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Read in Color Program Brings Diverse Books to New Orleans' Little Free Libraries

Little Free Library book-sharing boxes in New Orleans now offer diverse books celebrating Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, LGBTQ+ and other marginalized voices.

New Orleans (September 27, 2022) – The national Little Free Library® (LFL) nonprofit organization is thrilled to announce the launch of its **Read in Color** diverse-books initiative in New Orleans, in partnership with local groups Youth Empowerment Project (YEP), the YMCA and One Book One New Orleans. Through the initiative, 10 new Little Free Library book-sharing boxes will be established in high-impact areas and roughly 3,000 multicultural, inclusive books will be distributed to promote understanding, equity and inclusion.

“YEP is excited to be a part of this community effort to get books about diverse characters and by BIPOC authors into the hands of residents all across the Greater New Orleans area,” said Jessica Irving-Marín,

Director of YEP Educates, YEP's adult education program, and LCSW. "Ensuring equal access to high-quality education is at the heart of our mission, so we are grateful to LFL for making representation and access a priority for our students."

To celebrate the launch of the first Read in Color Little Free Library in New Orleans, a ribbon-cutting, special remarks, and book giveaway were held at YEP East Opportunity Center (12000 Hayne Boulevard). Other Read in Color library locations will include Schaumburg Elementary School, The Ohm Well, local residences and more.



WHY DIVERSE BOOKS MATTER

"Little Free Library believes that everyone should have the opportunity to see themselves in the books that they read," said LFL Executive Director Greig Metzger. "Personal relevance and connection empowers the reader. Diverse voices also provide insight on life experiences that are not like our own. Empathy is nurtured by awareness. But too often access to diverse books is limited."

"Working with local organizations as a catalyst, Little Free Library hopes to expand resources through our Read in Color initiative," Metzger continued. "In New Orleans we are honored to be working with the Youth Empowerment Project, the New Orleans YMCA, and One Book One New Orleans."

LFL's Read in Color initiative in New Orleans was funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Penguin Random House and a local private donor.

“The love of learning starts early in life and is cultivated when children can read stories of diversity, as well as, stories of experiences and people just like them,” said Deirdre Johnson Burel, senior program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. “We are proud to support Read in Color and their efforts to inspire learning in our children in New Orleans and make reading accessible to everyone.”

In March, LFL will work to share even more diverse books in the region as an official partner of the New Orleans Book Festival at Tulane University.

The Read in Color initiative has launched in 13 U.S. cities to date, from New York and Washington, D.C. to Atlanta and Phoenix, with plans for even greater expansion this year. More than 150 Read in Color Little Free Libraries and 30,000+ diverse books celebrating Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, LGBTQ+ and other important voices have been shared so far. Learn more at 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. There are more than 150,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes worldwide in all 50 states, 115 countries and seven continents. Through them, over 250 million books have been shared since 2009. LFL received the 2020 World Literacy Award as well as honors from the Library of Congress, National Book Foundation and others. The organization grants Little Free Libraries full of books to underserved areas through its Impact Library Program and champions diverse books through its Read in Color initiative. To learn more, visit LittleFreeLibrary.org.

ADDITIONAL QUOTES

“YMCA educators and adult learners are thrilled about Little Free Libraries getting filled with books that represent the varied experiences of our Greater New Orleans community. In our work, literacy is not only a survival skill, but also a vital tool for imagining what is possible.”

–Amy E. Leggette, Director YMCA Educational Services

“One Book One New Orleans is committed to making sure that readers from all walks of life have access to books. We’re so excited that Little Free Library’s Read in Color program shares that vision and is working with us to make New Orleans a more literate city, one book at a time.”

–Dr. Megan Holt, Executive Director One Book One New Orleans