads. The site has a wealth of information, including reading lists, book suggestions, activities and materials for parents and caregivers, as well as teachers. Online versions of materials from previous years' programs are still available so if you prefer a different book, you might like one of the earlier titles.

8. Michigan Reads! takes place during September and October, which is also Library Card Sign-Up Month. What role do libraries play in supporting early childhood literacy?

Public libraries are one of the few places that support early childhood literacy for children in the community with appropriate materials and programs before they enter school. These programs and materials at your local library are free, year round and available to all. People who take advantage of the staff expertise and the materials can give their children a good beginning with literacy and general academic skills. And, children who start school already familiar with reading are able to get the most out of school and are much less likely to fall behind academically. From the kids' point of view, the most important part is that the library is a lot of fun!