

The George hotel dedicates Texas Flag book wall to Barbara Bush New Texas A&M hotel honors first lady's literacy efforts

Diane Cowen | October 18, 2018



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Neil Bush was on hand at The George hotel for the dedication of a literacy installation honoring his mother. The plaque reads: "My wish is for every parent and child to experience the joy of reading and a ... more"

Some 10,000 books with spines of red, white or blue are stacked floor to ceiling in an art installation in the entrance of [The George](#) hotel at Texas A&M University in College Station.

Together they form a Lone Star flag that's an homage to Texas authors as well as to the late Barbara Bush, who championed literacy efforts since the 1980s when her husband, George H.W. Bush was vice president. Barbara Bush was 92 when she died April 17.

The former first lady -- now dubbed the First Lady of Literacy -- founded the national [Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy](#) in 1989. In 2013, her son Neil Bush

and his wife, Maria, both Houston residents, formed the [Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation](#) to promote literacy efforts in Houston and help children learn a love for reading early in their lives.

Neil and Maria Bush were on hand at The George when the wall was dedicated, and they unveiled a plaque engraved with a quote from his mother: "My wish is for every parent and child to experience the joy of reading and a lifetime of learning."

"My family and I are deeply grateful to Midway for honoring Mom in such a special way," said Neil Bush in reference to Midway, the development company that created Century Square that includes The George along with a second hotel and retail complex. "We also wish to thank everyone for their outpouring of support since Mom's passing in April. Undoubtedly, Mom impacted countless people during her long and happy life and through her cause of literacy. We are committed to advancing her legacy and vision of literacy for all."

The wall's 10,000 books were collected and organized by [artist Thedra Cullar-Leford](#) who spent months combing through book stores and thrift stores for Texas-centric books that had red, white or blue spines. The installation includes books on all kinds of Texas subjects, from barbecue to horticulture, and even a few Aggie textbooks.

The George's unique layout and decor -- including the book wall -- are part of the genius of Kelie Mayfield and Erik Ragni, principals of the Houston architecture and design firm, MaRS Mayfield and Ragni Studio, which handled interiors for the Midway project. Mayfield and Ragni designed nearly everything in the hotel complex, from unique lighting fixtures to interesting wall treatments including hand-made rope and a smattering of "art sheep" -- some of which were tagged by artist Gonzo247. (If you stay in the hotel, don't be surprised if you see sheep moving from one spot to another. It's become a "thing" for guests to prank each other, sometimes placing a sheep at your door to greet you in the morning.)

"Barbara Bush left a legacy of selfless community service that humbles and inspires us," said Brad Freels, Midway's chairman. "We hope to encourage others to follow the Bush family's example by giving of their time and/or money to literacy causes, helping people to broaden their perspective and reach their full potential."

Freels and his wife, Claudia, co-founded the Midway Foundation, a nonprofit that used the dedication to kick off its own "Round Up for Reading" plan, which raises money for literacy efforts.

Midway Foundation, the charitable organization of Midway, developer of Century Square and partner with Valencia Group in The George hotel, also kicked off "Round Up for Reading." The ongoing fundraising program, Round Up for Reading is a convenient, easy way for hotel guests, visitors and the community to advance the literary legacy of Barbara Bush and the Bush family by making a donation in any amount when they visit The George.

<https://m.chron.com/life/style/home-design/article/The-George-hotel-dedicates-Texas-Flag-book-wall-13315938.php#photo-16348637>