



Rachael (left) and Debbie Lambin have been making book sculptures for six years.
PHOTO/JERI CHADWELL

Mince words

Book sculpture class

On March 9, visitors to the South Lake

Tahoe Library will have a chance to try their hands at sculpture, though they won't be using clay or stone. They'll be using a material native to the library setting—books. It's one of many free programs that Denise Haerr, the volunteer programs coordinator for the nonprofit Friends of the South Lake Tahoe Library, has arranged.

"Everybody likes those magic moments where you get free fun," she said. "And there's a lot of free fun at the library."

To find programming, Haerr said she attends events at libraries around the region.

When she met Debbie and Rachael Lambin, the mother-and-daughter teaching team for the upcoming book-sculpting class at an event last year, she thought their work would fit perfectly into her programming.

"We have a lot of really creative people in South Lake Tahoe who like to do hands-on things like that," Haerr said.

Rachael and her brother, John-Henry Lambin—who doesn't teach but also makes book sculpture art—are both studying medicine at the University of Nevada, Reno. Together with their mother, they've been creating book sculptures for more than six years—and selling them for about four.

"I'd say probably the moment where we started officially making artwork was when my mom was taking a college class, and she wanted to return the text book and get her money back, but they'd changed the edition of the text book," Rachael said. "So she was just kind of bored one day and folding through the pages ... and found it made this really cool design."

Upon finishing, Debbie thought the piece would look nice with a little figure affixed, something like Auguste Rodin's

"The Thinker." Rachael, experienced in clay sculpting, instead used paper to make the figure. The Lambins took the piece to an art show and were surprised when it sold. They began making book sculptures regularly. Some are simply books with folded pages, others including papier-mâché sculptures like the first one Rachael made.

"My son was in seminary, and [Rachael] made him the Armor of God out of a Bible," Debbie said. "And we got a lot of flak for taking a Bible and doing that. But it's amazing all of the pastors and the people who were in that profession—they all wanted one."

"There's always someone who has problems with us tearing up a book—any book—anytime we show them at an art show," Rachael said.

But the Lambins say their art is meant to honor the books from which it's made.

"And that's what we try to do with every single sculpture," Rachael said. "We try to think about what the story sparks in our imaginations."

In six years, they've made hundreds of book sculptures—some as commissioned pieces, others as gifts or donations. In the UNR medical library is a skeleton sculpture Rachael made from *Gray's Anatomy*.

Until just a few years ago, Debbie said, they'd never thought to teach their art form to others.

"I think we were afraid to teach," Rachael said. "We taught this to ourselves, and I don't know the first thing about teaching. But it really took off. I mean, people really love learning this. People just get to know each other."

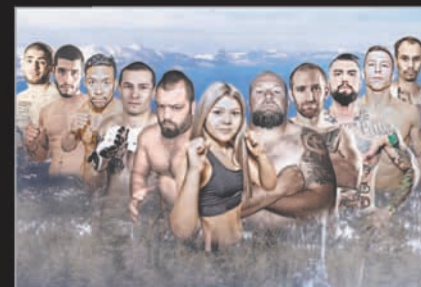
"It's like a knitting circle. ... They're all sitting at a table and talking up a storm, and they're folding," Debbie said. □

Learn more about the book sculpting class at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., here: <https://goo.gl/ZdaaPm>.

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