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On Friday, April 21, the Cobb Collaborative led a dedication and ribbon cutting of a new Little Free Library at Garrett Middle School in Austell. Collaborative Executive Director Irene Barton was joined by Austell Mayor Ollie Clemons, Jr., Cobb County School Board Area 3 Board Member Leroy Tre Hutchins, local entrepreneur and children's book author, Tameka Mitchell, and administrators, staff, National Junior Honor Society students and parents from Garrett Middle School.

Little Free Library is a nonprofit organization dedicated to putting books in the hands of children and adults in communities around the world with a vision to have "a Little Free Library in every community and a book for every reader." These book-sharing boxes remove barriers to book access by being available 24/7 with free accessibility. LFLs operate under the "Take One, Leave One" theory which encourages readers to not only take a book, but to leave one for others when there is an ability to do so.

Mayor Clemons spoke to those gathered about the importance of reading and Board Member Hutchins reiterated that literacy is the foundation for all learning. Ms. Mitchell also encouraged the students to pursue their dreams and remember the power of "and", as she stated, "I am an author AND an entrepreneur." Ms. Mitchell also donated copies of her book, "My Super Mom and her Sidekick Crew," to the LFL.

As a Little Free Library community partner, Cobb Collaborative is pleased to continue its goal of establishing LFLs all throughout Cobb County. This is the third LFL established in Austell so far this year. The Collaborative proudly serves as the local point of contact for the Get Georgia Reading Campaign. Research from this campaign confirms that development and use of language skills from early childhood through adolescence has a dramatic and positive impact on an individual's overall quality of life and life outcomes.

For more information on Little Free Libraries, including sponsorship opportunities, please contact Cobb Collaborative Executive Director, Irene Barton, via email at ibarton@cobbcollaborative.org.

The Cobb Collaborative is a membership of non-profit organizations, local government, businesses, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, professional organizations, associations, and citizens who share ideas, expertise, and resources to improve outcomes for children and families in Cobb.