

BOOKING IT

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Better than a lemonade stand

It's the first Little Free Library in Madison

By Lisa Reisman

MADISON — Inside a bird-house-like structure on a recent Saturday on Green Hill Road in Madison, a bestselling memoir stood back-to-back with a Pulitzer Prize-winning play which nestled against a slim volume on camp cooking.

Earlier that morning, 6-year-old Nolan Zawecki added a copy of "Trunk Trouble" to the children's section of Little Free Library Charter No. 71558, among the roughly 70,000 locations in all 50 states and 85 countries worldwide where the miniature lending libraries have popped up.

When he came back for the grand opening a few hours later, the



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Emory Bova, Nolan Zawecki, Ava Rose Juliano, and Cece Bova at the grand opening of Little Free Library No. 71558 on Green Hill Road in Madison.

early July sun was beating down on the quiet, wooded block. The book, about a little elephant whose trunk keeps getting in the way of his ef-

forts to have fun, was gone.

"Now another kid gets to enjoy it," Nolan said. Then he took out a "Nate the Great" detective story.

It's all part of a 2009 initiative inspired by "take a book, leave a book" collections in coffee shops and public spaces. Its mission, according to littlefreelibrary.org, is to "inspire a love of reading, build community, and spark creativity."

Upholding that mission at the Green Hill Road branch are its stewards, Ava Rose Juliano, 6, and Cece Bova, 8. Ava, who's from Chico, Calif., has been visiting her grandparents Susan and Greg Juliano for the last 3 summers. Cece is a neighbor on Green Hill Road.

It all started back in May. Susan got a Little Free Library model from her son Jonathan, 31, as a Mother's Day gift. "We're all avid readers in this household," he said, while sipping lemonade on a lawn chair beside the library at the grand opening, as Nolan stole a glance at the first page of "Nate the Great."

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Then came the assembly. "It came all built," Greg said. "I just added an extension, weatherproofed it, painted it an exterior stain on the wood, and painted it Caribbean blue." Once he'd installed the post, he and Ava arranged potted flowers on a bed of wood chips around it.

"We wanted to make it cheerful and inviting," Susan said.

Emory Bova, 11, Cece's older brother, then pedaled around the neighborhood, knocking on doors or leaving flyers about the Little Free Library in mailboxes. "I hate to read books, but I wanted to help," he said, adding that he prefers the daily newspaper.

By that time, Susan had appointed Ava and Cece stewards "as a sort of summer project," she said. As summer jobs go, the gig is low-impact. Little Free Libraries require no library cards. There are no late fines to assess. Ava and Cece won't even mind if you don't return a book. And if you forget to whisper, it's okay with them.

Plus, it seems, it's fun. "When we check it in the morning, it's pretty exciting," said Ava. "If someone took a book, it means they got a new book to read."

And when someone leaves a book, Cece added, "it means people have more choices." Also, she said, "I love to read so it's exciting to share that."

Christine Masick, mother of Cece and Emory, and teacher at Independent Day School in Middlefield, had another take. "A book from this little library



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The books donated by neighbors and friends, and available for the taking, at Little Free Library No. 71558 on Green Hill Road.

might spark a lifelong passion for reading," she said.

"It should," said Jan DeFrancesco, who consumes several books a week. "Reading is a great escape. It takes you to places and times you can't otherwise visit, and without the usual aggravations of travel."

By then, a woman in a sun hat was browsing through the stacks. She slid out "Eat, Pray, Love" by Elizabeth Gilbert, then lingered to chat with the Julianos.

"This is such a kick," said Susan, an English teacher in the New Haven school system for 38 years, as she offered the woman a homemade chocolate

chip cookie.

"There's not a lot of action on this block," she added. "That's where books come in. They feed the imagination. That's what I always tried to teach my students. That's what I hope to instill in Ava and Cece."

By then, Nolan was already making his way home, book in hand.

Little Free Library #71558 is located on 93 Green Hill Road in Madison and open 24 hours a day. All are welcome. For more information about Little Free Libraries, visit littlefreelibrary.org.

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