

Grab a book - dockside



By Megan Burke, The Recorder and Times
Wednesday, July 4, 2012 10:15:48 EDT AM



Janice Laprade reaches into the only dockside Little Free Library on record, located on Honey Bee Island, in the Thousand Islands. Laprade, along with her husband Michael Laprade who built the dockside library, came across the organization dedicated to sharing books at no cost. (SUBMITTED PHOTO)

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IVY LEA - The new library is stocked and already serving visitors – you just need a boat to get there.

Located in the international rift, 100 metres from Hill Island and 100 metres from Wellesley Island, sits Honey Bee Island. This private island, also more commonly known to locals as “the surfboard island,” has become the first ever to have set up a Little Free Library at the end of their dock.

After seeing a news segment on television about the Little Free Library organization, Michael and Janice Laprade, who reside on the Canadian Honey Bee Island in the summer months, fell in love with the idea.

“I think a lot of people like the poignancy as well as the practicality,” said Janice Laprade.

“We think it’s a terrific organization.”

Little Free Library was created by Todd Bol, who first had the concept when he made a Little Free Library in memory of his mother, a former schoolteacher. Since then many have sprung up across North America and other continents.

As much as the Laprades loved the idea of setting up a library at the end of their driveway, they ran into a problem: They are surrounded by water. Their only option was to set one up at their dock.

After contacting the organization, the Laprades found their Little Free Library to be even more special.

“They went to their records and found we were the only members that had a (Little Free Library) on an island,” Janice said.

“It’s up and ready. Anyone boating by can swing by and open up the door, pick up a book or two or three and get going.”

Since it's been in place at their dock, Janice Laprade said people, if not always taking a book, have been looking at it and idling in front of the dock in their boats and personal watercraft.

Like many other Little Free Libraries, the Laprades put a personal touch on the structure.

Michael Laprade made the sides of the box-like structure to resemble a woodsy house. The siding is made out of birch bark and it has a cedar shake roof.

"We're having fun with it," said Janice. "It looks very Adirondack in keeping with the cottage life out here."

As a self-proclaimed 'bookaholic,' Janice has so far stocked her library with her own wealth of books. She hopes that neighbours and visitors alike will take part in the "pay it forward" mentality and put in a few of their own books to keep the library replenished.

"We'll see how it works out. It's a great opportunity to get to know your neighbours," she said.

Being on an island offers yet another unique advantage: Her neighbours are both Canadian and American, making her library an international one.

On one instance, both Laprades were sitting on their boat when a family with young children stopped by during their camping trip.

"(The kids) said, 'Dad pull over, pull over,' and they asked if we mind them pulling up to the dock," Janice recalled. "The dad thought this was fantastic. They grabbed their reading material and off they went. They were just tickled pink."

Over the holiday weekend the Laprades spoke with many of their "neighbours" all stopping by interested in what was on their dock. Janice Laprade said the general comments made were that her Little Free Library was a fantastic idea.

She hopes those visiting the area will take the idea back to their hometown with them.

"It's something that's readily available that never closes," Janice Laprade added about the uniqueness of these libraries.

"The books are there for the taking."