**September 2022 Community Newsletter Content**

**How five Little Free Libraries inspired community engagement in Shawnee-Evergreen**

By: Marin Peake-MacAlister

A message from the Federation of Calgary Communities



In the summer of 2021, Lynn Jobe came across the [ActivateYYC grant program](https://activateyyc.calgarycommunities.com/) offered by the [Federation of Calgary Communities](https://calgarycommunities.com/). As president of the [Shawnee-Evergreen Community Association](https://shawnee-evergreen.ca/) (SECA), she brought it forward to the board with the idea to build a neighbourly community where people can feel a sense of belonging and community pride.

One of the board members built on this idea by drawing from his own experience with having a little free library in his front yard and noticing how many people stop to chat or exchange books.

“I think you can always build on that, wherever you are, you can start. And wherever you are, you can take steps forward in that direction. And that's what keeps us going,” says Jobe.

On top of building towards achieving a community with a sense of belonging and pride for residents, Jobe says that one major goal of the project to build five little libraries across the community was to provide a messaging centre for the community association since they don’t have a facility.

After receiving the grant from ActivateYYC, Jobe says that one of the main challenges they faced was that the process was rushed because of the deadlines with submitting expenses for reimbursement.

“I was away camping and wondering how we were going to build these libraries [in time],” she says. “So, I called out to the Kerby Centre and they were wonderful.”

[The Kerby Centre](https://www.kerbycentre.com/) ended up providing the community with a woodworking shop, two volunteers and three seniors from the community who showed up at the Kerby Centre to build four of them.

Following the massive support from the Kerby Centre and community volunteers, three other little free libraries were built by community members with their own resources.

Jobe says that one of the people who came forward through this process was Tom Green, a resident of Shawnee-Evergreen for over 25 years, who built several additional little free libraries for the community.

“I'm a bit jealous that I didn't go to the Kerby Centre to actually learn something, but I enjoy working with wood,” says Green. “I thought well, that is a chance to leave a little sort of memory of a legacy out in the community and such a worthwhile cause.”

Green says that because he grew up in a rural community, navigating community building in an urban centre was a new experience for him.

“Community building in an urban centre is complex because people go all different directions at different times of the day,” he says. “Community isn't simple but it is very important for people to feel comfortable walking down the street and to let their children play outside and we just have to keep plugging away.”

Building community was a successful endeavour in this case.

All of the wood-cutting and construction of the libraries took place in one afternoon with just priming, painting and installation left to be done afterwards.

Jobe says that it was challenging to take on a process that was so new to her, but that the City’s Parks Department, their neighbourhood partnership coordinator (NPC) and fellow community members made the process easier.

“It was a lot of work, but really rewarding,” says Jobe. “In the end, it's something we can really all be very proud of.”

Since installing the libraries, Jobe says that the project has been a success with community members taking full advantage of the new amenities.

All of the libraries have been registered with the global registry, [Little Free Library](https://littlefreelibrary.org/), where users can download an app to find libraries in their area.

“It's fun for kids and parents to explore the neighbourhood and find out where all the libraries are,” she says.

If you’re interested in kickstarting a community project, apply for an ActivateYYC grant to get started.

**City of Calgary Content**

The September 2022 Community Newsletter content has been posted at <https://www.calgary.ca/cfod/csc/community-newsletter-content.html?redirect=/cs/csc/>.

This month’s topics include:

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* Boards, Commissions and Committees recruitment
* City Services funding policy update