

The Face of Fillmore

By Sherry Shepard

As someone who has spent years working in a library, I was excited when I realized there was a library in Fillmore that I had not noticed before.

Harold and Kimberly Robison live at 221 South Main. If you look closely in their front yard and you will see what first appears to be a large birdhouse yard decoration. Upon closer inspection through the window in the front door of it, you will discover it is a tiny library. I had seen these before in other towns but until my interview with Kimberly, I had no idea what a great thing this is.

This is one of many “Little Free Libraries” not only dotting our country but all over the world. Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization with a mission to inspire readers and expand book access to readers of all ages and backgrounds around the globe. More than 150,000 small libraries have been registered with the organization throughout the world in 115 countries. In those, during the past 14 years, over three million books have been exchanged.

The first Little Free Library was built in 2009 by the late Todd Bol in Hudson, Wisconsin. Bol mounted a wooden container, designed to look like a one-room schoolhouse, on a post on his lawn and filled it with books as a tribute to his late mother, a book lover and school teacher who had recently died. Bol shared his idea with his partner, Rick Brooks, and together they built and installed more of the book houses in different areas of the Midwestern United States. After a while, the idea started to spread.

According to the organization, “We are facing a growing literacy crisis. Today in the United States, more than 30 million adults cannot read or write above a third-grade level. Studies have repeatedly shown that books in the hands of children have a meaningful impact on improving literacy. The more books in or near the home, the more likely a child will learn and love to read. But two out of three children living in poverty have no books to call their own.”

Fillmore’s Little Library began in 2020, as the CoVid pandemic began. Kimberly Robison said she had seen one in Idaho and thought it was a “cool” idea. She said it seemed like a fun idea to pursue. She registered with the organization, which gave her better access to books.

The next question is, “How do I use the little library?” That is probably the easiest part of all. Bring a book, and exchange it for one in the library you would like to read. When you are done, exchange that book for another one. It is just that easy. Leave one and take another.

Travelers often do this as a way to remember the areas they visit. Leave a book from our area in the little library where you are visiting and take one from there. What a fun way to remember your travels.

While the libraries may be small, their impact on reading throughout the world is huge.

