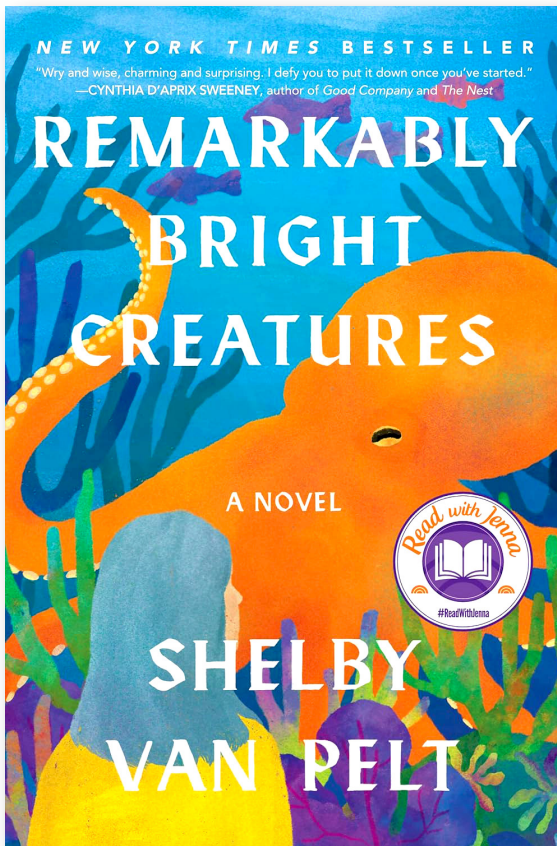




**Read Together**  
**Palm Beach County**  
One Book, One Community

# Read Together

## Events & Discussion Guide



# Read Together Palm Beach County “one book, one community”



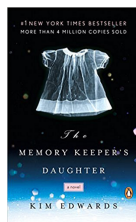
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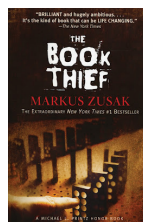
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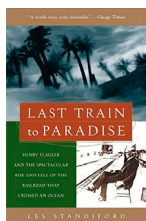
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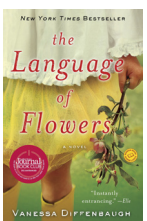
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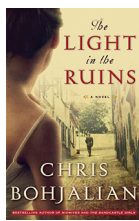
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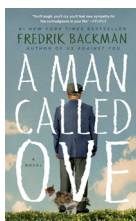
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2014



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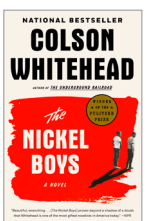
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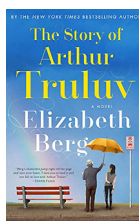
2018



2019



2020



2022



2024



**PURPOSE:** The Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County is working to involve thousands of adults throughout Palm Beach County in reading the same book at the same time. This community reading campaign will entice adults who can read, but often don't, to get involved in the habit of reading again. It will also promote community dialogue and engagement as citizens gather together to discuss key themes.

**HISTORY:** Based on the success of similar campaigns in Seattle and Chicago, the Campaign Coordinating Committee conducted Read Together Palm Beach County biannually from 2002 to 2016. Building on the excitement, momentum and success of the 2016 campaign, the Literacy Coalition and the Read Together Committee decided to coordinate the initiative annually, when possible. In each campaign, thousands of adults read and discuss the chosen book.



*Dr. Regine Bataille, Literacy Coalition Board President,  
Sharon Hill, Read Together Campaign Chair and  
Aurora Arthay, Palm Beach County Library System Deputy Director*

## **2024 Read Together PBC Book Selection Committee:**

Laurie Gildan, Chair  
Stacy Alesi  
Valrie Martin Buchanan  
Len Gray  
Sharon Hill  
Tina Maura  
Telsula Morgan  
Deborah Nix  
Lindsay Reinhart  
Carol Rose  
Janel Williams

## **Campaign Committee:**

Sharon Hill, Chair  
Aurora Arthay  
Craig Clark  
Municipal Library Directors  
Carol Rose

**COPIES OF THE BOOK ARE AVAILABLE  
AT LOCAL LIBRARIES AND THROUGH THE  
LITERACY COALITION FOR A \$20 DONATION.**

# About the Author

## Shelby Van Pelt



Photo © Karen Forsythe

Born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, Shelby Van Pelt lives in the suburbs of Chicago with her family. *Remarkably Bright Creatures* is her first novel. She is a longtime flash fiction and short story writer, and has had several collections published by independent presses.

### About *Remarkably Bright Creatures*

**For fans of *A Man Called Ove*, a luminous debut novel about a widow's unlikely friendship with a giant Pacific octopus reluctantly residing at the local aquarium—and the truths she finally uncovers about her son's disappearance 30 years ago.**

After Tova Sullivan's husband died, she began working the night shift at the Sowell Bay Aquarium, mopping floors and tidying up. Keeping busy has always helped her cope, which she's been doing since her eighteen-year-old son, Erik, mysteriously vanished on a boat in the Puget Sound over 30 years ago.

As she works, Tova becomes acquainted with curmudgeonly Marcellus, a giant Pacific octopus living at the aquarium. Marcellus knows more than anyone can imagine, but wouldn't dream of lifting one of his eight tentacles for his human captors—until he forms an unlikely friendship with Tova.

Ever the detective, Marcellus deduces what happened the night Tova's son disappeared. As his affection for Tova grows, Marcellus must use every trick his old, invertebrate body can muster to unearth the truth for her before it's too late.

Charming, compulsively readable, and full of wit, Shelby Van Pelt's debut novel is a beautiful exploration of friendship, reckoning, and hope – a reminder that sometimes taking a hard look at the past can help uncover a future that once felt impossible.

*REMARKABLY BRIGHT CREATURES* (Ecco, 2022) was an instant *New York Times* Bestseller and a *Read With Jenna* Today Show book club pick. In 2023, she was awarded the Heartland Prize for Fiction and the McLaughlin–Esstman–Stearns First Novel Prize from The Writer’s Center. The book has sold over two million copies, been reprinted 30 times and spent, in aggregate, more than a year on the *New York Times* Hardcover Bestseller list.

## Praise for the Book

“Shelby Van Pelt has done the impossible. She’s created a perfect story with imperfect characters, that is so heartwarming, so mysterious, and so completely absorbing, you won’t be able to put it down because when you’re not reading this book you’ll be hugging it.”

— **Jamie Ford**, author of *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet*

“*Remarkably Bright Creatures* is the rarest of feats: a book that manages to be wry and wise, charming and surprising, and features one of the most intriguing and satisfying characters I’ve encountered in fiction in a very long time—Marcellus the Octopus. I don’t know how Shelby Van Pelt managed to make this uncommon tale sing so beautifully, but sing it does, and I defy you to put it down once you’ve started.”

— **Cynthia D’Aprix Sweeney**, author of *Good Company* and *The Nest*

**PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE FINALE**

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.**  
Duncan Theatre at Palm Beach State College, Lake Worth

**Featuring Shelby Van Pelt, author of**  
*Remarkably Bright Creatures*

**This event is free of charge, but donations are suggested and reservations are required.**

**REGISTER ON [LITERACYPBC.ORG](https://www.literacypbc.org)**  
**561-279-9103**

# Reading Group Questions

1. What kind of person do you think Marcellus would be if he were human? What qualities do Marcellus and Tova both share that make this remarkable friendship a success?
2. Each of these characters—animal and human—need each other in a specific way, even if they don't realize this at first. What qualities bind these characters to each other? Are they connected by loss, grief, or something else?
3. On page 9, Tova empathizes with the sharks in the big aquarium tank, musing that she “understands what it means to never be able to stop moving, lest you find yourself unable to breathe.” Why do you think she feels so compelled to keep busy? What would happen if she simply stopped?
4. In contrast to how Tova keeps busy, Cameron emerges as a character who deals with grief by remaining stagnant, refusing to even try to reach his potential, much to the frustration of those who care about him. Why do you think he sabotages himself? Have you ever had someone like this in your life?
5. Marcellus is extremely smart-smarter than any human he encounters. Have you had encounters with animals—octopuses or otherwise—who demonstrated surprising levels of intelligence, emotional or otherwise? Have you felt “seen” by an animal or felt a relationship with an animal deepen upon earning their trust?
6. *Remarkably Bright Creatures* takes place in a Pacific Northwest coastal town in the recent past. The watery Puget Sound setting plays a major role in the plot, but how else does the setting inform the novel? How do you think the novel would be different if it were set somewhere like Arizona or Minnesota?
7. Marcellus remarks on page 59 that “fingerprints are like keys, with their specific shape. I remember all keys, too.” From the house key Tova loses to the ring of keys Marcellus finds at the bottom of the sea, the novel is filled with various types of keys. What do you think keys symbolize in this novel?



**8.** Tova reflects on her experience caring for her husband through his illness and eventual passing, and with no surviving family to do the same for her, she worries about being a burden on her friends as she ages.

How do you view the role of community and family in caring for older people? How did Tova's views on this change throughout the book, and why do you think they did?

**9.** In the middle of the novel, on page 177, Cameron says to Tova, "conscience does make cowards of us all." What do you think he means by this statement? Do you agree with this?

**10.** Tova's Swedish Dalo Horses are some of her most treasured possessions. Why do you think that is? Are there heirlooms in your family that carry a similar significance?

**11.** This novel explores different characters who are faced with major choices: they can open themselves up to something new and take an unexpected, daring opportunity or they can continue on as they have been. Have you ever faced a moment in your life where a critical choice could change everything? Did you take the leap or not?

**12.** Marcellus's life in captivity is much different than the life of an octopus in the wild—and eventually, Terry reveals that Marcellus was rescued from the sea after a life-threatening injury. Aquariums play an important role in education and conservation but some people view keeping animals, especially intelligent ones, in captivity with skepticism. What do you think?

**13.** In the last few pages of the novel, Tova and Cameron realize how they are truly connected. What do you imagine they are doing a year from the novel's end?

# Community Events

**SEPTEMBER 24 – OCTOBER 8, 2024**

**Creating a Book Club**

**Presented by Lake Park Public Library**

529 Park Avenue, Lake Park, FL 33403

Join our Book Club to discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. For information, visit <https://www.lakeparkflorida.gov/Government/Departments/Lake-Park-Public-Library> or call 561-881-3330.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2024, 1:00 P.M.**

**Adult Book Club**

**Presented by Lantana Public Library**

205 W Ocean Avenue, Lantana, FL 33462

The adult book club is reading and will discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Email Jane Smith at [jsmith@lantana.org](mailto:jsmith@lantana.org) to register and reserve a copy of the book, while available.

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2024, 1:00-3:00 P.M.**

**Happy Little Paintings**

**Presented by Mandel Public Library of West Palm Beach**

411 Clematis Street, 2nd Floor, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Join local artist Nickie Hennevelt and find the joy of painting while discussing the *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. We will use acrylics and follow Bob Ross to produce an ocean scene. Registration is required one week before: visit [wpbcitylibrary.org](http://wpbcitylibrary.org) or call 561-868-7701.

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2024, 12:30-1:30 P.M.**

***Shapeshifters: Octopus Superpowers***

**Presented by Lake Park Public Library**

529 Park Avenue, Lake Park, FL 33403

Enjoy watching *Shapeshifters: Octopus Superpowers* and a Kahoot game with questions about the show. For information, visit <https://www.lakeparkflorida.gov/Government/Departments/Lake-Park-Public-Library> or call 561-881-3330.

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2024, 6:00-7:00 P.M.**

***Secrets of the Octopus***

**Presented by Lake Park Public Library**

529 Park Avenue, Lake Park, FL 33403

Enjoy watching *Secrets of the Octopus* and a Kahoot game after watching the show. For information, visit <https://www>.



lakeparkflorida.gov/Government/Departments/Lake-Park-Public-Library or call 561-881-3330.

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2024, 1:30-3:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Main Library**

3650 Summit Blvd., West Palm Beach, FL 33406

Book discussion of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Register: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2024, 1:30-3:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Greenacres Branch**

3750 Jog Road, Greenacres, FL 33467

We will discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Copies of the book are available. Register: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 25, 2024, 11:00 A.M.**

**My Octopus Teacher Screening**

**Presented by North Palm Beach Library**

303 Anchorage Drive, North Palm Beach, FL 33408

Join us for a special screening of *My Octopus Teacher* and enjoy this documentary that explores the captivating world of octopuses while connecting with this year's book. Register: <https://www.village-npb.org/FormCenter/Library-3/Virtual-Program-Sign-Up-74>

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2024, 2:00-3:00 P.M.**

***Remarkably Bright Creatures* and a Craft**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Acreage Branch**

5801 Orange Blvd., Loxahatchee, FL 33470

We'll discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures* while creating decoupage seashells! Registration opens October 20: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2024, 6:00 P.M.**

**Sunset Book Club**

**Presented by Lantana Public Library**

205 W Ocean Avenue, Lantana, FL 33462

Take advantage of the early fall sunset and cozy up with hot chocolate and tea during a discussion with other book enthusiasts. This month, we are reading *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Email Bailey Maxwell at [bmaxwell@lantana.org](mailto:bmaxwell@lantana.org) to register.

*Continues on page 10*

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2024, 2:00–3:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Virtual – Talking Books for the Blind**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library System**

Join us to discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Registration opens October 23. For information and registration: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2024, 3:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Club Discussion**

**Presented by Delray Beach Public Library**

Auditorium, 100 West Atlantic Ave., Delray Beach, FL 33444

Join us to discuss *Remarkably Bright Creatures* with discussion leader, Vice Mayor Juli Casale. **561-266-0194**

**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2024, 3:00–4:00 P.M.**

**Animal Intelligence: A Case for Veganism**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Acreage Branch**

Online Event

Learn about the intricate minds of animals and the moral implications of our dietary choices. Includes additional readings and documentaries. Registration opens October 26: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024, 1:00 P.M.**

**Conversations, Connections, and Literacy–The Read Together Edition**

**Presented by Riviera Beach Public Library**

2129 North Congress Avenue, Riviera Beach, FL 33404

Open forum conversation discussing *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Registration is required by calling **561-845-4195** or email [Library@rivierabeach.org](mailto:Library@rivierabeach.org)

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024, 6:30 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Club Discussion**

**Presented by Barnes & Noble, Boynton Beach Store**

333 N. Congress Avenue, Boynton Beach, FL 33426

We will be discussing *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Visit: <https://stores.barnesandnoble.com/store/2874>

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024, 3:00–4:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Gardens Branch**

11303 Campus Drive, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33410

We will be discussing *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Register: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024, 5:00 P.M.**

**Watercolor Sip & Paint**

**Presented by Lantana Public Library**

205 W Ocean Avenue, Lantana, FL 33462

Enjoy craft mocktails and follow along with our paint instructor to create a beautiful watercolor image of an octopus in honor of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Email Kelsey Hamm, at [khamm@lantana.org](mailto:khamm@lantana.org) to register. All materials are provided.

**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024, 5:30-6:30 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Presented by Lake Park Public Library**

529 Park Avenue, Lake Park, FL 33403

Join in a book discussion of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. For information, visit <https://www.lakeparkflorida.gov/Government/Departments/Lake-Park-Public-Library> or call 561-881-3330.

**FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2024, 2:00-3:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Book Discussion**

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, West Boynton Branch**

9451 Jog Road, Boynton Beach, FL 33437

Join in a book discussion of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Registration opens November 1: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

**MONDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2024, 6:00 P.M.**

**Read Together PBC Finale with the Author**

**Presented by Literacy Coalition of Palm Beach County**

**Duncan Theatre at Palm Beach State College**

4200 S Congress Ave., Lake Worth Beach, FL 33461

Please join us for the Read Together Finale, featuring Shelby Van Pelt, the *New York Times* Bestselling author of *Remarkably Bright Creatures*. Register at <https://RTPBC2024.givesmart.com>

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024, 5:30 P.M.**

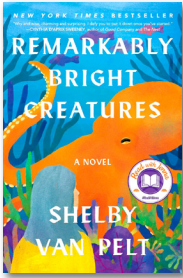
**Painting & Prose: Creating Art Inspired by *Remarkably Bright Creatures***

**Presented by Palm Beach County Library, Wellington Branch**

1951 Royal Fern Dr., Wellington, FL 33414

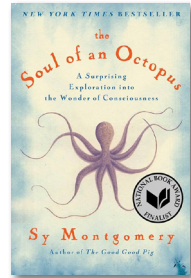
Details to come. For information and registration: <https://pbclibrary.bibliocommons.com/v2/events>

# Other Octopus Adventures



Shelby Van Pelt's *Remarkably Bright Creatures* has created excitement with its popularity and staying power. If you're a fan of the octopus, do not miss out on learning more by reading or viewing these additional titles:

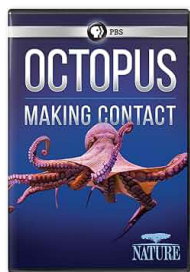
*The Soul of an Octopus: A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness*, is an international bestseller written by Sy Montgomery. Van Pelt has said she used this book as a reference resource for her book.



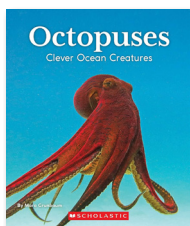
Montgomery also published the book, *Secrets of the Octopus*, along with Warren Carlyle, founder of *OctoNation*, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire wonder of the ocean by educating the world about octopuses. This book is a companion to the National Geographic television special by executive producer James Cameron and narrated by Paul Rudd. This beautifully illustrated book explores the alluring underwater world of the octopus – a creature that resembles an alien lifeform, but whose behavior has earned it a reputation as one of the most intelligent animals on the planet.

Up next for *Remarkably Bright Creatures*, Netflix is developing a film adaptation of the book and in talks with Sally Field to star and Olivia Newman to direct.

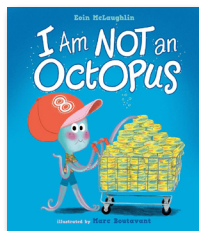
The documentary film, *My Octopus Teacher*, won the 2021 Academy Award for Best Documentary Feature and can be seen on Netflix. The story features a filmmaker who forges an unusual friendship with an octopus living in a South African kelp forest.



In the world of cephalopod research, a nature show on PBS looks at the extent to which these intelligent animals are individual personalities – able to recognize faces and interact with other individuals – all of which is an odd adaptation for an animal thought to live an asocial existence. Follow this science through the story of a pet octopus and its evolving relationship with the passionate American scientist studying it in nature in *Octopus: Making Contact*, produced by David Allen and available on PBS.



Young octopus fans can also enjoy reading and learning about these creatures in several children's books. In the Juvenile Non-Fiction section, check out *Octopuses: Clever Ocean Creatures* by Mara Grunbaum or the Juvenile Picture Book, *I Am Not an Octopus* by Eoin McLaughlin.



For more resources, cephalopod fun facts – and all things octopus, visit [OctoNation.com](http://OctoNation.com), also mentioned above. It is the official octopus fan club website. Visit [octonation.com](http://octonation.com) to learn more and explore through an education portal and an Octopedia, a cephalopod encyclopedia, making it easy to learn about the planet's most interesting creatures.

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### VOLUNTEER

You can volunteer to tutor an adult or child in need of literacy skills. There are also opportunities to help an adult learn English and/or prepare to take the GED exam. No experience is required as we will provide training.



### BOOK DRIVES

Organizations and individuals can conduct book drives for the Literacy Coalition. The collected books are shared with the children's literacy programs operated by the Literacy Coalition or distributed to partner agencies serving economically disadvantaged children. The Literacy Coalition received **12,105** books this year through book drives and donations from our generous community partners and individuals. Books are always needed for programs serving children up through the fifth grade.



### MAKE A DONATION

Your tax-deductible donation will help provide literacy services to adults, children and families who are working to achieve a better life by improving their literacy skills.



#### MAKE A BIGGER IMPACT

Donate long-term appreciated securities, including stocks, bonds, and mutual funds, directly to the Literacy Coalition. Compared with donating cash, or selling your appreciated securities and

contributing the after-tax proceeds, you may be able to automatically increase your gift to the Literacy Coalition and your tax deduction.



#### IMPACT FUTURE GENERATIONS

Consider an endowment gift to the Literacy Coalition that will allow us to sustain the impact in our community for future generations. Include the Literacy Coalition in your retirement plans, will, living trust or related planned giving methods allowing you to extend your legacy of literacy to future generations. Planned gifts – large and small – are a lasting way to help us continue the success we know today in helping families be successful in school and in life.

### READ TO A CHILD

Read together everyday. Point out print everywhere. Do not limit yourself to reading books with your child. Street signs and cereal boxes count too. Tell your child how much you enjoy reading with him or her. This attention lets them know they are special and loved.



### ATTEND AN EVENT

There are various events to attend throughout the year that support our literacy programs and initiatives. Events include LOOP for Literacy, the Love of Literacy Luncheon, and the Literacy Links Golf Tournament.



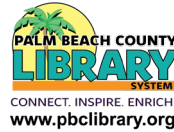
### PROMOTE LITERACY

You can support the mission of the Literacy Coalition and become an advocate for literacy. Share our posts and information on your social media accounts. Follow LiteracyPBC today!



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3651 Quantum Blvd., Boynton Beach, FL 33426  
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The Literacy Coalition is recognized in the top 1% of charities nationwide and has earned 15 consecutive 4-out-of-4 star ratings from Charity Navigator.



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