



Waxhaw welcomes a Little Free Library

Fourteen-year-old Bella Moubarak has always been intrigued by community projects that enrich people's lives. An avid reader and member of the Metrolina Phoenician Club's Young Adults Committee, Bella became fascinated by a non-profit program called Little Free Library, which she came across on a recent trip to her hometown in Wisconsin. They are basically house-shaped boxes filled with free books, most of which are gently used. The concept is simple: take a book and replace it with a different one to be enjoyed by someone else. It is based on the honor system and promotes a sense of community, sharing, creativity, wisdom across generations and of course recycling.

On her return to Waxhaw, Bella decided that the town where she now lives should have its very own Little Free Library. She teamed up with her school friend Lily Austin, created a PowerPoint presentation about the program's benefits and presented it to Waxhaw's Mayor and Board of Commissioners. They loved the idea, approved it and tasked the girls with opening a Little Free Library on town property. Within a few months they were ready for the unveiling.

The sun was shining down on the large crowd that gathered for the ribbon cutting ceremony on January 16, 2015. They included Bella's friends from the Metrolina Phoenician Club's Young Adults Committee, and local government representatives who supported the girls' dream to have a Little Free Library in Waxhaw. Mayor Dawne Gardner publically thanked the girls "for what you're doing for our community."

Paul Fitzgerald, one of the Town Commissioners, explained that the Little Free Library was established in 2009 by Todd Bol of Hudson, Wisconsin, and it went from one little box filled with free books to a worldwide book sharing and social movement that promotes literacy and a love of reading. He praised Bella and Lily for their "principles of values" and then presented both girls with hardcover editions of Charles Dickens' classic novel *Great Expectations*. Shane Fraser from Waxhaw Business Association promised the girls that he would get local businesses to support the Little Free Library through the donation of books.

The girls were then invited to say a few words. They thanked the local government officials for supporting the project and encouraged other youths to do volunteer work that helps build communities. Bella's parents Christina and Joseph – who's a board member of the Metrolina Phoenician Club – were beaming as Bella addressed the crowd. They're proud to say that Waxhaw's Little Free Library was designed to resemble the historic McDonald House that's nearby and it's now part of Waxhaw's history.

For more information about the program, see www.littlefreelibrary.org