

Fredricksen Library

HOLIDAY BOOK TREE!



Building a Holiday Book Tree Fundraiser

What if there was a way to decorate for the holidays, start an annual feel-good tradition, AND raise needed funds for your library at the same time? At Fredricksen Library what started out as volunteer Joseph Franklin Smolinski's National Honor Society project, has warmed people's hearts and quietly raised over \$10,000 over five years.

In celebration of our fifth year in 2017, we wanted to share some tips on how we did it with our library friends. Learn how our tree "grew," have fun, and put your own twist and improvements on it in YOUR library!

It is also convenient to Fredricksen's two front desks – staff can tell patrons about it at check out.

OPTIONS: Lobbies are best, but other locations that could work are the center of periodical reading areas, weatherproof vestibules or any high traffic area.

STEP TWO: SIZE OF YOUR TREE

Determine what size tree your space can accommodate. Our tree is 5 feet in diameter at the base and about 6.5 feet tall. A wide base diameter will help the tree stay solidly in place. A tall skinny tree may not stand up to the activity in a busy public building.

OPTIONS: Smaller size trees could be built on top of lower shelving. Multiple trees could be constructed throughout your building.

STEP ONE: LOCATION

Determine a prominent place for your book tree. It should be in a very high traffic area, easily seen by patrons of all ages. Be sure that there is enough room around the tree for patrons to walk, and for wheelchairs and strollers. It is helpful to be near staff, perhaps near a Circulation or Reference desk. Children WILL touch it, but the weight of the books makes it very sturdy. Folks will also be taking photos of the tree and photos of their book dedications.

Our tree is front and center in the library atrium, the first thing folks see when entering the library. It's great to hear children squealing with awe as they see it for the first time!



STEP THREE: DETERMINE A SOURCE OF APPROPRIATE BOOKS

It is important to find many books that are of similar size and thickness. We used the Literary Criticism and Contemporary Authors series, being weeded from the reference collection and destined for recycling. As more reference areas are reduced and partially replaced by online resources and databases, there may be similar sets available for your tree. Old donated encyclopedia sets, reference sets, even the typical best seller size will work. The base of the tree should consist of very large books if possible. The books can be different sizes as long as all books on each layer are the same thickness. Our 6.5 ft. tree weighs around 900 lbs., is made up of 35 layers of 261 larger books, approximately 11.5" x 8.5" with about 20 smaller books making up the top of the tree.



STEP FOUR: DO A PRACTICE BUILD (BEFORE ANY PREP OF BOOKS)

Do a practice build BEFORE you do any prep of the individual books. This may take a few hours, including rebuilds, so make a party of it with a few staff or volunteers. Pizza and beverages will help!



- Transport your books to a room/spot with lots of space to move around. Joseph used the family garage. Organize your books into stacks of similar size and thickness.



- Determine the diameter of your tree. Remember, our six foot tree has a five foot diameter base. if you want a bigger tree, start with a bigger diameter base.
- Using a yardstick and white chalk (or painters tape) make an outline on the floor of your diameter.

Make a centerpoint, then measure out from there. Example: with a five foot diameter, measure out 2.5 feet from the centerpoint and make a mark, keep moving the yardstick around marking 2.5 ft out. Connect the dots! (Smiley face optional!)

- Place the first layer of books inside the circle, spines facing out. Our first layer had 12 large books about 2.5 inches thick. Depending on your book sizes this number will vary. Fill the circle with the books touching or as close as possible.



- Place the next layer "brick pattern style" on top of the first layer. (Do not move inward...yet) You will have to experiment with the number of books on each layer and when to nudge the books inward to create a nice tree shape, using less books as you build upward. You can see from our online photos it took a few tries to get it right!

- The following is the "secret family recipe" of our tree.

LAYERS:

- #35(bottom layer), 34, 33, 32 – 12 books
- #31, 30, 29 – 11 books
- #28, 27, 26 – 10 books
- #25, 24, 23 – 9 books
- #22, 21, 20, 19 – 8 books
- #18, 17, 16, 15 – 7 books
- #14, 13, 12, 11 – 6 books
- #10, 9, 8 – 5 books
- #7, 6, 5 – 4 books
- #4, 3, 2, 1 – 3 books

The top of the tree is more "free form" with smaller random

size books – whatever works!

- When you are happy with the size and shape of your tree, take it apart, **NUMBERING** each book with the layer numbers (just the main layers, not the random top). Use a thick black permanent marker on the **BACK COVER** of each book with the layer number. Make a list of the layers and the number of books in each layer.



STEP FIVE: COLORING (OR NOT COLORING) YOUR BOOKS

- Depending on how you want your tree to look and the books you use, you may or may not want to change the color of your books. We decided we wanted a solid green tree. Some people may want to keep the books as they are, especially if they are multiple colors. We decided to spray paint our books, but this is very time and space consuming, as you will see in the photos. Again, an outdoor/garage space is ideal to attempt this.



- Grab an old sheet, folding table, some bricks and your choice of paint! You could do different colors also. Set your bricks up on the table, maybe 4-5 at a time, like a production line.

Open each book and drape over the brick, cover facing you, so that it will be vertical while you are painting it. You do NOT need to paint the back cover of the books. This will save paint and allow for quicker drying time and stacking.



- Start spraying – use gloves and masks. Use even horizontal strokes back and forth over the



front cover and spine, with a little overlap onto the back cover. One coat did it for us, thankfully. Go around the table, spray painting each book.

- When finished painting the first group, pick up each book by the back cover and lay out to dry. REPEAT, REPEAT, REPEAT, taking breaks to breathe fresh air! They dry very quickly, but let dry as long as possible, then stack the books keeping numbered layers together.



- OPTIONS FOR COLORING BOOKS:** Cover books with THICK wrapping paper, contact paper, or cover or paint just the spines of each book.

STEP SIX: TOP OF TREE

- Paint or prep the smaller books the same way for the top of the tree. You may want to have a few extra of these to get the shape just right. You



can use all books to come to a “point”. Or for the very top – what could be better than an old fashioned folded book page tree! Very easy –

if you didn't make these as a kid with Readers Digests, take a look on pinterest, by googling or check out: <https://holidappy.com/holidays/Make-a-Christmas-Tree-With-Folded-Book-Pages>. Or <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1RNP-z32ac>

We used a hardback book, removing the cover, painted with the same green spray paint and printed a simple paper star.



STEP SEVEN: THE LIBRARY BUILD & DECORATING



- Time for another after hours build party! Start by doing your circle on the floor for your diameter. Following your list and your numbered books, place your first layer of books and REPEAT, REPEAT,

REPEAT...again. As you are building, be sure to step back every few layers and take a look from all sides to be sure it is fairly symmetrical. (It will NOT be perfect and that's OK!) Build times will vary, but a rough guess for a 6 ft



tree, with 2-3 people is about 3 hours (with decorating).

- Lights and decorations are optional. We used cool white lights, small PLASTIC ornaments

(Kids WILL touch) and glittery pinecones. Or, have children participate by making handmade ornaments. Be sure to attach a floor clicker to the lights for easy turning off and on. We wrapped some gold fabric around the base, to help cover up the wires.



THE FUNDRAISING COMPONENT

Of course, you can build a book tree just for your patrons to enjoy for the holidays, but they may also want to be a part of your tree for the season. At Fredricksen Library, in 2013, volunteer and staff member, Joseph Smolinski had the idea to raise money for the library AND for the survivors of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines. Our patrons could participate by dedicating a book on the tree with a donation. Their family name, loved one, friend, organization, children, pet, and names "in memory of" would be placed on the spine of one of the 100s of books on our tree. The first year was a wonderful success, raising over \$1500.00, with half going to the library and half going to Save the Children. Five years and \$10,000 later, the tree returns to our beautiful atrium each November. Will this fundraiser work at your library? Here's some steps to determine if it will.



STEP ONE: DECIDE ON A TIMEFRAME

Decide on a timeframe in which to display your tree. Yes, some people do not like the earlier and earlier appearance of holiday decorations in the stores. That said, if you ARE planning to make your tree a fundraiser, the earlier the better. We display our tree no later than the middle of November. Families placing a name on the tree will want to see it as long as possible for the holiday season. Dedications are usually accepted until December 20th. The tree is taken down the first weekend of January. A shorter timeframe will work, but will reduce the number of donations. Six to eight weeks is ideal.

STEP TWO: DECIDE IF YOU WILL BE SHARING THE FUNDS

Will you be splitting the donations with another organization or current need locally or worldwide? (hurricane relief, local food bank, flood relief) This gives families the chance to donate easily to these causes AND help the library they love at the same time. BUT – with decreasing funding for libraries every year, designating that donations go solely to the library is also a great option.

STEP THREE: DECIDE ON A MINIMUM DONATION

Fredricksen asks for a minimum donation of \$10 a book. This makes an affordable way for many families to be a part of this tradition each year. You may find, as we have, that many folks donate more than the minimum. Over the years we have received many \$25, \$50 and even a few \$100 book dedications!

STEP FOUR: DEVELOP AN ORDER FORM WITH ALL THE DETAILS

- Decide how much information you want to collect from your patrons. We collect all contact info in case there is a question about the dedication. We also send a thank you email acknowledging the donation. An email may also be sent to past donors each year when the tree goes up.
- Under “Amount of donation” - always be sure to state (\$_____ minimum) and they will know that can donate more.
- Decide on a maximum number of characters you will be able to put on the book spines. We do 20 characters, but there are always folks who need to squeeze a few more on. Do the best you can to accommodate them. This will also depend on the way you will be applying the names to your book spines.
- At Fredricksen, we offer a choice of 5 different lettering colors: Red, Light Green, Silver, Gold and White with a few symbols like hearts, pet paw prints, peace signs, etc. Just white is fine too!
- Be sure to log all donations in an excel sheet to keep track of donations and details of their orders. The following year, you may want to send an email to past donors announcing the return of your tree for the season. A large percentage of our dedications are repeat donors.

HOLIDAY BOOK TREE DONATION FORM 2017



Created entirely from books destined for the recycling bin, Fredricksen Library's Holiday Book Tree is an annual tradition coordinated by Joseph F. Smolinski. You can help us decorate the tree by making a donation (minimum \$10) to the library in honor or recognition of an important person(s) in your life. Your name, or the name of your loved one, or message will be placed on the spine of one of the books on the Holiday Book Tree. **THIS YEAR half of proceeds will benefit the Cleve J. Fredricksen Library AND half will support much needed hurricane relief in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Please consider this when deciding on your donation amount to help us meet our goal. Thank you for participating in this annual tradition!**

NEW THIS YEAR! - CHOOSE YOUR COLOR: TRADITIONAL WHITE___ RED___ GOLD___ LIGHT GREEN___ SILVER___
PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY (20 characters and spaces max.)

PRINTED ON BOOK SPINE: _____

YOUR Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Amount of donation (\$10 min.): Payment: _____ Cash___ Check # _____

Credit Card VISA MC AMEX DISC Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date: _____

NOTE: Holiday cards are available at the library for you to notify the person(s) you are honoring.

STEP FIVE: PLACING THE DEDICATIONS ON THE TREE

- To give folks an idea of what you are doing, do a few sample names for the tree. Maybe an “In Memory of”, family name, organization name, children, pets, etc. As donations



start to come in, patrons will be anxious to see their dedications on the tree. At Fredricksen, we try to get the new names on the tree within two days of the order. There are several ways to apply the names to the book spines. We use a Photoshop template to do the names and run them on our color copier on 8.5 x 11 label stock (MacTac). They are run

6-7 up on a sheet and cut into strips. Some folks request a special place on the tree, some order multiple dedications and want them grouped together. When you receive dedications, try to space them out all around the tree. Especially the first year of your book tree, you won't know if you will get a few dedications or a few hundred, so you will want them spread out over the whole tree. On the top small books, print out some holiday words (hope, faith, love, peace, joy, etc.) or as we have done – Happy Holidays in different languages.

- **OPTIONS:**
Book names can be done several ways
 1. by hand with a gold or white paint marker
 2. simple word or publisher document cut into strips
 3. If label material isn't available, use cardstock, removable spray mount or other removable adhesive. (Removable so books reusable the next year!)



STEP FIVE: PROMOTION

Just the appearance of your Holiday Book Tree will be a big help in getting the word out!

- Start with posters and bookmarks a few weeks before announcing your fundraiser.
- Contact your local newspaper and/or tv news stations – they are always looking for feel-good stories around the holidays. (See our newspaper coverage at https://www.pennlive.com/west-shore/index.ssf/2014/12/fredricksen_library_holiday_t.html) (below)
- Create a webpage for your fundraiser with all details, photos and if possible, a way to order and pay online. (We use Paypal)
- Of course, social media will play a huge part in the success of your fundraiser. We utilized facebook and Instagram and shared our posts on local groups and on national library facebook pages. Joseph also made a stop motion video just using photos shot while building.



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2015 Holiday Book Tree



Stop in starting November 9th and see the 2015 Fredricksen Library Holiday Book Tree!

Our book tree is a wonderful new holiday tradition at Fredricksen. Created entirely from out-of-date withdrawn books that were destined for the recycling bin, the 6 ft. tree is a volunteer fundraising project by Joseph F. Smolinski.

For a donation in the amount you choose (minimum \$10), we will place your name or family name on the spine of a book for the 2015 holiday season. 100% of your donation will be used at Fredricksen Library to enhance programming, buy needed equipment or for special projects.

What a wonderful way to honor your family or loved one and support Fredricksen Library! Dedications available November 9th through December 20th. Holiday cards will be available for you to send to the recognized person or family if desired. Forms are available at the Reference and Circulation Desks, DOWNLOADABLE below, or make your dedication request with payment ONLINE below.



MAKE YOUR DEDICATION REQUEST ONLINE by CLICKING the DONATE button below!

(If a holiday card is needed, it must be picked up at the Fredricksen Library Reference or Circulation Desk)



See photos and video of the building

of the FIRST year of the Holiday Book Tree [HERE](#) or below:



[SEE THIS YEAR'S 12/10/15](#)

Student's Fredricksen Library holiday tree speaks volumes

Usually books are made from trees, but sometimes trees are made from books — paralleling 10-year-old Joseph Smolinski's here.

I have decided that the amazing, gorgeous, clever and altogether wonderful holiday tree that Smolinski, who lives in Silver Spring Twp., has built for the last two years out of discarded books at the Clevie J. Fredricksen Library in Camp Hill is not only absolutely smashing, it's also fabulously, wonderfully gestalt.

A whole that is something other than the sum of its parts. This, by the way, is a very unusual holiday tree. Here's my thought process.

The tree, which stands near the library entrance, is made of more than 300 books the library was going to discard. Last year,

ALLISON DOUGHERTY
COMMENTARY

Smolinski and his parents took the saved-from-the-bin books home and painted them green. They carried the books back to the library, and Smolinski built them into a 6-foot-tall tree.

Smolinski told me the whole thing, from start to finish, took about 50 hours.

Cindy Smolinski, who is Joseph Smolinski's mother and the library's marketing coordinator, said it's a little freaky having all kinds of strangers looking at photographs of her garage.

The photographs have

had a lot of online traffic. The tree is something of a celebrity in the book-tree world. But I digress. I will continue with my gestalt of the tree.

This tree is not just a holiday tree made from almost discarded books. This tree is other than the sum of its parts. This truly beautiful tree is also a fundraiser, which brought in about \$1,500 in donations for the library last year.

This year, the tree raised that much by the second week in December.

How does the fundraiser part work? For a donation, you can have your name, your family's name or, I suppose, your neighbor's name, if you really like your neighbor, printed on the spine of one of the tree's books, where it will stay

Please see TREE on Back Page



Joseph Smolinski, 10, of Silver Spring Twp., and his fundraising library-book holiday tree at the Clevie J. Fredricksen Library in Camp Hill.

Be a part of the 2014 Fredricksen Library HOLIDAY BOOK TREE!

Our book tree is a wonderful new holiday tradition at Fredricksen. Created entirely from out-of-date withdrawn books that were destined for the recycling bin, the 6 ft. tree is a volunteer fundraising project by Joseph F. Smolinski.

For a donation in the amount you choose (minimum \$10), we will place your name or family name on the spine of a book for the 2014 holiday season. 100% of your donation will be used at Fredricksen Library to enhance programming, buy needed equipment or for special projects.

What a wonderful way to honor your family or loved one and support Fredricksen Library! Dedications available November 3rd through December 19th. Holiday cards will be available for you to send to the recognized person or family if desired. Forms are available at the Reference and Circulation Desks or ONLINE at fredricksenlibrary.org

THANK YOU

Ruth Walker Foltz

Cindy Foltz Smolinski • American Library Association

December 15, 2013 • Camp Hill, PA •

The Little Tree That Could...

A fundraiser created by volunteer Joseph F. Smolinski to benefit Fredricksen Library and Save the Children, the Holiday Book Tree has brought lots of good cheer to our patrons and staff in addition to raising over \$1,000! Built out of hundreds of withdrawn books, patrons are able to have their names or name of a loved one placed on a book spine. Check out photos of the building process here - <http://www.cumberlandcountylibraries.org/> — at Fredricksen Library.

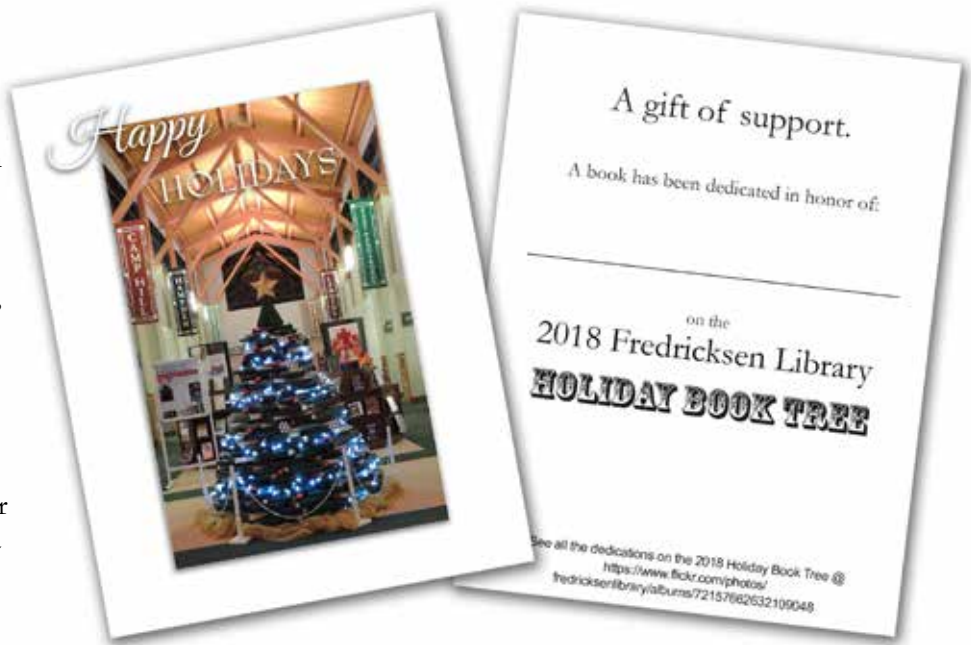


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Comment

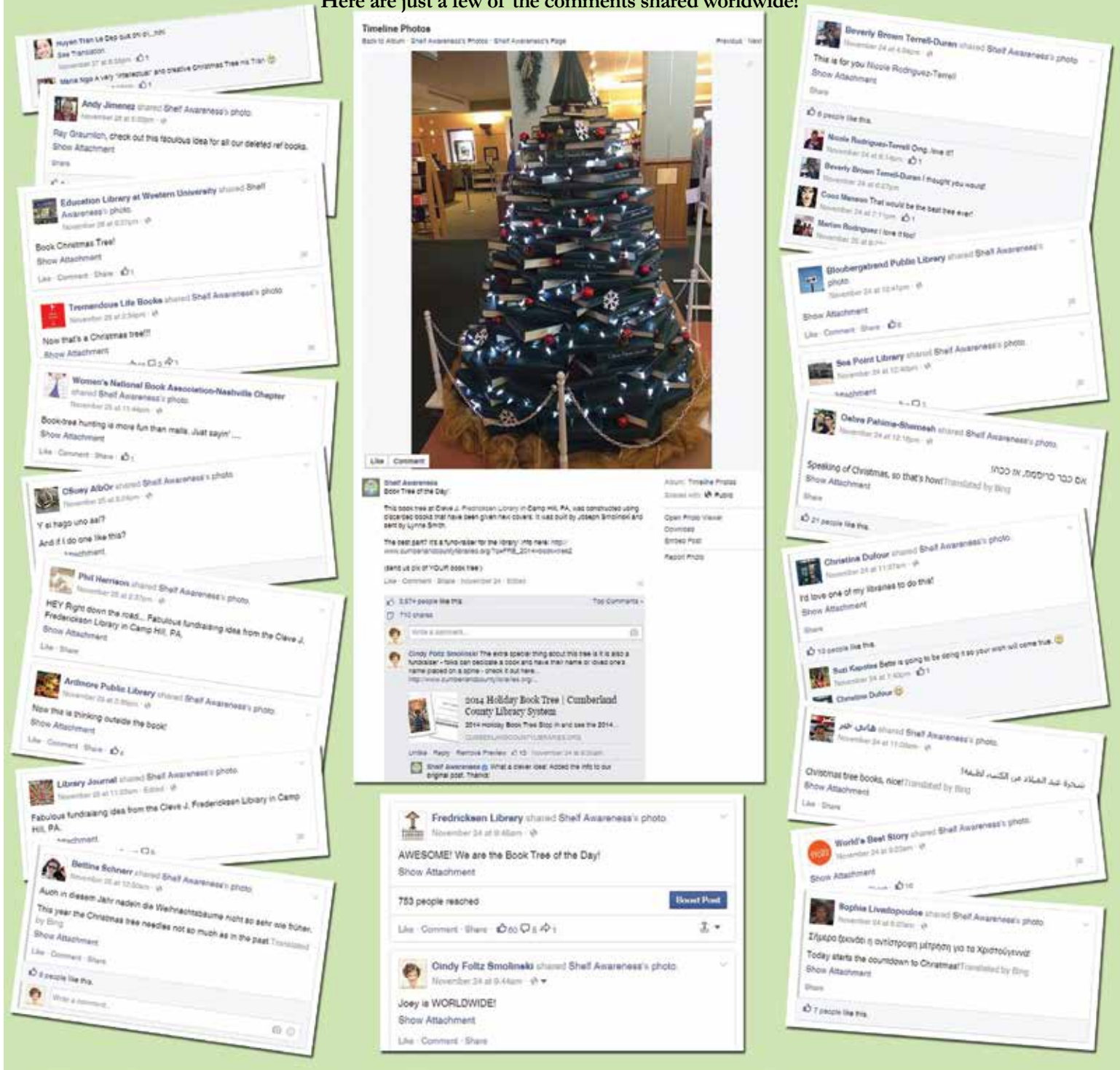
Share

Each library will have great ideas to make their tree their own. At Fredricksen, we have done a few things that have been well recieved, one being Holiday donation recognition cards. These simple cards announce dedications to the folks or families recognized by the donation. If a dedication is made honoring a grandchild, the grandparent can pick up a Holiday card to send to the family announcing the gift to the library. These are especially nice for long-distance dedications if the person/family recognized is not local. Cards can be created with a photo of your tree, printed 2up on a copier and fit into a plain A2 envelope.



the little tree goes worldwide!

In 2014 our tree was chosen as "Book Tree of the Day" on the Shelf Awareness facebook page. Here are just a few of the comments shared worldwide!



We'd LOVE to see (and hear about) YOUR tree!

#booktreefundraisers

twitter.com/cjfredricksen ~ facebook.com/fredricksenlibrary ~ instagram.com/fredricksenlibrary

Cleve J. Fredricksen Library

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