


Completed library at Weaver



Completed library



Filling the library with books



Completed library

**Letha H Brown Literacy Award**
**Altrusa International of Garland, TX, Inc.**
**Supplemental Material**
**June 29, 2023**



Little Free Library build day: Boy Scouts and Altrusa members



Identifying location at Weaver with school staff



Teacher, Sheila McComas, helping install

The schools' librarians join with Altrusa members in our shared goals to provide easy year-round access to books. By providing books 24/7 in Garland's book deserts, Altrusa Garland aims to encourage reading, develop a reading culture in the home, and improve reading proficiency scores; thus, resulting in more learning and going to more places, just as Dr. Seuss encourages!

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PLEASE NOTE:

**Optional Supplemental Material** (No points) Judges place primary importance on the written narrative. Substantiating materials do not earn points and are considered only in a supplementary perspective.

ENTRY SUBMISSION:

Submit your entry by June 30 to the email address shown on the District Nine Webpage www.altrusadistrictnine.org under Members Only/Reports and Awards.

community. Another club member then contacted the "Know Before You Dig" program to verify that the location is safe from water mains, electrical conduits, or other issues.

Twenty club members joined another twenty Boy Scouts and leaders to build seven libraries one Saturday morning. Several Boy Scouts joined Altrusans to install each library which has one plaque recognizing it as a Little Free Library and another plaque identifying it as a project of Altrusa Intl. of Garland, TX, Inc.

The many books needed to maintain this project came from partnerships with Half Price Books, the Achievement Center of Texas, local book drives, the Rust Powers Foundation, and the Altrusa Garland Foundation. The club held multiple book parties where books were sorted by grade level and stamped with, "Donated by Altrusa International of Garland, TX, Inc." One hundred children's books and 10 adult books in both English and Spanish were placed in each library. Two Altrusa members regularly follow up with the school librarians and spot check the libraries for replenishing. These members are delighted that the libraries are being used and books with no Altrusa stamp are being placed in the libraries, indicating possible community involvement. The project coordinator notified club members, schools, and community groups regarding progress, volunteer opportunities, and completion through emails, monthly club newsletters, and club meetings.

Capitalizing on the relationship built with the schools, Altrusa members held book fairs in two of these schools—Southgate and Weaver—allowing each child to select his or her own book. Some of the schools' librarians and teachers have visited Altrusa Garland meetings with hopes of joining Altrusa's literacy efforts. These librarians realize the potential impact of the Little Free Library.

Viola Prieto, the librarian at Southgate Elementary, says, "We love the Little Free Library. This morning I saw three girls getting books from there. I loved seeing that. Made my heart happy!"

reading materials and a book culture, children may come to school unprepared and are less likely to become lifelong readers.

Susan Neuman, professor of childhood and literacy education at New York University, and Naomi Moland, assistant professor at Columbia University's Teachers College, published a 2016 study in Urban Education identifying that children's books are a rarity in high-poverty urban communities. The authors ask, "How can you become literate when there are no available resources?" Neuman and Moland report that only 8% of those families visit local libraries. These authors state that living in a book desert "may seriously constrain young children's opportunities to come to school ready to learn." They conclude that giving students access to books may be one of the most overlooked solutions to helping ensure they have the tools needed to succeed in school.

Altrusa Garland's community service committee chairman suggested installing Little Free Libraries to address this issue. The club researched all elementary schools in Garland ISD as to the scores on state mandated tests (STAAR), reading proficiency, income level, family education level, and diversity using information from Garland ISD, the U.S. Census, and city of Garland's neighborhood department. The club purchased seven two-story composite libraries from the Little Free Library organization to place at the most at-risk elementary schools—Caldwell, Centerville, Cooper, Lister, Montclair, Southgate, and Weaver. These schools have at least 50% of the residents with a high school diploma or below; 80% are low income receiving free breakfasts and lunches; have either a grade of C, acceptable performance, or D, in need of improvement, on the state test; and demonstrate low reading proficiency rates ranging from 29 to 38%.

Multiple opportunities to influence community literacy allowed all 27 members of Altrusa Garland to participate. These members averaged 25 hours each for a total of 675 hours of community service. The club's project coordinator met with the schools' librarians and principals to determine the ideal location for optimal access by the students, parents, and

**Executive Summary / Synopsis:**
*A 60-word count synopsis of your project providing brief outline of key aspects of the project. This synopsis will not be counted towards the project description count and will not affect submission eligibility. The synopsis will be used if your awards is selected as the winning entry.*

Altrusa Garland's Little Free Libraries project targets seven Title One low performing elementary schools in the Garland ISD reaching 3,520 students. All members of the club participated by meeting the staff; conducting book fairs; collecting, sorting, and stamping books; and partnering with Boy Scout troops to build, install, and fill the libraries with English and Spanish children's and adult books.

**Project Description**: *(1,000-word limit)*

"The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go!" Dr. Seuss writes in I Can Read with My Eyes Shut! But families need access to books to develop the love of reading and to learn more as Dr. Seuss suggests. Many schools in Garland, Texas lie in book deserts, a geographic area where reading materials are difficult to obtain.

The librarian at Weaver Elementary, Laura Thomas, said, "Our families live in a book desert as they do not have a print rich environment due to lack of access to books at home, in the classroom, or limited access to school or public libraries." Mrs. Thomas explains that due to a fear of fines, transportation issues, limited hours, and fear of government-issued cards, many families in her school's neighborhood cannot or will not use the city libraries.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, up to 61% of low-income families do not have any books for their children at home. Educators believe that the presence of books in the home is a strong predictor of reading achievement. Donalyn Miller and Colby Sharp elaborate in their book, Game Changer! Book Access for All Kids, that without access to

# Servicing Garland's Book Deserts with Little Free Libraries

Name of Project

**Nomination for Letha H Brown Literacy Award**

**June 29, 2023**
Date

Altrusa International of **Garland, TX, Inc.**
**106 Stone Mountain Ct.**
**Garland, Texas 75044**
USA

District Nine
Club Year
20**22** -20 **23**

# Letha H Brown Literacy Award

## Entry Form

District **NINE**

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|---|---|---|---|
| Name of Altrusa Club | **Altrusa International of Garland, TX, Inc.** | | |
| Address | **106 Stone Mountain Ct.** | | |
| City | **Garland** | State **TX** | |
| Country | **USA** | Zip/Postal Code | **75044** |
| Contact Person | **Barbara Rust Powers** | | |
| Telephone | **214-662-4412** | Email: **brpowers@icloud.com** | |
| Date (day. Month, year): | **29/06/2023** | | |
| Club Membership (as of entry date): | **26** | | |

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Project Title: Servicing Garland's Book Deserts with Little Free Libraries