

DAILY NEWS

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SIMON SONG

FAMILY MATTER Chloe Bryant Barbera, 4, holds book by ancestor William Cullen Bryant in midtown park named for poet, with relatives Wynona Bryant Barbera, 10, and Claudia Goddard.

Reading room sprouts in park

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The gloomiest June on record hasn't dampened New Yorkers' enthusiasm for Bryant Park's new outdoor reading room.

Inspired by the New York Public Library's outdoor reading area, which was in the park from 1935 to 1943, the new site is about the size of the original. It offers 540 books, 170 magazines and 18 newspapers.

An early visitor on opening day last week, Charlotte Fuchs, 54, picked up "How to Love a Difficult Man."

Marveling at the open lending policy, Fuchs, of Brooklyn, wondered, "How do they keep these books from getting stolen?"

The answer is simple: Good Samaritans keep an eye on colored stickers. Rare and popular reads and periodicals with red circles stay on the premises at the north side of the park.

Anything with a green marker can be taken home and even swapped.

The loosely organized al fres-

co reading room charmed Stella Syrrakos, who wants one at home in Milwaukee. "I'm going to talk to my mayor and give him the idea," said the visiting 72-year-old.

Heading the mostly volunteer staff, Jordan Benke has little library experience but is enthusiastic about the job. "I'm glad I'm not working in an office," said the 23-year-old, who will be paid an intern-level wage.

Benke, an artist by night, has lived in the city for two weeks but is relishing the chance to affect what New Yorkers read.

"I want to get a collection of art books," he said, adding that books in storage will likely be rotated in.

One author who remains a staple is the park's namesake, poet William Cullen Bryant.

His great-great-great-granddaughter, 10-year-old Wynona Bryant Barbera, was at the opening ceremonies. Shyly confessing to being a poet, she hopes that one day her work will be in the park to be read by all.