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Book Champions: Little Free Library Announces 2024 Todd H. Bol Awards for Outstanding Achievement

From a queer-bookstore owner in Utah to a meticulous Little Free Library mapper in the Netherlands, winners of the sixth-annual awards display a spirit of community and care



Todd H. Bol Award winner Wendy Shih of Portland, Oregon

Saint Paul, MN (May 14, 2024) – The Little Free Library (LFL) nonprofit organization is delighted to present the sixth-annual Todd H. Bol Awards for Outstanding Achievement to five extraordinary individuals and one exemplary organization who embody LFL’s mission to build community, inspire

readers and expand book access for all. Today's announcement is part of the organization's second-annual [Little Free Library Week](#), a global celebration running May 12-18.

Since LFL's inception, thousands of people around the world have become Little Free Library volunteer stewards—the caretakers of Little Free Library book-sharing boxes.

"One of the strengths of the Little Free Library organization is our broad network of volunteer stewards who connect neighbors, inspire readers of all ages and grow book availability," said LFL Executive Director Greig Metzger. "These individuals and organizations are critical contributors to our collective impact. We are excited to honor a few of those stewards who have made the extra effort with the Todd H. Bol Award for Outstanding Achievement. It is always a challenge to select the winners from the incredible list of nominees, but this year's winners represent the best examples of kindness, charity and caring and would make our founder, Todd Bol, proud."

The winners are:

Evelyn Gayhart of Everett, Massachusetts, a seventeen-year-old who dreamed of starting a Little Free Library when she was twelve and now—after a pandemic pause—stewards multiple book-sharing boxes. "I originally started it as a project for the Girl Scouts Silver Award but ended up wanting to expand beyond just one," Gayhart said. "The response I've been getting has made me really happy. I get to make sure more people have the opportunity to get and read books. It's been an extremely rewarding experience."

Kaitlyn Mahoney of Salt Lake City, Utah, who installed a Little Free Library in her LGBTQ+ bookstore, Under the Umbrella, to support lower-income patrons unable to purchase books. "We are currently in an area with a high concentration of unsheltered individuals, many of whom frequent our Little Free Library," said Mahoney. "It has become a welcoming service providing books to those who wouldn't otherwise shop in our store. Several individuals also regularly come into the store and purchase new books specifically to donate to the library for others to enjoy."

Ellen Selig of Norfolk, Virginia, who has been instrumental in establishing 130 Little Free Library book-sharing boxes. "Creating and supporting the Norfolk Little Free Library Project of the Friends of Norfolk Public Library has been the most meaningful project I have ever been involved in," Selig said. "Little Free Libraries build bonds between neighbors and across communities. Most importantly, they teach sharing—of books, ideas and ourselves—to adults and children alike. Being the 'Little Library Lady' is pretty special."

Wendy Shih of Portland, Oregon, who is dedicated to expanding access to diverse books through her Little Free Library, which embraces the mission of LFL's Read in Color program. "I believe that having access to diverse and inclusive books can help expand the worldview of readers and entire communities to create a more compassionate society," said Shih. "My library has connected me with those who believe in the power of diverse and inclusive books to not only open hearts and minds, but also save lives."

Jacques Zuiderwijk of Leidschendam, Netherlands, who has shared nearly 10,000 books in his own and other Little Free Libraries in his region and who has also created a map showing locations of hundreds of book-sharing boxes in the Netherlands. "Everywhere I go I look for Little Free Libraries and get in touch with other LFL stewards," Zuiderwijk said. "I now consider it my life's work. My network has grown enormously. Every day, every evening, I am busy mapping Little Free Libraries."

Metro United Way and Mary Sullivan of Louisville, Kentucky. For the last 10 years, the Metro United Way's Little Free Library Program has provided increased access to books through 36 Little Free Libraries. This effort has been supported in large part by Mary Sullivan, who coordinates book donations and distribution, and who first shared an article about Todd Bol with the Metro United Way in 2014. "I have done a lot of volunteering over the years, but I have never stuck with a program for 10 years," Sullivan said. "Many of my friends ask, 'how many hours do you put into this,' and I say 'I don't know and it doesn't matter. One more book taken, read and enjoyed is what matters most to me.'"

The Todd H. Bol Awards for Outstanding Achievement—part of the Little Free Library Week celebration—are named for LFL's founder, Todd Bol, who created the first Little Free Library book-sharing box in 2009 in Hudson, Wisconsin, and passed away unexpectedly in 2018. This is the sixth year the awards have been presented, and LFL will continue to honor Bol's memory for years to come.

Bol said: "I really believe in a Little Free Library on every block and a book in every hand. I believe people can fix their neighborhoods, fix their communities, develop systems of sharing, learn from each other, and see that they have a better place on this planet to live."

Read more about this year's Todd H. Bol Award winners and see their photos:

LittleFreeLibrary.org/todd-bol-awards

Learn about Little Free Library Week, May 12-18: LittleFreeLibrary.org/lfl-week

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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 180,000 registered Little Free Library book-sharing boxes worldwide in all 50 states, 121 countries and seven continents. Through them, over 400 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 and Indigenous Library Programs and champions diverse books through its Read in Color initiative. To learn more, visit LittleFreeLibrary.org.

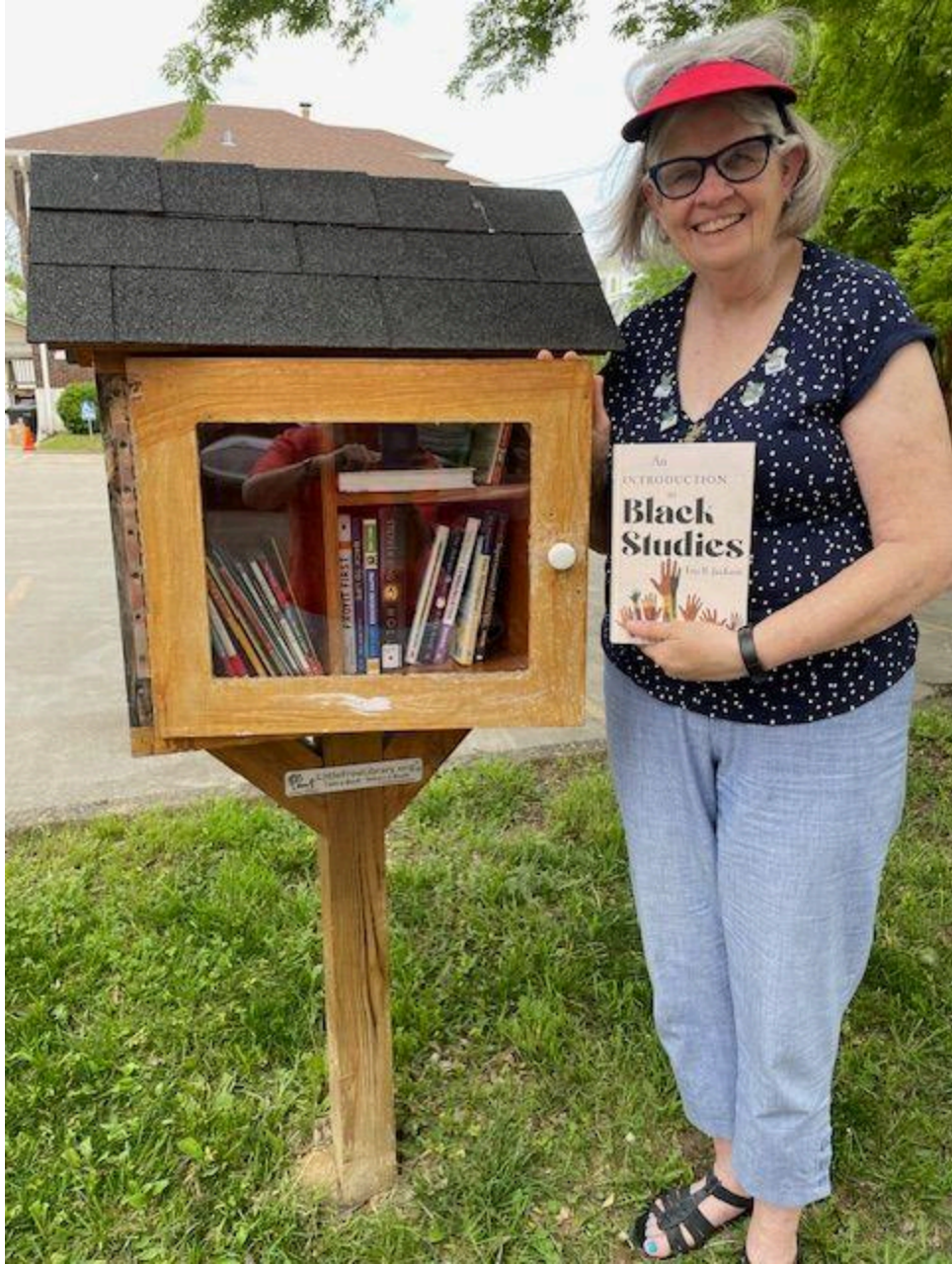
EDITORS: Photos below. Please be in touch with questions and interview requests.



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