

# Daily Journal

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## NEWS

# Little Free Library program enters new chapter in Vineland

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VINELAND - With a little imagination and lots of paint, the students in the IMPACT Parent Linking Program converted a retired Daily Journal newspaper vending box into a fetching Little Free Library.

With delicate brush strokes, students Ester Bautista and Diane Villanueva added an owl motif to the sides of the box on Wednesday.

'Can we read them now?'

Across the room, their classmates Sharon Rodriguez and Mildred Regino divided book donations into piles based on reading grade-levels.

About a year ago, the program coordinator Debrah Hickman submitted a request to The Daily Journal, when it offered its decommissioned vending boxes to be used as little libraries.

"I wasn't sure what was coming," she told The Daily Journal, adding she was now pleased with the results.

Hickman handed out notices during parents' night this week to explain how the program works on a premise similar to "take a penny, leave a penny."

The boxes are like a library without the due back date. People are welcome to "borrow" a book that catches their interest. They don't have to return the same book, but they are encouraged to replace it with another so the little library remains well stocked.

After reading an article in The Daily Journal about the Little Free Library movement, Max Leuchter Elementary School on North West Avenue became the first in the Vineland Public School District to join the program last year.

### Vineland school joins Little Free Library movement

Principal Carmella Heer ordered the school's mini library box from [littlefreelibrary.org](http://littlefreelibrary.org) and it was well-used.

To spare schools the expense of having to purchase little libraries, The Daily Journal offered its vending boxes, urging the schools to customize and personalize them.

Seven boxes were distributed last December to various locations across Cumberland and Atlantic counties, including the IMPACT Center and the D'Ippolito and Barse Elementary schools.

School aide Debbie Delacruz submitted the request letter for D'Ippolito.

"Reading is such an important part of education and many families don't have the money to buy book after book," Delacruz said when her school's newspaper honor box was delivered.

The little library, she said, is "such a valuable resource for kids and parents to do something special, like picking out a book to read together."

D'Ippolito art teacher Lisa Kaler turned the vending box, now standing at the school entrance, into a work of art.

Kaler said she approached the project as if it were a sculpture.

"People are going to be looking at three sides," she said.

Kaler wanted them to see something "bright and cheerful," including a sunflower reading a book.

The sunflower's face was inspired by a student in her classroom, she said.

The front of the box features the Frederick Douglas-inspired quote: "Once you learn how to read you will forever be free."

The bright blue little library caught the attention of 8-year-old Anyla Purnell, when she was entering school recently.

The D'Ippolito third-grader is now a frequent little library borrower and has found a favorite book.

"It was about a girl with 500 middle names," she said.

Fourth-grader Saul Nieves hadn't used the little library. Anyla showed him how it was done.

When box door closed, they both held books they wanted to read.

D'Ippolito students are encouraged to stop by the little library anytime, except when they are in class, Saul said.

Back at the IMPACT Parent Linking Program, the students continued to sort the books and added "Always A Gift Never For Sale" stickers to their covers.

The program serves student moms and dads.

Rodriguez had pulled a few books out of the pile.

She hoped to read them to her 14-month-old daughter, Angelina.

Sometimes, she said, reading to her daughter at bedtime can be a battle.

“She wants to read herself,” Rodriquez said.

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### **More information**

The Daily Journal is preparing to distribute 10 more vending boxes to Vineland schools, including Johnstone, Sabater, Petway, Mennies and Winslow elementary schools as well as Veterans Memorial Intermediate School, to establish their own little free libraries. Several preschools are also on the list.

To deliver the boxes well stocked, The Daily Journal is hosting a book drive to collect new or gently worn books. Donations may be dropped off at The Daily Journal, 891 E. Oak Road, Vineland. If you have questions or need help with a donation, contact Deborah M. Marko at (856) 563-5256.