

# Creating a Community of Readers

## Big Rapids Community Library's "Little Phelps Free Library" Project

Focus is on improving literacy in our community.

2017 statistics for the reading proficiency of Michigan's 3<sup>rd</sup> graders (language arts) is only @ 44.1%, with Michigan ranking 41<sup>st</sup> among the 50 states in this category.

Goal is to create a community of readers in the Big Rapids Area.

**Take books, share books, leave books!**

Our free libraries are named after the person who bequeathed her estate to the City of Big Rapids in 1893 to create the first permanent location for a public library in the city.

Big Rapids Community Library is putting up 11 free libraries, which were purchased with money from two grants.

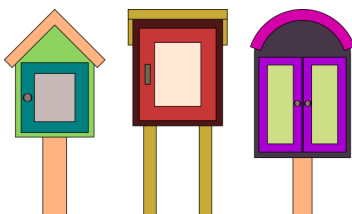
Various community organizations were asked if they wanted to have their members paint the libraries with designs of their own choosing, with a sign placed inside noting which group did the painting.

High-traffic locations throughout the Big Rapids community were selected for placement of the libraries, with the permission of the business owners or landowners.

They are asked to keep us informed if the libraries need books or repairs of any kind.



**Just one of our libraries, painted by  
a local group.**





## LITTLE PHELPS FREE LIBRARY

### How this library works

#### THIS LIBRARY BELONGS TO EVERYONE!

Anyone may use it—  
community members, neighbors, friends,  
and passerbys.  
The books are always free.

#### TAKE BOOKS

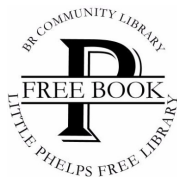
If you see something you'd like to read, take it!  
It's for you. Some books include a note about  
who gave it or has read it. You may leave your  
own note in it when you're done.

#### SHARE BOOKS

When you're finished with a book, you may pass  
it along to a friend or return it to this Library or  
any other Little Phelps Free Library.

#### LEAVE BOOKS

Consider donating books to Little Phelps  
Free Libraries or the Big Rapids Community Li-  
brary. Especially desired are books you recom-  
mend to friends, your childhood favorites, and  
books that teach and spark conversation.



Learn more at [www.bigrapids.lib.mi.us](http://www.bigrapids.lib.mi.us)

*In a small city a good library is  
indispensable to the intellectual  
growth of its people.*

*-Harriet C. Phelps*

## LITTLE PHELPS FREE LIBRARY

### Who was Harriet C. Phelps?

Harriet Phelps bequeathed her estate to the City of  
Big Rapids in 1893 to create the first permanent  
location for a public library in Big Rapids. The Phelps  
Free Library, located on the corner of Elm and  
Stewart Avenues, served as the City Library until the  
1960s. In honor of Harriet, for her generous gift to  
the Big Rapids Community, we are naming our free  
book exchange libraries after her.

## Creating a Community of Readers

Michigan's children are falling behind in reading!  
Michigan is 41st in the nation for literacy scores and  
projected to be 48th by 2030. Today, fewer than 50%  
of Michigan's third graders are proficient in reading.

One study found that in middle-income  
neighborhoods the ratio is 13 books per child, while  
in low-income neighborhoods, the ratio is one book  
for every 300 children.

What can you do? Be the change and start reading!  
Take a book from a Little Phelps Free Library, donate  
a book to a Little Phelps Free Library, or head to the  
Big Rapids Community Library to access thousands of  
books for all ages.

