

Fort Collins neighborhoods check out free libraries

Kevin Duggan, kevin.duggan@coloradoan.com 12:12 p.m. MST, January 1, 2016

Joe Sakato, one of the country's few living Medal of Honor recipients, has passed away. He was 94. 9NEWS at 4 p.m. 12/3/15



(Photo: Kevin Duggan/The Coloradoan)

A little box of books can make a big difference in a neighborhood.

So say local supporters of an international movement that places free-standing lending libraries in public spaces and in front of homes. Passers-by take a book or leave a book at their leisure.

The concept has taken root in Fort Collins. There are no sign-out sheets, fees or fines. The idea is to provide a free exchange of books while promoting literacy and building community, said Nick Armstrong of the Maple Hill subdivision.

LITERACY: [Six of 10 Colorado homes live in 'book scarcity' \(/story/news/local/2014/06/24/six-colorado-homes-live-book-scarcity/11306857/\)](#)

Armstrong set up a library — a weather-proofed wooden box measuring 20-by-21-by-22 inches with a pitched roof and swinging door — in the 2300 block of Bar Harbor Drive in October.

"It's had some good turnover," he said. "There's some cool local knowledge stored in this little library."

Armstrong, a big supporter of childhood literacy, said a variety of materials have passed through the library, including novels, cookbooks, travel books and children's books. It can hold up to 30 books at a time.

The red and white box sits next to a trail that ties into the soon-to-be-constructed Maple Hill Park.

SPRING CREEK: [Decision on concerts will shape gardens' future \(/story/news/2015/12/27/decision-concerts-shape-gardens-future/77838796/\)](#)

Placing the structure required the cooperation of the area homeowners association and its landscaping company, which set the stout post that holds it up. Armstrong maintains the library and makes sure it is fully stocked.

Inspiration for the project came from the nonprofit organization Little Free Library, which sells kits for libraries and provides a registration system and other resources to participants.

According to the organization's website — littlefreelibrary.org (<http://littlefreelibrary.org>) — little libraries have been established in all 50 states and 70 countries since 2010. As of September, about 32,000 libraries were established around the world.

Sarah Cody, who lives in west Fort Collins, hopes to establish a library near the intersection of West Prospect Road and Banyan Drive on a piece of land owned by the city of Fort Collins stormwater utility.

The project is expected to be done in 2016, perhaps in coordination with a youth group, Cody stated in an email to the Coloradoan.

FORT COLLINS BOY: [Owner of lost money comes forward \(/story/news/2015/12/14/owner-lost-money-comes-forward/77299860/\)](#)

Cody, whose professional background is in childhood development and education, said she heard about Little Free Library a few years ago and was interested in the concept.

"I love the interaction that comes from community projects, and to be involved in a community project around the very important topic of literacy is so valuable," she stated.

City officials said they have no problem with placing a library on the site, which is crossed by a neighborhood trail, as long as it is maintained by residents and does not interfere with operations on the property.

Cody has run a summer reading club for area children for a couple of years. Getting books for the little library should not be a problem, she said.

The Poudre River Public Library District does not participate directly with little libraries but is supportive of the concept, said spokesperson Paula Watson-Lakamp.

GREEN: [Free home energy monitors available at city libraries \(/story/news/2015/12/24/free-home-energy-monitors-available-city-libraries/7777824/\)](#)

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<http://www.coloradoan.com/story/news/2015/1>

The district could help little libraries get books if they are needed through the nonprofit Poudre River Friends of the Library, she said.

Little Free Library lists 16 "charter" Fort Collins locations on its website. However, several others libraries around town are not registered with the organization.

Proprietors decorate libraries to suit their tastes. The Barking Beagle's Little Free Library in the 3200 block of Gunnison Drive features images of dog bones and a water bowl. Inside the tight, little building are dog treats as well as donated books.

Erik Hardy, who lives on West Oak Street near City Park, built his library using scrap wood as a winter project. The library is popular with nearby residents and is visited by people who live outside the neighborhood.

Hardy said he sees people check out the library four or five times a day. Some drop off books; others pick them up. Neighbors seem to take have taken "ownership" of the structure, he said, and have helped keep it stocked with a variety of interesting reading material.

Any neighborhood would benefit from having a little library, Hardy said.

"You'll really enjoy it and people will thank you for it," he said.

Building community is a primary goal behind the little library concept, Armstrong said. Toward that end, Armstrong said he would support placing libraries in city parks and other public spaces.

Parts of Fort Collins are "book deserts" where accessing books requires driving to a library building rather than walking, he said.

"Having these libraries around in city parks would really ensure everybody got access to books and reading material they want to," he said.

Kevin Duggan is a Coloradoan senior reporter covering local government. Follow him on Twitter, @coloradoan_dugg.

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Free home energy monitors available at city libraries

 **Jacy Marmaduke**, jmarmaduke@coloradoan.com 2:58 a.m. MST December 24, 2015



(Photo: Fort Collins Utilities)

Fort Collins Utilities customers can now check out a free tool at the library to monitor their home energy use.

The battery-operated device, called the Home Energy Monitor, lets residents track their energy use by kilowatts, kilowatt hours and dollars and cents. Residents can turn appliances on and off and watch the reading on the device change in real time to ferret out energy hogs around the house. You can also compare how much power you use on different days.

The device is available for checkout at all three locations of the Poudre River Public Library District. For more information at [PeakPartnersFortCollins.com/HEM](http://www.PeakPartnersFortCollins.com/HEM) (<http://www.PeakPartnersFortCollins.com/HEM>) or the city's Peak Partners Initiative to reduce electricity use during peak hours.

Reporter Jacy Marmaduke covers environment and breaking news for the Coloradoan. Follow her on Twitter at [@jacymarmaduke](https://twitter.com/jacymarmaduke) (<https://twitter.com/jacymarmaduke>).



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