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‘Read in Color’ Initiative Launches in Washington, D.C. to Share Thousands of Diverse Books in Little Free Libraries

The Little Free Library nonprofit, Everybody Wins DC and Van Metre Companies teamed up to share custom-designed little libraries and books that amplify BIPOC and LGBTQ+ voices.

Washington, D.C. (June 23, 2021) – The Little Free Library® (LFL) nonprofit organization launched their **Read in Color** diverse-books initiative in Washington, D.C. today in partnership with Everybody Wins DC (EWDC) and Van Metre Companies. Through the initiative, 21 new Little Free Library book-sharing boxes will be established in high-impact areas and more than 4,600 diverse books will be distributed to help promote understanding, equity and inclusion.

Washington’s first Read in Color Little Free Library was unveiled at CentroNía headquarters this morning with a ribbon-cutting, story time, and free books for kids. The library is filled with books that provide perspectives on racism and social justice; celebrate BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and other diverse voices; and incorporate experiences from all identities for all readers.

"As one who raised my twins in Washington, D.C. and often searched for diverse books to share with them, I am so proud of Little Free Library's Read In Color initiative and the partnerships that will increase book access and amplify diverse voices in the Washington, D.C. area," said Anita Merina, LFL National Board Chair and former EWDC volunteer.

"Everybody Wins DC has always used books and reading to help children thrive," said Jordi Hutchinson, EWDC Executive Director. "Now, as a Read in Color partner, we can do even more to support their futures. By increasing access to engaging reading materials that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and social justice, we are giving children new ways to develop critical social emotional skills such as self-respect and empathy while also promoting understanding across communities and cultures."

Ten of the Little Free Libraries being established in Washington—including the CentroNía library—were thoughtfully designed by award-winning real estate developer Van Metre Companies. The impressive libraries look like small-scale houses, complete with painted siding, tiny flower boxes, miniature artwork on the interior walls and ample room for books.

"I strongly believe that the success of our company has everything to do with our Core Values," said Rick Rabil, President and CEO, Van Metre Companies. "For Van Metre, the cornerstone of those Core Values is Diversity and Inclusion. We are honored to support the mission of Little Free Library and the Read in Color program. I am proud of our company’s united commitment to honoring and supporting diverse voices. Literature is a powerful tool to increase understanding and empathy—and books should reflect the diverse world we live in."

Brian Davidson, Group President of Van Metre's New Homes Division added, "Including the 10 book-sharing boxes we are designing and constructing at our warehouse, we will be installing over 20 Little Free Library book-sharing boxes in the DMV area. The book-sharing boxes will be filled with diverse books that support and amplify BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, Muslim and other marginalized voices. Being able to identify with a character in a book is powerful and validating—and we believe that everyone should be able to see themselves in the pages of a book."

Support for Read in Color in Washington was also generously provided by HarperCollins Publishers and their Read in Full Color program, Scholastic and their Power of Story program and SixDegrees.org.

LFL's national **Read in Color** initiative, which was introduced in Minneapolis last year in response to George Floyd's murder, has four key components:

1. **Little Free Library installations** full of culturally relevant books, placed in high-need communities.
2. **Free diverse books** for applying LFL stewards, purchased from independent and BIPOC-owned bookstores when possible.
3. **Recommended reading lists** representing Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latinx, Muslim, LGBTQ+ and other communities.
4. **Read in Color pledge**, allowing everyone to show their support for diverse books and access downloadable resources.

Get involved: To learn more and sign the Read in Color pledge visit LittleFreeLibrary.org/Read-In-Color.

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About Little Free Library:

Little Free Library® (LFL) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that builds community, inspires readers, and expands book access for all through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Libraries. LFL received the 2020 World Literacy Award as well as honors from the Library of Congress and National Book Foundation. There are more than 100,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes worldwide in all 50 states, 110 countries and 7 continents; through them, more than 200 million books have been shared. LittleFreeLibrary.org.