

Silver Award
by **Gabrielle Palfi**

Opening Doors ... One Book at a Time



The Stepping Stones Shelter

Hi! My name is Gabrielle Palfi, and I went on a very interesting journey when I started working on my Silver Award Project for Girl Scouts. Some of my original thoughts were how to make a difference in someone's or something's life. I have always cared greatly about animals, the environment and children. The many things that I considered led me to creating a nice reading area for children who might not otherwise have books to read.

I started on my journey by making many phone calls to hospitals, homeless shelters and other similar types of facilities that might have a need for a library. There were many places that would have liked to have a library on their premises, but there were issues which prevented them from having used books in their facility, until by chance I found the Stepping Stones Shelter. When I called the shelter, I was greeted by a very receptive woman by the name of Liz. She was very kind and said that they were starting to create a library, and would love to talk to me about helping with it. I was very excited and made an appointment to meet with her and discuss the details and how we should move forward.

There are perhaps no days we lived
so fully as those we spent with a
favorite book.

Marcel Proust

My Dad drove me to the shelter in Rockville. It is a very large, 101-year old house that provides temporary living facilities for six families at a time and helps them to transition to their own home, usually within three months. The house gives so much to the families that reside there, and has a great potential to feel even more comforting than it already is. Liz told me they really needed the foyer area on the second level of the house painted, since it was a dark blue. They wanted to brighten up the area that would house bookcases in the hallway and was the entry to the library. I had not considered painting, but gladly took on the task.

We discussed the other ideas I had, such as making bookmarks for the residents, holding

*The more that you read, the
more things you will know.
The more that you learn, the
more places you'll go.*

Dr. Seuss

a book drive, and creating pictures to decorate the library walls. Liz welcomed my ideas and shared her thoughts about the library. We toured the house, and I felt so excited about starting on my project. When we were leaving the house, my mother and I had a great idea to take a picture of the shelter and use it in our decorations for the library.

I wanted to do as much for the Stepping Stones Shelter as possible, so I thought of some fundraising ideas. I washed cars to raise money for the paint and painting supplies, as well as the materials for the bookmarks. I asked friends and family to pitch in their time and energy to make this into an amazing Girl Scout-built library. I also solicited donations of gently-used books for all ages – from babies to adults. I collected the books from neighbors, businesses and family, bought supplies for the bookmarks and pictures from craft stores and dollar stores (as well as cutting out pictures from magazines, gift wrap, birthday cards, etc.), and doing some online research for my project. I found three quotes from various people that really said so much about what reading can do to you and for you. Then I spent my free time sorting books, making bookmarks, creating my pictures from the quotes I found online, and coming up with ideas for how to implement the final plan for the library. We had to think about things like not marring the plaster walls when we hung our pictures; but we managed to find a solution to all of the little challenges that we encountered.

My mother, father, two volunteers and I spent half a day at the shelter painting the foyer. We also explored the attic to look at the bookcases and books the shelter already owned. Liz and the others at the shelter were very excited about the progress we were making!

I went to the shelter for the final trip of organizing the library. I brought many books for adults, teens and children. We brought the bookcase and books the shelter already owned down from their attic. We shelved the books (which taught me a great deal about how libraries are organized.) We hung the pictures I made with quotes about reading. I even used the picture I took of the shelter and framed that and hung it in the hall way. It will be a reminder to all the people that pass through the halls of the great place that will help them learn more from books and about life, and if nothing else, about the humanity of the people that care about them.

There is more treasure in
books than in all the pirate's
loot on Treasure Island.
Walt Disney

I am very grateful to all of the people – friends, family and strangers – who pitched in and helped me with my project. I know that this experience will stay in my heart and in my mind for a lifetime. This experience has taught me that I am such a fortunate person, and that it takes a community to fill a library.

LIBRARY AT THE STEPPING STONES SHELTER



1 Me making bookmarks for the library



2 Books being gathered for the Stepping Stones Library



3 Me and my dad painting at the Stepping Stones Shelter



4 It takes a lot of time to fill up and organize one of these bookcases!



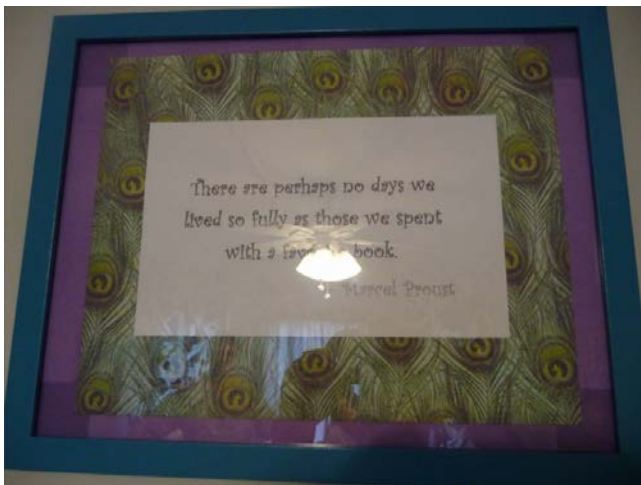
5 Bookmark holder and picture of shelter



6 Me with one of the finished bookcases



7 My picture with the quote from Dr. Seuss



8 My picture with the quote from Marcel Proust



9 My picture with the quote from Walt Disney



10 The library at the Stepping Stones Shelter



11 Me with Liz of the Stepping Stones Shelter