

Simply One Page- Between the Sidewalk and the Street

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision motivated by my one page intent. Mike Haddorff 2624

We live on the western edge of old town, Fort Collins. Our house was built in 1959. But just a few blocks east, the homes grow older, the porches deepen, the trees stretch higher. From our place I can walk to downtown, along wide tree lined streets, the sourdough bread shop, my favorite Ace Hardware. The route itself feels like a gift.

The sidewalks tell their own story. Some are wide and relatively new. Others are uneven slabs of stone from another century. Between the sidewalk and the street is a narrow strip of ground where trees were planted years ago. That strip softens the walk. It creates space between traffic and porch.

And in that ordinary space, between public and private, something has been happening. Over the past decade, small surprises have appeared. A single miniature golf hole tucked between two elm trees. A tiny free lending library mounted on a post. A small dispenser offering treats for passing dogs.

None of it is required. None of it increases property value. None of it brings measurable return. Yet there they are.

As I walk, I find myself slowing down: A lone putter, a colored ball resting on a segment of green turf. Someone opening the little wooden door of a lending library and scanning the spines. A dog pausing eagerly while its owner retrieves a biscuit.

These yard supplements don't lighten the mortgage. Nor does the effort earn applause. It's simply a gesture, a humble offering placed into shared space.

Someone, at some point, decided to create a small, unexpected moment of joy for a stranger.

And I can't help but think there is something deeply human about that impulse. A desire to bring about a spontaneous surprise, in the best sense. To draw out a smile. To enrich another life, even briefly, without being asked.

Yes, I know there is another side to the human story. There are headlines and histories that remind us of that daily. But that is not the story for today.

Today, I'm thinking about this often over-looked instinct.

The one that plants beauty between sidewalk and street.
The one that adds delight where none was required.
The one that gives simply because it can.

Perhaps that impulse reflects something deeper, something of the One whose image we bear.

Or perhaps it is simply this: We were made to bring joy into the path of another.

And sometimes, it shows up in the smallest strips of ground.