



Michigan State Fair adds Little Free Library prize program for Detroit Urban Gardens

Thursday Sept 1-Monday Sept 5, Suburban Collection Showplace, Novi

NOVI, MI: The **Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair, September 1-5 at the Suburban Collection Showplace** in Novi, celebrates Michigan's literary traditions with a special appearance Thursday September 1 by popular young adult book author **Jonathon Rand**, creator of the **Michigan Chillers** and **American Chillers** mystery book series, presented by **Chrysler Pacifica**! It's a grand kick off to a weekend long **"Reader's Round-Up"** featuring a broad slate of talented Michigan authors that will be visiting the State Fair to meet readers of all ages and sign books for their fans. The State Fair will also be hosting an exhibit of **Little Free Libraries** decorated by local artists that will be installed at Urban gardens in Detroit this fall, stocked with books and aimed at fostering a love of reading for Michigan residents of all ages in the city. Current State Fair schedule and advance ticket sales information can be found at www.MichiganStateFairLLC.com.

"In little more than a decade, Michigan has gone from being a fairly average state for student achievement to the bottom 10 in key school quality indicators such as fourth-grade reading. Michigan is suffering systemic failure across racial, ethnic and socio-economic groups in early reading and middle-school math, according to a new report just released by The Education Trust-Midwest..."

Amber Arellano, Executive Director, Education Trust-Midwest, The Detroit News, May 31, 2016

The latest scores have indicated that literacy rates in Michigan are dropping precipitously; the state is currently ranked in the bottom ten states in the nation for 4th grade reading proficiency. "This is a "grass and farm" roots initiative to create easy access and put books in the hands of youth and adults in the city," says **Steve Masters, State Fair Executive Director**, "We are very excited about long term prospects for this program to foster literacy around the already thriving urban garden hubs in Detroit."

The grand old traditions surrounding the Michigan State Fair recall a simpler time; when books were a primary source of knowledge and entertainment, encourage us to revisit rituals and pastimes of an earlier age. From tending the earth, planting, harvesting and preserving foods, to storytelling, community gathering and sharing of resources, it is all about slowing down and a return to our roots in an increasingly fast paced 21st Century society.

"During the summer months when the youth are out of school, it is so critical to encourage reading," says **Jerry Ann Hebron, Executive Director, Northend Christian CDC and Oakland Ave Farm Market**, "We find that the young people we work with in disadvantaged communities are reading well below their grade level, as well as not understanding what they have read. We are hopeful that having access to Little Free Libraries in the community gardens and urban farms, conveniently located in Detroit neighborhoods, will encourage youth and adults to take time to read more."

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Kim Kozlowski, founder of a grassroots campaign working to promote reading through the Little Free Libraries in Detroit, adds that new research by a former University of Michigan professor shows that there are stark disparities between the number of books available to Detroit children and their suburban counterparts. "We are working to increase the circulation of more books for children in Detroit to help give them tools to be successful in school, and life," said Kozlowski, of Detroit Little Libraries. "Reading has so many benefits, but among the most important is it builds vocabulary. Words help people define others, and themselves. A vast vocabulary has the potential to change the trajectory of someone's life."

The Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair is dedicated to supporting the resurgence of agricultural practices across the state, including the rapidly expanding Urban Ag movement in many of our cities. Detroit has been hailed nationally as a leader in the greening of blighted neighborhoods and also in educating youth about how to successfully plant, harvest and prepare their own fruits and vegetables.

Along with the terrific community energy surrounding the Detroit urban farm movement, there is also a great momentum building around the Detroit Little Free Libraries non-profit organization, placing colorful, artful, tiny free library boxes, filled with books for children and adults to enjoy, in many neighborhoods across the city. Numbering greater than 150 in Detroit alone at last count, these little free libraries nurture discussion, connection and literacy wherever they are placed. Internationally, the Little Free Libraries organization now boasts more than 35,000 tiny free library boxes placed around the world. For more on the Detroit chapter, please visit www.detroitlittlelibraries.org

The Michigan State Fair, LLC will install 20 brand new Little Library Boxes at some of the most high profile and popular Urban Garden locations in Detroit, filled with donated books for adults and children, with a focus on Michigan authors and origins. To add even more fun, we are inviting select artists and organizations in the city to decorate a Little Free Library box with a Michigan Agriculture theme, and Fair-goers and Facebook fans will vote on their favorites, with the best awarded cash prizes of \$1000, \$500, \$250 and \$100 at the Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair on Labor Day Weekend, September 1-5, 2016. More information about the Little Library Prize Program and Readers Roundup at www.MichiganStateFairLLC.com

**Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair adds another day for 2016
Now open Thursday September 1!**

For additional information, please contact Nancy Schoenheide-Phares, 248.486.3424 office, 248.390.7340 cell
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