



A literacy program helping incarcerated parents stay connected with their children

## IN THE NEWS

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"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope." —Kofi Annan

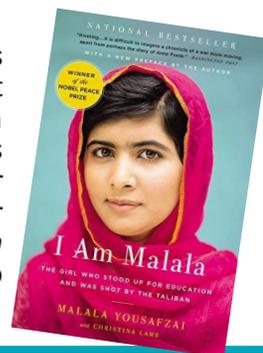


### She wasn't a reader, but ...

One of our long-time inmate participants — we'll call him Robert — has two children and two step-children. The first time our facilitator met Robert he chose books for three of the children but said his fifteen year-old step-daughter wasn't a reader. The facilitator suggested that, although the teen has not enjoyed reading in the past, she might be disappointed if the other three siblings received mail and she did not — so Robert chose a book from our young adult book cart to send.

Apparently, the books Robert has sent to his step-daughter over several months have been well received. He reported to our facilitator that she now has a bookcase in her room for her book collection. And recently, when she was shopping with her family, she asked to stop at a bookstore to look for more.

**Remain in Touch** not only has introduced her to reading but strengthened the bond between her and her step dad. She has also looked to Robert for suggestions on what to read for a school book report. *I Am Malala* is the book that came to the rescue.



### Reading Aloud

Reading aloud is one of the most important things parents can do with their children. Reading aloud builds many important foundational skills, introduces vocabulary, provides a model of fluent, expressive reading, and helps children recognize what reading for pleasure is all about.

<https://www.startwithabook.org/reading-aloud>

### It's all in the bookmark

As reported in our last newsletter, **Remain in Touch** has become creative in serving incarcerated parents when access to the jails is temporarily disrupted. If inmates are not able to record readings or greetings with our facilitators, they may still select books for us to send to their children. To aid in the selection process, we have provided booklists for every age group featuring color images of the book covers and descriptions of the content.

We provide forms for the inmates on which they write the name of the book and the child to whom it should be sent. Included on the form is a rectangular space to write a personal message. Remain in Touch receives the

previewed form from the jail administrator, and then laminates the parent's hand-written message — making it into a bookmark. The bookmark is placed in the book that is mailed to the child. Here is a sampling of some of the messages:

"I love you the mostest!"

"Our little genius ... A book to take camping"

"I am so proud of you sounding out your words and learning to spell. Keep up the greatness and know I love you so much!"

"I love you to the moon and back."

"I love you with all of my soul, heart, mind! So glad you love reading! Enjoy everything. Absorb everything."

"This is the book that got me reading when I was younger, give it a chance and I think you'd love it. I love you buddy."

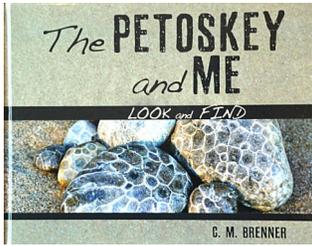
"I love you so much baby girl, Daddy will be home soon, Merry Christmas, take care of Mommy for me."

"... when everything changes,  
I need a bookmark ~  
I need you ..."

— John Geddes, *A Familiar Rain*

- Children develop literacy skills long before they read.
- Young children who are read to regularly have a larger vocabulary, a stronger foundation of language awareness, and literacy skills at a younger age.
- Children who are read to regularly by family members experience social-emotional gains and an increased likelihood of overall school success.

**Local books, local bookstores, local treasures**

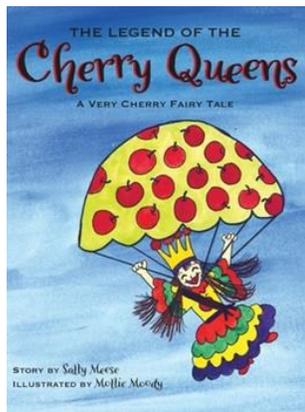


Local author Cortney Brenner generously donated 36 copies of her hardcover book *The Petoskey and Me* to **Remain in Touch**. This is a “seek and find” book in which the reader searches each page for the elusive Petoskey stone. Accompanying the

photographs is a rhyming story of the Petoskey stone and where it is found in our region. The photos are beautiful and it is so much fun! It is a welcome addition to our book cart for children 0-12 years of age. Thank you, Cortney!

There are treasures to be found when you're looking on the ground!

Author Sally Meese and local artist/illustrator Mollie Moody, creators of the book *The Legend of the Cherry Queens: A Very Cherry Fairy Tale*, are dedicating the proceeds of their book to non-profits that focus on literacy. Earlier this year Remain in Touch was among the chosen recipients, receiving proceeds of \$250. We are grateful for this generous gift, and for Sally and Mollie as they help to boost children’s literacy in our county.



In 2022, 103 books were donated to **Remain in Touch** through our partnerships with Brilliant Books in Traverse City and Bay Books in Suttons Bay. That’s a combined value of \$1,411! Wow!



Thank you!

**Brilliant Books** and **Bay Books** continue to be treasured supporters of Remain in Touch by featuring us periodically and offering a 20% discount on every book purchased for our program. Complete age-appropriate booklists for our **0-12** and **13-18** programs are always available in-store or online at Brilliant Books in Traverse City and in-store at Bay Books in Suttons Bay. We are ever-grateful for these partners!



and



**We are grateful**

- For **all the individuals** who generously contribute to our literacy program
- For **Keswick United Methodist Church** in Suttons Bay for once again featuring Remain in Touch as its charity of choice and donating \$225 in October 2022
- For the **Green Brick Foundation** for its unsolicited, continued, generous support of \$500
- For a substantial \$1,000 grant from **Benzie County Community Chest** received in February 2023
- For **matching funds** generated by individual contributors through Rotary Charities and the Community Foundation, and the Blackbaud Giving Fund



As of February 20th, Amazon **ended** its AmazonSmile charity program. Thank you to everyone

who made purchases through the AmazonSmile program and named Remain in Touch as the beneficiary. All those pennies added up!

Visit our [website](#) for:

- a complete list of our partners & supporters
- the latest news about Remain in Touch
- a description of our program
- numerous ways that you can help
- secure online donation via PayPal
- a link to our complete booklists for ages 0-12 and 13-18 at Brilliant Books

**Donate**

Your generous support provides hope for incarcerated parents and their children! Please invest in a better future by donating online at [www.remainintouch.org](http://www.remainintouch.org) or make your check payable to *Remain in Touch* and mail it to:

Remain in Touch  
P.O. Box 553

Suttons Bay, Michigan 49682

Ph: 231-499-0606

Email: [contactus@remainintouch.org](mailto:contactus@remainintouch.org)

Thanks!

