



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

News Release

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Civic Associations in Glenmont and Silver Spring Team Up to Establish 'Free Little Libraries'

The COVID-19 health crisis that has dominated 2020 has led to people through the world changing their life patterns. In Montgomery County, those changes have impacted work routines, schools, activities and free time. For residents in the Wheaton-Silver Spring area, two award-winning civic associations have been working hard to make some parts of living during a pandemic bit easier.

The Glenmont Forest Neighbors Civic Association (GFNCA) and the Greater Silver Spring Civitans club (GSSC) have teamed up to create and maintain two "Little Free Libraries" to benefit the community. One was launched in November 2019 at Judson Road and Lindell Street, and a second will be installed in a new community park beside Glenmont Fire Station 18, which is at 12210 Georgia Ave. GFNCA previously established little libraries on Livingston Street; at the Lindell and Randolph Streets juncture; at the intersection of Henderson Street and Grandview Avenue; and at Judson Road and Newton Street. Though installed on private property, the "lend-a-book-take-a-book" libraries are open to all members of the community.

The collaboration between the organizations is part of an effort to include additional amenities for the new park. In addition to a playground, pavilion and the library, GFNCA has been awarded a grant for a public art installation there.

The Little Free Library program was started in 2009 by Todd Bol of Hudson, Wi. He filled a structure with books and put it on a post in his front yard. His neighbors and friends loved it, so he built several more and gave them away. The program evolved into a nonprofit organization as Little Free Libraries continued to grow annually. In 2020, the organization surpassed 100,000 registered Little Free Libraries in more than 100 countries worldwide.

In addition to be a place where community members can donate books for others to pick up and read, many Free Little Libraries are placed in areas that also provide settings that inspire readers to enjoy their books. For example, the library at the Judson/Lindell median is a gathering place with natural seating and a community bulletin board.

Free Little Libraries have been especially important during the health crisis of 2020 as many public buildings and services have not been available. The buildings of Montgomery County Public Libraries (MCPL) have remained closed and there was a considerable time after the health crisis began in which MCPL was unable to lend materials even under safe, specialized procedures.

Even in the best of times, Free Little Libraries enhanced public libraries in unique ways, including that they are created and maintained by their respective communities. GSSC, which has provided funding for the two community libraries that the organizations have worked on jointly, will maintain those little libraries.

“We will keep it going, look after them and refurbish them as needed,” said GSSC Vice-President Mirza Donegan.

GFNCA President Jim Epstein credited the Montgomery Housing Partnership for getting the local library program off to a solid start by sending four GFNCA board members to training by NeighborWorks America, which granted GFNCA \$2,000 for community projects. The Mid-County Regional Services Center provided additional startup funds through its “Neighborhood Event Matching Funds” program. Others have contributed in a variety of ways. The Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection recycled tree stumps for seating at one location and FAsMarketplace member Tychelle Mosely Art painted the little library for the new park location with original art.

Community members who seek more information or would like to join these civic organizations can contact glenmontforestnca@gmail.com or silverspringcivitan@gmail.com.

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