

Twenty Stories



Imagine you live in California and you go to a local coffee shop often; parked outside is a teal and pink truck. You see it, every time — it's hard not to — but you never stop. Although you can't remember why exactly, there is always something else to do, some rush you are in, some other task you've allotted your time. Perhaps you want to, but you never stop.

Now imagine you move all the way across the country — from Los Angeles to tiny Providence, Rhode Island. There, suddenly, you see it — parked across from a different coffee shop — *THAT SAME TEAL AND PINK TRUCK. THERE IT IS. IT'S RIGHT THERE.*

Hearing Emory Harkins tell it, this actually happened to an RI resident. "He ran into the van this past weekend ... he stopped and actually had, probably, a 20-minute conversation with us," said Harkins, who, along with his partner Alexa Trembly, co-owns the mobile bookstore **Twenty Stories**. Selling 20 curated books a month out of their renovated van, the pair recently switched coasts. This story, Harkins continues, "[shows] the nature of the two cities."

Mainly, it's a story about pace. The more engaged city residents are with what is happening around them on the streets the less quickly they are moving, certainly. For Trembly and Harkins, that is a good thing.

"The whole bookmobile concept is really nostalgic," says Alexa. "I think people, when they see the van, it's almost like a timescape where everything feels like it's moving a little slower and they are able to enjoy themselves and browse ... [to] take their time and find some peace."

In addition to the van, the pair will be opening a physical bookstore this fall, which will allow them space to host write-nights, events with local authors and illustrators and their monthly book club discussions featuring one selection from their list. Both creative writers themselves, they are excited about the extended possibilities a brick-and-mortar space will give them that a truck didn't; at the same time, they are grateful for the way they began - hardly fathomable in New England, their truck started up last winter in California.

The Pawtucket bookstore will house the past six months worth of selections - 120 rotating, curated stories at a time. "We always try to put our tastes aside," says Alexa. "So much can be covered in 20 books that I really do think there is a book for everyone."

“Just being around books gets you in that mental state where you can think more creatively,” Alexa says. Certainly the case, the Providence/Pawtucket community and beyond will soon have a new space to be inspired. In the meantime, Alexa and Emory will be trucking all around our city - stop and say hello if you can.