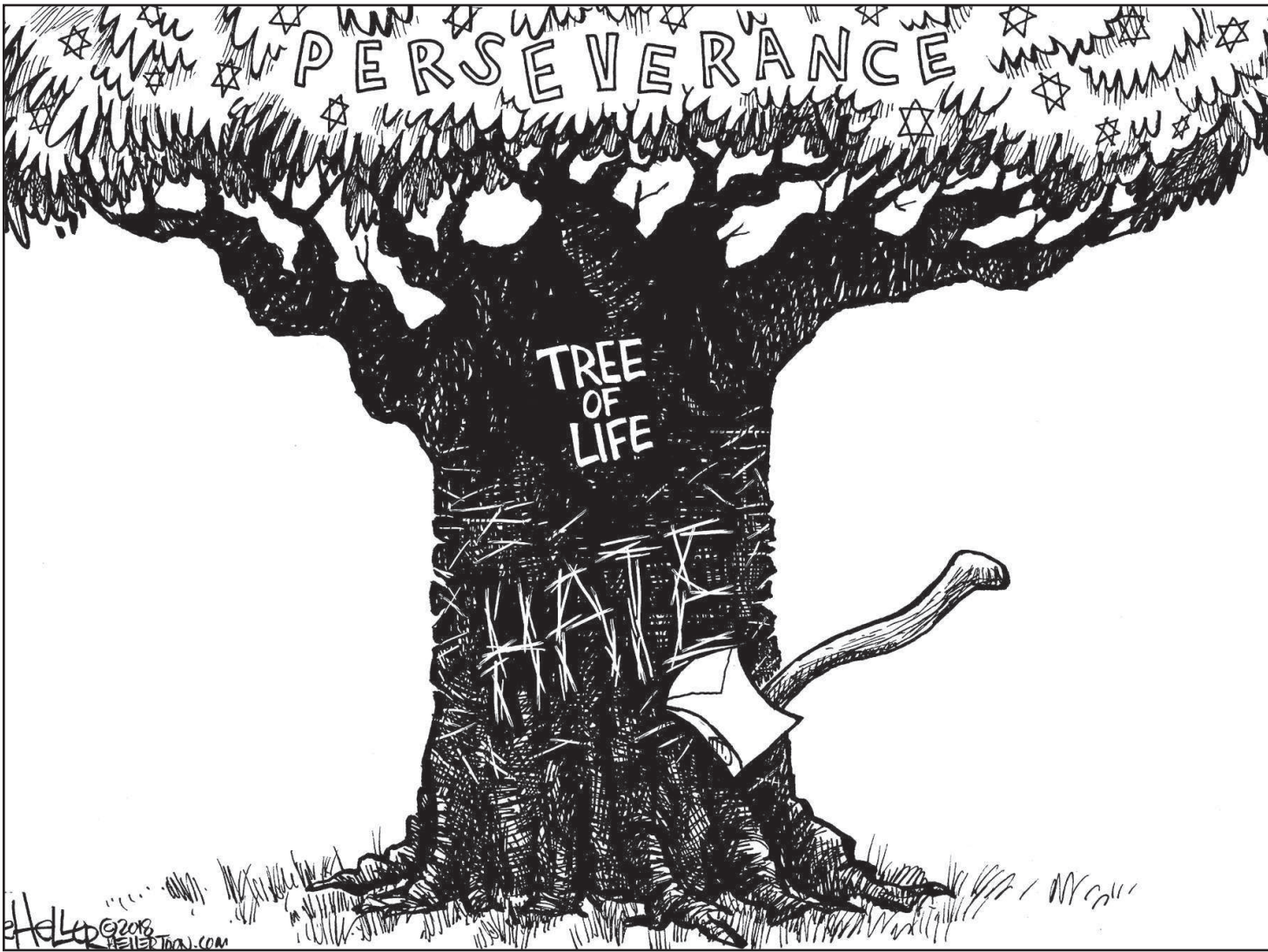


# OPINION

"I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend." —Thomas Jefferson (1800)



## Guest Viewpoint

### Planting seeds for tomorrow

By Kristin Ammerman  
Cottage Grove

Have you noticed the Little Free Libraries dotted across Cottage Grove? We have four officially registered "Little Free Libraries," plus several more around town, most of which were installed by a Ford Foundation Leadership group.

Little Libraries are the brain child of Todd Bol. His mother was a school teacher, and he built the first Little Library in front of his own home to honor her in 2009. In 2015, there were 32,000.

Now, less than three years later, there are 75,000 registered Little Libraries in over 85 countries.

#### What are Little Libraries?

Little Libraries are free "book exchanges." Take one, give one. You can take a book and then return it later, too. According to the "Book Mine," who keep an eye on the Little Library in the community park downtown, books turn over so quickly that within a couple of weeks the selection is completely different.

#### Why Does Book Access Matter?

Academically, children growing up in homes without books are on average three years behind children in homes with lots of books, even when controlled for other key factors (M.D.R Evans et al, Research in Social Stratification and Mobility, June 2010).

But 61 percent of low-income families do not have any age-appropriate books for their kids at home (Source:

Reading Literacy in the United States: Findings from the IEA Reading Literacy Study, 1996).

This is especially impactful when considering that both Harrison and Bohemia Elementary schools are Title I schools.

Per an article in the *Los Angeles Times*, Little Libraries help reduce crime.

Pretty bold statement, right?

According to the LA Times reporter, 75 percent of the populace that goes before the juvenile court system is functionally illiterate. Literacy has a direct correlation between crime, graduation rates, job rates and other tracked statistics. In addition, knowing how to read and research helps people better advocate for their own health, as well as use critical thinking skills and reason through complex issues (Disruptor Podcast, interview with Todd Bol, Ep 2 Free Little Library).

#### Why Little Libraries Are So Awesome:

- 92 percent of people said their neighborhood felt friendlier because of their Little Library.

- 73 percent of people said they've met more neighbors (Informal survey of 3,000 stewards in Oct. 2017).

Todd Bol's belief was that Little Libraries are a reflection of who we are as a people. We are not naturally as divisive or polarized as the media would have us believe.

For example, after a natural disaster,

communities pull together. Little Libraries inspire us to act like there was a storm, without the storm!

Communities work together to give to each other. We want to see each other succeed. We reach across the aisle and across the street.

So what's happening with our Cottage Grove Little Libraries? After tracking down three stewards, they responded that the community does most of the work. But the stewards do fill in books from time to time and do a little maintenance on the libraries.

Little Free Libraries deal with relatively little vandalism in Cottage Grove (similar to the care that has been seen around the globe). Neighbors view gifting books as giving love to those in the community.

Todd Bol passed away at the age of 62 on Oct. 18. He was a firm believer in communities working together; of literacy; and how reading helps elevate communities.

The simple act of building a Little Library as a gift to his community grew into a global phenomenon.

"What we have, is we have the strength of each other." — Todd Bol

If you have an idea that you think will change the community, or even the world, perhaps you'll be inspired by Martin Luther King Jr., who said, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree."

So plant your tree — and utilize the Little Libraries around town.

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The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

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Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

### Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

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