



# When You Think You Can't Find Enough Money for a Neighborhood Little Free Library

## Practical Tips

### Where can you turn?

**Very first-- to people you know.** People who share your interest in a great neighborhood. People who will come or give or share the work because you (their friend or colleague) asked them. These people don't have to belong to any formal group. They just need to know you somehow, and share your desire to do something good for the community.

**To your neighborhood association, service club, faith-based group, youth group, school club, giving circle, knitting or book group, or parents' association.** What do they have besides money? Time, person-power, access to their members' hearts and minds; and influence. They have meeting space, kitchens, land where you can locate a Library... and books!

**For larger locally owned businesses contributions:** If the owners or managers know your and/or your family they might want to help. Community and corporate foundations require written requests ranging from a simple letter to more detailed proposals with goals, objectives and work plans.

**Large retail and discount stores:** Walmart, Target and similar "big box" stores often set aside money for local programs. The Home Depot and Lowes' has a national contributions programs for larger amounts (\$thousands) but local stores can contribute products and small amounts of money, especially if employees are involved.

**Local hardware and grocery stores,** restaurants and other businesses have much smaller budgets for community causes, and they are asked many, many times each year. But they like to play a positive role in the community and get recognition, too.

Some supermarkets have a sales receipt collection program that schools and clubs use to earn extra cash. Other food stores will often provide refreshments for events, especially if you buy some. Send a request letter explaining the cause and how many people will be affected. A follow-up personal request (face to face) from someone the owner or manager knows almost always helps

**Fast food:** Owners of Pizza shops, McDonald's, Culver's Burger King, Hardee's, Wendy's—any small business that wants to increase its customer base, can choose to support Little Free Libraries. Every coupon that is used usually brings in more than one new buyer.

**Local franchises of national chain stores** in malls and shopping centers can usually only donate very small amounts of merchandise at their manager's discretion.

### Hints:

Tell businesses you will buy one item for every one they contribute. If you are anxious about asking for outright donations. Ask if they will sell you their products and services at cost or at a discount. Realize that if they buy ads in a printed program, they are doing it to be nice. Such ads rarely pay off in new business.

Tell them you will gladly promote their business to all your participants and members. Make sure you have someone—preferably more than one person—visit the business to tell the manager how much you appreciated their participation.

### Who Else Might Be Interested?

**People who care** about books, reading, literacy, education, justice, or any other topic you can relate to your Little Free Library. Are you going to put the Library near a garden? Talk to master gardeners or people who care about flowers and fresh produce.

**People who are committed to a cause.** The cause can be health, aging, nature, pets, safety or almost anything else. But here's a caution—try not to be too “pro” or “anti” about a particularly controversial cause when you promote your Little Free Library. The more people it appeals to, the better.

### HOT Tips:

**Money isn't everything.** If you only ask for money, you may miss more important contributions— involvement and ownership. What you really want is for people to refer to the Little Library as “ours” rather than “yours.”

Even if you have one person or sponsor who is willing to pay for the Library, it's good to have lots of smaller contributors. It doesn't take long for contributions of \$5, \$10 or \$25 to add up. And every little bit helps establish a sense of ownership. **Don't forget arts or humanities councils, parks commissions, school and community foundations or your public library system.** They might offer \$500 to several thousand dollars to fund a group of Little Free Libraries if you can show that other local groups can contribute and benefit from the Libraries.

Key words to use when you ask for support: literacy, children, reading, quality of life, sense of community, outreach and education. Citizen engagement.

### Why Would Someone Want to Contribute?

The primary reason that individuals give money and resources to causes is that they want to feel good about playing a positive role. They want to feel valued. But there are many other reasons you can keep in mind when you reach out to others to support the Little Library. They give because...

1. **They know you** and want to be associated with what you and your friends are doing. Even corporate and foundation donors say they give to individuals with *whom they have a relationship* rather than responding to program requests alone.
2. **They know children and adults affected by the issues your Library addresses.** Better yet, yet, they have been asked to take part by someone they value—a child, neighbor, fellow church member or colleague.

**Good Luck!** You don't have to buy a Little Library all by yourself. You probably have many more friends of your Library than you realize. Just give them the chance to be a part of GIFT—the Give it Forward Team.

*Last Updated May, 2013*