



Great River Road Visitor and Learning Center

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Immediate Press Release

From: Great River Road Visitor & Learning Center, Prescott, WI

Contact: Margaret Smith, Executive Director, mhsmith@freedomparkwi.org

Date: November 14, 2011

Subject: Little Free Library Comes to Prescott



Caption: Helen and Jay Stassen (left) with Todd and Susan Bol (right) Photo by Margaret Smith



Caption: Benjamin's Books Little Free Library at Freedom Park, joins a national network of Little Free Libraries. Photo by Margaret Smith

Helen, Jay and Peter Stassen of Prescott have donated Prescott's first Little Free Library to Freedom Park and the Great River Road Learning Center. Named Benjamin's Books, in memory of their son and brother, this Little Free Library is number 260 in a national network of Little Free Libraries. Friends of Freedom Park is grateful for the generous donation of Benjamin's Books to the grounds of Freedom Park. Benjamin's Books was installed at the end of September, and it has been visited and used daily by children and adults enjoying Freedom Park and the Learning Center.

Begun in Madison as a non profit in 2009 by co-founder Todd Bol of Hudson, the Little Free Libraries are popping up all over the Midwest including Chicago and as far west as the Sacramento and Portland. The idea of building community and giving through books is gaining momentum. Little Free Library has been recently featured on Wisconsin Public Radio, in the St. Paul Pioneer Press, and in other regional newspapers.

Each Little Free Library has a sponsor and stewards who make sure the library and its books are safe and have appropriate materials for the neighborhood. The Stassen Family is the sponsor and steward of Benjamin's Books in Prescott.

The motto of Little Free Library is "Take a book. Return a book." People can donate books into the library at all times and take a book when they want. Bol remarked, "A Little Free Library creates a common thread of community. It's like a water cooler of literacy. It can bring people together and you might even meet neighbors for the first time."

You are encouraged to stop by and share your favorite books. Poetry, kid books, novels, classics and more are welcome. Book donors are encouraged to handwrite a personal note inside the front cover and every person who passes the book on to someone else is welcome to add his or her thoughts.

The Stassen Family shared their thoughts on Benjamin's Books/Little Free Library:

"This Little Free Library is a memorial library for our youngest son, Benjamin, who died an untimely death a year ago at age 21. Benjamin was a beautiful young man, a junior in college and he was studying to be an entrepreneur. We have looked for ways to honor and celebrate his life in positive ways that carry his spirit forward. The extraordinary setting of Freedom Park in Prescott, Wisconsin and the open public access to the park and its facilities seemed like a perfect place to share something that Benjamin loved with the whole community.

Benjamin enjoyed books and loved to read. His mom, Helen, is a librarian and his dad, Jay, is an attorney, and both enjoy reading for work and for pleasure. Growing up with many books in our home, Benjamin and his brother, Peter, became strong readers and were frequent library users. Benjamin's high school years at Cretin-Derham Hall High School really cemented his love of reading.

The Little Free Library at Freedom Park has a name plate that reads "Benjamin's Books, Little Free Library, In memory of Benjamin Curry Stassen – a Great reader. Forever loving you, Mom, Dad and Peter" followed by a "Peace" symbol. We included the Peace symbol because people have described Benjamin as a peaceful person. That symbol is one he often wore and it describes his nature. We also want peace for him now.

We first heard about the Little Free Library organization from a college friend who sent us information on the program this summer. We looked further into the organization and what its founders are trying to promote. We immediately felt it was a perfect memorial for Benjamin. We firmly believe that Benjamin would love the idea of a little library to promote the exchange of free books with others and the sustainable nature of a community book exchange.

We embrace the Little Free Library as a way to honor Benjamin because of the sharing and the ongoing sustainable nature of the program. We love that it's free and that anyone can use and contribute to the library. It is a lovely way to carry on Benjamin's memory in a positive way. Benjamin was always trying to learn more about things that interested him and sharing books at his library promotes learning for all who take time to read about what is interesting to them.

Helen and Jay are the "stewards" of this Little Free Library. We bring books of our own to share and we have friends and family members who donate books they have read to restock the library. However, we are delighted that other people in the community are borrowing and adding books to the library too. That is what we were trying to promote and it is rewarding to see that it is being used as we hoped and intended. Who knows where a book you donate will go or the pleasure it will bring to another person?"

We at Friends of Freedom Park encourage you to stop by and enjoy this wonderful new addition to Freedom Park. To learn more about how you can be involved or sponsor a Little Free Library, contact Todd Bol at tbol@littlefreelibrary.org or go to the website www.littlefreelibrary.org. To learn more about the Great River Road Learning Center at Freedom Park, go to www.freedomparkwi.org