Little Free Libraries
Expanding Ashland Public Library’s reach

Libraries to be placed across the city this spring

By BECKY MEZIERE
 Correspondent

Take one, leave one.

It’s a pretty simple concept, but for the Little Free Libraries set to be unveiled in Ashland this spring, it can make a big difference.

The Ashland Public Library is expanding its reach to promote libraries and the love of books with the addition of Little Free Libraries across town, which will provide myriad books for anyone to take and enjoy.

Support Services Manager Hayley Tracy-Bursley spearheaded the development of six Little Free Libraries for Ashland.

“We are always looking for new ways to be inclusive and meet community needs,” Tracy-Bursley said. “That’s ultimately what the Ashland Public Library is for, to meet their needs and promote access for them.”

Little Free Libraries will be stocked with books — in a separate entity from the library — and are one of the top things in the new mission statement.

“We want to provide access to materials,” Tracy-Bursley said. “We do the best that we can to remove barriers to that.”

The small, house-shaped boxes with doors and Plexiglas fronts are the brainchild of the Little Free Library Organization, which has been providing and placing libraries since 2009 with the mission to put libraries in more than 80 countries.

Tracy-Bursley sees them as a way to reach more people in the community with books and resources, applying the library’s mission statement: “to connect people with ideas, information, and inspiration.”

“Books do all of those things,” Tracy-Bursley said. “I think using books and materials to create community and sustained community is a big thing. … (With Little Free Libraries) You have communities sharing what they are reading and what they enjoy.”

Community Relations Coordinator Shirley Shores said the Little Free Libraries are also helping educate the community in new ways.

Throughout the past two years, the library has made some big improvements. Along with a renovation of the Brookside Main, Brookside West and Cape Grey, early literacy and summer reading programs were added. The library’s staff has expanded to meet the needs of various groups.

Shores said the Little Free Libraries are a way to provide resources to those additions.

“We want to use this as a tool to say, ‘Hey, the library has changed. You can use this as a way of borrowing books,’ Shores said. ‘... We also want to encourage people to come in and use our facilities, too.’”

“We have always offered a lot,” she continued. “I think the renovation brought a few changes, but I think it also changed the way we talk people about the library. The vision for the little libraries is to put them in places where children and families would have access to them, so Tracy-Bursley reached out to the students to get help.

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By Becky Meziere, Times-Gazette.com

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