

Greater Lowell Tech students, others work to replace stolen neighborhood library

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Sophomore carpentry students at Greater Lowell Technical High School are finishing a miniature house with plans to donate it as a replacement for Maddie's Little Free Library, a book-sharing station that was stolen last week from Long Pond Drive in Dracut. Watch video at lowellsun.com. SUN/Amaris Castillo

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TYNGSBORO -- The air in Greater Lowell Technical High School's carpentry shop smelled of sweet wood on Thursday morning. Miniature houses dotted the space as carpentry instructor Bruce Brown's sophomore class worked diligently on the structures' framing, stairs, and more.

Most of the houses will eventually be passed on to other students at the school to practice their painting or plumbing skills. But one in particular will be replacing Maddie's Little Free Library, a book sharing station that was stolen last week from Long Pond Drive in Dracut.

The original box filled with books was the brainchild of Maddie Gath, a 10-year-old Dracut girl who loves to read. Anyone passing by the miniature library could stop to take a book or leave one -- or both.



Maddie with her original library. courtesy photo

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When the Gath family moved to another part of town, fellow Dracut resident Vallery Miller and her 9-year-old daughter Kelsie offered to take over the library at their home on Long Pond Drive.

Since The Sun's article on the stolen library ran earlier this week, a flood of people from the Greater Lowell community have offered to help. Joe Ciccarelli, a Dracut retiree, wanted to donate money. Wade Demanche, a Lowell resident who runs a sawmill, offered to build a bigger library. Robin Gravlin, the founder of Bobby's Legacy Foundation, wanted to hold a book drive to replenish what was lost. Even more offered to donate books.

"I just couldn't believe somebody would steal something like that," Brown said after finding out about the stolen library in The Sun.

Brown said another staff member, Jenny Malavich, asked if his class was busy. Their conversation led to the stolen library and the idea formed to donate one of the students' structures for a new little library.

"When I told them about what had happened, some of the kids from Dracut that are in the shop, they knew about it," Brown said. "They were like 'Let's take two of the projects' and I said 'Let's put two together' and they were all for it. They wanted to help out.



Bruce Brown, a carpentry instructor at Greater Lowell Technical High School, and Derick Veillette, 17, of Dracut, work Thursday on a miniature house to replace Maddie's Little Free Library, a book-sharing station that was stolen last week from Long Pond Drive in Dracut. Watch video at [lowellsun.com](#). SUN/Amaris Castillo

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Derick Veillette, 17, was one of several students who worked on the library replacement Thursday.

"I live in Dracut so I feel bad," the sophomore said. "Kids should have something to get their books and stuff, and donate."

Jennifer Gath, Maddie's mom, on Thursday said she's seen many people on Facebook ask how they can help, adding that it's been really great because "it turns a negative into a

positive." She said an older gentleman also contacted her Wednesday night about a little library he had begun constructing for his wife. He wanted to give it to her family.

"I just want to thank everyone that's shared the picture and asked how they can help," Gath said. "It's been a really nice community effort."

On Friday, Maddie said she's excited to have a library again, and that the incident and community response taught her the importance of caring for others, and that there are often people in the world who care a lot.

"I felt sad that someone took it away," Maddie said. "And then I felt glad that people cared enough to build a new one, and that it was built by kids."

Staff reporter Robert Mills contributed to this report.