

The Macomb Daily

Dakota students seek to locate little free library at Macomb Corners Park

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The National English Honor Society at Dakota High School is working on a Little Free Library project. The library will be a small box structure located within Macomb Corners Park, which will provide 24/7 book access. (NICOLE TUTTLE FOR THE MACOMB DAILY)

Reading is a walk in the park for Dakota High School’s National English Honor Society students, and the group is hoping to make it just as easy for Macomb Corners Park patrons by providing access to free books.

Jeanie Cline, a teacher at Dakota and the National English Honor Society chapter sponsor for the school, said students plan to develop a Little Free Library. It will operate on the honor system of leave a book, take a book at Macomb Corners Park, 19449 25 Mile Road in Macomb Township.

“The club plans to have a recurring event ‘book drives’ to help with this initiative,” Cline said. “Additionally, the club plans to transform the library into a food pantry as the opportunities arise.”

Dakota High School, located in Macomb Township, has 65 members in its chapter of the National English Honor Society. The society is a group for students who excel at and enjoy English and literature. Requirements for students to join include that they earn a cumulative GPA of 3.5 in English classes, and that they be in 11th or 12th grade. The group meets once a month and students also schedule themselves to participate in events as they have time.

“This is our first year, and we have been really busy. We have collected books for our Free Little Library, socks for Friends of Foster Care, created cards of encouragement for holiday food baskets, written notes of appreciation to staff members, visited Little Turtle and elementary schools for read aloud during the holidays – a big hit for all students involved. And now we are raising money for our Little Free Library. More events are planned for the remainder of the school year,” Cline said.

She added student Eemi Toma initiated the creation of the Little Free Library at Macomb Corners Park.

“The initial founder and president of the club at Dakota, senior Eemi Toma, thought of the idea in September of 2023 and first sought permission from Macomb Corners Park Supervisor Ken Dalpra. After meeting with him in November, she started the initiation of the planning process. She later expressed the idea to me and worked on the project while maintaining the efforts the honor society strives to meet monthly for their members. Eemi has learned from her experience with other organizations in Dakota and has become cognizant of how to start a fundraiser and reach out to the individuals or organizations who would help her succeed in this project,” Cline said.

Students are fundraising with the plan to order the small box structure of the Little Free Library from the Little Free Library organization.

“We decided to order the library rather than build it to ensure that it is weatherproof for any conditions,” Cline said.

Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization based in St. Paul, Minn. Its mission is to be a catalyst for building community, inspiring readers, and expanding book access through a global network of volunteer-led Little Free Library book exchange boxes. The organization seeks to achieve its mission with the book-sharing boxes, open 24/7, and by equipping, educating and guiding volunteer stewards to establish the libraries in their communities. The organization also grants Little Free Libraries to high need areas, champions diverse books and works with key community partners to achieve its vision.

Cline said that the cost to create the Little Free Library is about \$700.

“Students have funded this cost by reaching out to the Clinton-Macomb library, Dakota’s ‘Mama Mia!’ musical, and fundraising at the Macomb Community College’s performing arts center. We have also promoted our flyers to the entire community,” Cline said, adding the group hopes to have the Little Free Library established at the Macomb Corners Park by March, which would coincide with March is Reading Month. The library will be placed on the right side of the park, geared towards the front-right of the tennis court among the sidewalks.

“The president of the chapter or any executive board member may visit the library once a month to make sure that it meets the expectations of a Little Free Library and meets regulations of the park,” Cline said.