

# Library and Parks Bring “Little Free Libraries” to Southside Virginia

*by Danville Public Library/Parks and Recreation Staff*

**O**n December 18, 2012, Danville Public Library in Southside Virginia opened the first Little Free Library along Danville Parks and Recreation’s Riverwalk trail system, highlighting collaboration between the city’s recreation and library departments. By February of 2013, nine other units were slated to open, with the majority located within parks and along the paved walking trail.

The Little Free Library program began in Wisconsin in 2009 in order to “promote literacy and the love of reading.” Each Little Free Library acts as a free book exchange and offers patrons the option of taking a book from the unit and leaving one in its stead, borrowing a book for a short time and returning it or simply taking a book. The units typically resemble a large bird house and hold an array of donated

literature from children’s books to the Twilight saga.

“Little Free Libraries are a great collaboration between the Libraries and Parks and Recreation and shows how matching services to community needs can be achieved,” says Parks and Recreation Director Bill Sgrinia. No stranger to collaborative efforts, Danville Public Library system has been a part of the Parks and



*The Danville Public Library staff poses with the first Little Free Library in Danville, Virginia. From left are Teresa Daniels, Diane Moore, Joan Waynick, Joanne Verasko, Rebecca Webb, Danielle Pritchett, Karen Coleman, children’s librarian Jennifer Hartley, and library director Shelly Janosko.*

Recreation Department for the last two years. “Parks and Recreation and Public Libraries fit well in the same department,” adds Sgrinia. “At the core, both services are rooted in people and lifelong learning.”

Library Director Shelly Janosko echoes Sgrinia’s sentiments. “The library is incredibly excited about the opportunity to share this Little Free Library project with the City of Danville,” says Janosko. “It’s a great feeling to know that we can promote the importance of literacy, share our love of reading, and carry out such a sense of community with this single project.”

In Danville, each of the 10 units have been adopted by agencies such as the Kiwanis Club, the Historical Society, and Epiphany School. Each adopting agency has vowed to maintain the collections in the library as well as the upkeep of the Little Free Library itself. Parks maintenance will install all of the units in their various locations, while the library will stock each box with its initial collection.

The entire project was made possible by a Danville Regional Foundation “Make it Happen!” grant. Once they are installed, all of the libraries will be pinpointed on a Google map displayed at [www.littlefreelibraries.org](http://www.littlefreelibraries.org).

The libraries are not only the first of their kind in the City of Danville, but are also new to Southside Virginia. Danville Parks and Recreation is proud to play host to the units. On an annual basis thousands of city residents, visitors and outdoor enthusiasts patronize the 11 parks and eight-mile walking trail in the City of Danville. The Little Free Libraries offer just one more amenity within the park system and while they mark a community service, the libraries are also one more way to attract more and more visitors to the great outdoors. **VI**

