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Phoenix Launches 'Read in Color' Initiative to Share Thousands of Diverse Books in Little Free Libraries

The Little Free Library nonprofit, Valley Leadership and Southwest Human Development are teaming up to share little libraries and books that amplify marginalized voices.

Phoenix (November 11, 2021) – The national Little Free Library® (LFL) nonprofit organization is introducing its **Read in Color** diverse-books initiative in Phoenix in collaboration with Valley Leadership's Impact Maker Education Team, Southwest Human Development and Phoenix Rotary 100. Through the initiative, 10 new Little Free Library book-sharing boxes will be established in high-impact areas and more than 2,000 diverse books will be distributed to promote understanding, equity and inclusion.

Phoenix's first Read in Color Little Free Library will be unveiled at a public celebration:

WHEN: Tuesday, November 16, 2021, 10:30 a.m.

WHERE: Fountain of Life House of Worship and Kingdom Kids Preschool, 8838 S. 2nd Ave., Phoenix, AZ

WHAT: Little Free Library ribbon-cutting, remarks, story time and free books for kids.

WHY: To expand access to diverse books in Phoenix. The libraries established through Read in Color are filled with books that provide perspectives on racism and social justice and celebrate BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and other important voices.

Other Read in Color library locations will include Homeward Bound, a site serving families facing homelessness; the Sagrado art gallery in South Phoenix; Cedar Crossing apartment building, a project of Native American Connections; and the Boys and Girls Club, Arizona Diamondbacks Branch.

"We are thrilled to welcome the Read In Color initiative to Phoenix," said Kim Gathers, Valley Leadership Class 41 and steward for a little library at Ageez Barbershop. "Providing diverse books to diverse communities is a step towards equitable access. Little black kids can see a black doctor in a book and see

their future as a doctor. My hope is that when kids and families see those that look like them in a book, it gets them excited and they want to read more.”

Diversity in books is sorely needed. In children’s literature, less than 25% of books depict non-white characters: 10% of characters are Black, 7% are Asian/Pacific Islander, 5% are Latinx, and only 1% are Native American.

Phoenix-based Native American fiber artist, and Little Free Library board member, Margaret Wood noted, “The Read in Color initiative is one way to make reading more equitable for all. It is important to bring awareness to the large, diverse Native American populations living in urban areas like Phoenix, and it is important to make relevant, multicultural books available to the children and families who live there.”

Support for Read in Color in Phoenix was generously provided by Scholastic and their Power of Story program, HarperCollins and their Read in Full Color program and the Fiesta Bowl. A portion of the books sourced for the Phoenix launch were purchased by LFL from Afri-Soul Marketplace, a local Black-owned independent bookstore.

To celebrate the Read in Color launch, Scholastic is providing 100 copies of *My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World* by Malcolm Mitchell for a national book giveaway. All are invited to enter to win. Existing LFL stewards in Phoenix are also invited to apply for a bundle of free diverse books. (See entry information below.)

“Little Free Library is excited to wrap up this year’s national expansion of our Read in Color program here in Phoenix,” said Greig Metzger, Executive Director of Little Free Library. “This installation exemplifies the fantastic partners we have been able to enlist in communities across the country. Partners like Valley Leadership and Southwest Human Development. For us to succeed and continue to expand Read in Color next year and beyond, we depend on such community-based literacy advocates. By working together, we can share diverse voices, strengthen understanding and build empathy.”

How the Program Works, How to Get Involved

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/Pacific Islander, 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.
- Registered Little Free Library stewards in Phoenix may apply to receive a bundle of free diverse books after November 16: LittleFreeLibrary.org/Books
- Everyone may enter the giveaway to receive a copy of *My Very Favorite Book in the Whole Wide World* after November 16: LittleFreeLibrary.org/Books

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INTERVIEWS AND EVENT PHOTOS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.

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

About Valley Leadership: Valley Leadership empowers, leverages and mobilizes leaders to meaningfully impact the most pressing issues facing Arizona. At our core, Valley Leadership builds community. We do that by empowering a broad spectrum of Arizonans to lead through our programming and activating them to make a difference on our state's most pressing issues through our Impact Maker. ValleyLeadership.org

About Southwest Human Development: Southwest Human Development strengthens the foundation Arizona's children need for a great start in life. The first five years of life are the most critical in a child's development. At Southwest Human Development, our services improve lives and help families by supporting young children and their caregivers during this important time. swhd.org