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New sculpture installed on Wagner College campus

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STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. — When students returned to Wagner College's bucolic Grymes Hill campus a few weeks ago, they were greeted by three new members of the campus community, who, though silent, speak volumes about the benefits of early learning and literacy.

The three, a mother and her children, are part of a bronze, nearly life-sized sculpture titled "Storybooks." The piece, by mid-western artist George Wayne Lundeen, was donated to Wagner by the Spiro family, long-time benefactors of the college.

The sculpture, which is appropriately placed on a pathway on the way to the Horrmann Library, will be formally dedicated in the fall, college officials said.

Lundeen, born in 1948, is a native of Holdrege, Neb. He earned his bachelor's degree from Hastings College and a master of fine arts degree from the University of Illinois before studying as a Fulbright-Hayes scholar at the Academia de Belle Arte in Florence, Italy.

In the mid-1970s, Lundeen established his sculpting studio in Loveland, Colo., where he continues to live and work.

A national inventory of public art, created by the Smithsonian American Art Museums, describes Wagner College's new sculpture: "Three figures seated on a bench, reading: a woman, a girl and a boy. The woman holds an open book with her left hand; her right arm is around the boy. The boy has his right foot on the bench as he holds an open book with both hands. The girl lies on the lap of the woman and reads the boy's book."

The casting of "Storybooks" is one of 21 pieces fabricated by Lundeen in 1992. Several other castings of the sculpture can be found at libraries in the American West, including the Beatrice (Neb.) Public Library, the Koelbel Public Library in Littleton, Colo., and the Laramie County Library in Laramie, Wyo.

Images of other pieces by Lundeen can be viewed on his website.