

'Take a Book, Return a Book'

Little Free Library and Big Red Bookshelf programs promote literacy and community in Yankton

Reading is an important life skill and a very enjoyable hobby for many people. Yankton's readers have some new resources to find books: Little Free Libraries and the Big Red Bookshelf.

Little Free Libraries

Tracy Dutrow loves books, and she loves sharing books with her neighbors through her Little Free Library on the corner of Mulberry and James Place in Yankton.

Little Free Libraries are neighborhood book exchanges with the motto: "Take a book, return a book." The mission of the Little Free Library is to promote literacy and the love of reading by building free book exchanges worldwide, to build a sense of community as readers share skills, creativity and wisdom across generations.

"I read about Little Free Libraries years ago and thought it would be really fun to have one," she said.

Last winter, Dutrow read an article about the Yankton High School's tech ed program building Little Free Libraries as a class project. Dutrow contacted high school teacher Bob Muth and went to pick one out.

"I picked one that has little gutters and is white with brick that matches my house," she said. "It is really cute."

Once she installed it in her yard she had to fill it with books.

"I was really fortunate that a number of people donated books to help me," she said. "I have a large collection of children's books so I try to keep the library stocked with half adult and half children's books."

Dutrow actually wants to expand her children's books offerings, so she talked her husband into building another Little Free Library that will house only children's books.

"It's really cute, shaped like a barn and quite a bit bigger than the original library," she said.

Dutrow said people's enthusiasm for the Little Free Library is the best part of having it in her yard.

"For example, the day we were setting it up, a vehicle stopped on the road and a woman came running up to me and she said she was so excited to see the library. She gave me a book because she said she wanted to give me the first book for my library," Dutrow said. "It wasn't even on the post or anything. It was very cool."

Dutrow doesn't know how many people have visited her library, but she knows she has visitors because the grass is dying off in front of the library.

"Of course, that is completely fine," she said. "I never really see anybody there because it is set up on the side of my house, which is



Little Free Library near the corner of Mulberry and James Place. (Photo by Tera Schmidt)



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