

spark

Anythink Receives National Medal



THE
ECONOMICS
OF
ANYTHINK

...see page 5

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Spark is what's created when Anythink customers walk into our libraries – it's a spark of creativity, of imagination and interest. Anythinkers offer the fuel.

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Cover photo: Staff were so enthusiastic about the National Medal award that they created their own version, worn here by community representative Donna Kelly. Her daughter Jasmine, left, and son Josh accompanied their mom to Washington, D.C., when Anythink accepted the "real" award from Michelle Obama. Photo by Stacie Ledden.

How to Reach Us

303.288.2001

Questions? Comments?

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Find Your Local Anythink

Anythink Bennett

495 7th Street • Bennett, CO 80102
303.644.3303

Anythink Brighton

327 E. Bridge Street • Brighton, CO 80601
303.659.2722

Anythink Commerce City

7185 Monaco Street • Commerce City, CO 80022
303.287.0063

Anythink Huron Street

9417 Huron Street • Thornton, CO 80260
303.452.7534

Anythink Perl Mack

temporarily closed for renovations
reopens Spring 2011

Anythink Washington Street

temporarily closed for renovations
reopens Winter 2011

Anythink Wright Farms

5877 E. 120th Avenue • Thornton, CO 80602
303.405.3200

Outreach/Anythink in Motion

8992 Washington Street • Thornton, CO 80229
303.288.2018

Visit us at Anythinklibraries.org.

A Letter From the Director

"Congratulations to the Rangeview Library District in Thornton for this prestigious honor. Four years ago, RLD realized the need to take bold steps to keep up with the rapidly changing way patrons interact with the library, and it began to re-engineer even the most basic services. The result is a new state of mind at RLD – and it's winning rave reviews from Coloradans of all ages. RLD is a model for how government at all levels can better meet the needs of our citizens, and I'm proud to join in the announcement of this award."

- U.S. Senator Mark Udall (CO)

At the beginning of 2010, it was looking like a very big year for Rangeview Library District. Anythink Huron Street opened in February, followed by the opening of our largest library and administrative offices, Anythink Wright Farms, in July. In January, we received a call from Congressman Polis' office. The Congressman wanted to nominate us for the Institute of Museum and Library Services' National Medal. So naively, but optimistically, we wrote the nomination and sent it off to Washington via FedEx one evening in early February.

We continued our work of ordering books, music, and movies, designing the renovations and coordinating moves and openings. We presented two programs at the Public Library Association Conference in March in Portland, Ore. The library team was overwhelmed at the standing ovation at both programs – it seemed like the work that we have been doing in our community was beginning to be an inspiration to other librarians around the country.



The National Medal for Museum and Library Service was presented by Michelle Obama at a White House ceremony Friday, Dec. 17, 2010. Anythink was one of five libraries and five museums to receive this prestigious award.

Then we began getting phone calls and e-mails from across the U.S. and even libraries in Canada. Librarians wanted advice, and they wanted to visit our Anythink libraries. Visiting librarians and architects often say, "I would love to have an Anythink in my city or town."

One phone call from *LA Times* reporter David Sarno resulted in a visit and our library being the lead in a story on the future of libraries. Our library in Adams County taking the lead, can you believe it? Then we got a call from *Library Journal*, a national trade publication for

see page 8

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

The Kellys Go To Washington	3
Economics of Anythink	5
Faces of Rangeview.....	7
Events Not To Be Missed.....	8

The Kellys Go To Washington



The Kelly family traveled to Washington, D.C., with library director Pam Sandlian Smith and RLD board president Kay Riddle as they accepted the National Medal of Museum and Library Service from Michelle Obama at a White House ceremony. Above, the Kellys pose at a Metro station shortly after their arrival in our nation's capital.

When library director Pam Sandlian Smith got the call that Anythink was selected as one of the winners of the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, she was told two things.

“First, we had to keep it a secret until the IMLS made the official announcement,” says Sandlian Smith. This was going to be quite difficult since she got the call in early August and the announcement

wouldn't be made until November. The second request was equally difficult. “We needed to select a community representative to accompany board president Kay Riddle and me to D.C. to accept the award.” With Anythink impacting so many lives in Adams County, Sandlian Smith turned to staff to help her decide who the representative would be.

Anythinkers were asked to submit their

favorite stories about people who've been transformed by their library experiences. As the many incredible stories poured in, one in particular rose to the top.

Donna Kelly and her family have been customers of Rangeview Library District for 10 years. She remembers fondly when her husband John and she took their first car for a test drive from 104th and Federal to the Perl Mack Library so they could read the *Consumer Reports* ratings on the vehicle. Kelly instilled a love of libraries in her children as well – Jasmine, 11, and Josh, 9. She started bringing them to the library as infants to participate in lapsit story times.

The Tales to Tails program at Anythink Huron Street had a significant impact on Josh as a reluctant reader. The program is based on a partnership between Anythink and the American Humane Association, matching reluctant readers with service dogs who listen as children read aloud their favorite stories. After some gentle encouragement by the Huron Street staff, he also overcame his fear of dogs. The once shy boy broke out of his shell and quickly befriended one of the service dogs; he is now also a voracious reader.

Dara Schmidt, teen guide at Anythink Huron Street, was one of the staff members who suggested Kelly as the library's community representative. “Donna Kelly is the kind of mom you want at your programs. She's always kind and supportive, and she always helps clean up. Every time you talk to her, she tells you about how great the library is and how much it means to her family,” Schmidt says. “The Kellys are library users, supporters, and all around delightful patrons. And they love us, too. When the Huron Street staff talked about who we should nominate, Donna was our first choice.”



Michelle Obama presented the National Medal for Museum and Library Service to five libraries and five museums during the Dec. 17 ceremony. Photo by Clara Bohrer.

from page 3

When Kelly was contacted to represent Anythink at the Dec. 17 ceremony in D.C., she was overwhelmed. “We’ve never been anywhere together on a trip,” she says. The only vacation they had together as a family previously was driving eight hours to Kansas to visit her in-laws. This would be the first time the family had traveled on a plane together.

Due to the graciousness of the library board, the district was able to redeem some airline miles to send the whole Kelly family to the nation’s capital.

Nine-year-old Josh was most excited about his first airplane ride. The flight attendants gave Jasmine and him cookies, and as they took off that cold Thursday morning from DIA, he looked out the window, trying to spot Anythink Wright Farms from the sky. The new library is walking distance from their home. “Josh caught on so fast to the Anythink concept,” says Kelly. “It took me a while longer.” It was the emphasis on creativity that really got through to her. As a mom who home schools her children,

she relies on the library for creative ways to teach them. Anythink has become a valuable partner in this quest.

The Kellys stayed at the W Hotel with the rest of the National Medal recipients, right across the street from the White House. “We could see the national

“The library district has revolutionized its operations in nearly every way, making it easier to use, empowering its staff, and establishing dynamic activities for users of all ages, and the results have been phenomenal.”

- Congressman Jared Polis (CO-2)

Christmas tree from the roof,” says Jasmine. This, along with their visit to the National Museum of Natural History, will be the experiences from the trip Jasmine says she’ll never forget.

Donna Kelly’s favorite part of the trip was sitting next to Sandlian Smith inside the White House, she says. Sandlian Smith and all of the library staff have adopted the Kellys as part of the Anythink

family. However, the Kelly fan club is growing. Kelly says after going through multiple security checkpoints and waiting in the cold, they were almost inside when someone greeted them to say, “Your congressman is here today.” Congressman Jared Polis (CO-2), who nominated Anythink for the National Medal award, was waiting for them inside – one of three representatives present. He greeted them with hugs and reminisced about the concerts on the lawn at the old Northglenn library. “We’ve come a long way,” he said to them. “I never imagined we would win.”

Congressman Polis invited the Kelly family to his office and then took Josh and Jasmine down to the House floor, where he signed their names to the bill he was working on.

When Donna Kelly, Jasmine and Josh visited the Anythink offices after their trip, they were still glowing. “This was the most incredible experience,” says Kelly.

As Sandlian Smith said to Mrs. Obama in their brief time together posing for press photos, anything is possible. The Kelly family’s journey is living proof.

The National Medal for Museum and Library Service is presented each year to five museums and five libraries. The annual award, made by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) since 1994, recognizes institutions for outstanding social, educational, environmental, or economic contributions to their communities.

The Economics of Anythink

Education, access and freedom to information are all worthy reasons to fund public libraries. Yet rarely is the economic ripple effect of these institutions touted as part of a library's worth. Rangeview's revolution has impacted hundreds of lives directly by putting people to work – and that's above and beyond the customers finding jobs using library computers, attending job seminars and gaining the knowledge they need to succeed.

"The impact the library's capital construction project has had on the Adams County community is significant – anytime we can educate our residents we're making a huge economic impact," says Thornton Mayor Erik Hansen. "I believe that what [Anythink libraries] is doing is really important and something the residents of Thornton should be proud of."

IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL WORK

The library's capital construction projects were not only a huge boon for library customers who get beautiful, state-of-the-art facilities, but also for the struggling construction industry.

For Humphries Poli Architects and their partners, the projects employed an average of 18.5 people over the course of each project – that includes architects, engineers, energy consultants and interior designers.

Denver contractor Fransen Pittman worked on the four new library buildings, along with a total of 100 subcontracting companies, with an average of 38 subs on each project. The number of individuals who worked on these projects – from electricians to landscapers and project managers – tops off in the hundreds.

"The Anythink library projects at Brighton, Huron Street, Bennett and Wright Farms had a positive effect on Adams County and Fransen Pittman when our economy was in an increasingly negative place," says the company's president, John Pittman. "The four library construction projects helped the local economy by putting Adams County and many other nearby community people to work, and set an encouraging example for other libraries around the United States."

CONSTRUCTION STAFFING NUMBERS FOR ANYTHINK'S COMPLETED CAPITAL CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS TO DATE			
Location	Total Construction Staff	# of Subcontracting Companies	Cost of Construction
ANYTHINK BENNETT	53	27	\$1,944,144
ANYTHINK BRIGHTON	97	37	\$5,667,000
ANYTHINK COMMERCE CITY	94	30	\$2,439,361
ANYTHINK HURON STREET	110	44	\$6,100,000
ANYTHINK WRIGHT FARMS	186	44	\$9,200,000

CREATING DESTINATIONS

Justin Sager, project manager with Wember, Inc., has been working with the library district for four years. He's been integral in ensuring the capital construction projects run smoothly and believes strongly in the mission of the library and its impact on local communities.

CREATING DESTINATIONS

"One of the benefits – and at Wright Farms specifically – is that we've created a destination in a part of the city people just passed through before. This benefits surrounding local business in addition to raising the quality of life for people who live directly in this neighborhood," says Sager. The same thing can be said for the new Anythink Brighton library,

which was built in a part of town the city is working hard to revitalize. Brighton city manager Manuel Esquibel says, "We haven't done an analysis of the economic impact of the library and the Brighton Cultural Center to the economy, but the two together have certainly attracted people to the downtown area for enjoyment, especially to the restaurants in the area."

The district collaborates with many local organizations and municipalities to enhance its services. Partnering with local businesses is also important. Thornton's own Bagel Bakery – with locations also in Brighton and Westminster – was recently contracted to run the Anythink Café at Wright Farms, scheduled to open the second week of January. This will provide an exciting new feature to the Thornton destination. Coffee served at the cafe will be from another Thornton-based company, Allegro coffee.

For Bagel Bakery owner Michelle Martinez, the opportunity to set up shop at Wright Farms was a no-brainer. "I love the environment, built-in customer base and becoming closer with the community." Previously, most of the bakery's

see page 6

from page 5

locations were “off the beaten path,” she says. “Many folks who don’t pass by – or pass by and only see the ‘bagels’ sign – have no idea how much we offer. This is a wonderful opportunity to introduce ourselves.” Martinez is excited to offer new items exclusive to the library and to be a part of the Anythink family. “They are a very unique group, and I feel honored to be welcomed.”

THE BRANDING BIZ

Launching a large branding campaign like Anythink also impacts local businesses that were contracted to create everything from signage to promotional materials and even the brand concept. John Bellina, co-founder of Ricochet Ideas, was part of the creative team that developed the Anythink brand and credits the experience with helping his new company gain their own brand recognition.

“While Ricochet Ideas is a Denver-based marketing firm, the national recognition, enthusiasm and impact of the Anythink brand has brought us potential new business opportunities from Iowa, California and Utah,” he says.



Anythink Wright Farms concierge Bill Zorack and his son Zach break ground at the library's groundbreaking in March 2009. Zorack is one of the 62 percent of Anythinkers who live in Adams County.

Bellina credits much of the district's success to its willingness to take risks. “Status quo thinking is a race to the bottom,” he says. “The Anythink team took a good, hard look at themselves and the current state of libraries across

the country and decided to be bold and take a calculated risk in order to become something great. So far, it would appear that the risk to rebrand and rethink as Anythink was a far better option than the certainty of staying one of the least-funded and ignored library districts in Colorado. That calculation, while seemingly easy in retrospect, takes a great deal of courage and commitment.”

Anythink did not set out to inspire others, but that's become one of the residual effects of its “little engine that could” story.

BUY LOCAL, SMILE LOCAL

In many ways, Anythink has approached its transformation like a start-up company. So it's no surprise that Anythink uses as many local small businesses as it can for its services. Companies like Scudder Press and FastSigns in Northglenn or Denver Bookbinding have become valuable partners in creating some of the promotional items that have helped Anythink succeed. Many of the toys found in the children's areas at Anythink locations were purchased at Westminster's Jillie Beans Toys.

“The majority of the money we spend beyond our materials budget is with Colorado companies,” says Anythink finance director Mindy Kittay. Professional services, utilities, snow removal, janitorial services and fuel are all purchased through Colorado companies.

The largest portion of the district's budget – 60 percent in 2010 – goes towards staffing. Of the 111 people who work at the district, 62 percent of them live in Adams County. The rest commute from areas like Denver, Boulder and Jefferson counties.

“It's important to us to support the businesses surrounding our libraries,” says communications director Steve Hansen. “These are our friends, our neighbors, and many of them are library users. They're part of the Anythink family.”



Anythink is more than just a library – it's a destination.



Congressman Jared Polis (CO-2), above, spoke about the importance of libraries during official remarks at the grand opening celebration of Anythink Huron Street, Saturday, Feb. 6, 2010. Polis has always been a strong advocate for the libraries in Adams County and earlier this year nominated Anythink for the IMLS National Medal.

Innovation Advocate and Honorary Anythinker

Earlier this year, Congressman Jared Polis (CO-2) spoke fondly of his mother at the Anythink Huron Street grand opening. As an activist, poet and entrepreneur, Susan Polis Schutz instilled a love of the written word and libraries in her son – a passion they both share to this day. This heavily influenced his lifelong dedication to forwarding education in Colorado and beyond.

Polis is a native of Boulder, Colo., and grew up using University of Colorado and municipal libraries there. While he was starting his first business ventures, he relied extensively on the CU library. “This was before the age of the Internet,” he says, and the reference area was an important resource for him. He went on to found several successful Internet companies and was named Ernst and Young’s Entrepreneur of the Year in 2000.

After being successful in business, he sought ways to further his passion for

education by serving on the Colorado Board of Education and founding two charter schools. He was then inspired to take this passion a step further to make an impact on a national level. In 2008, he was elected to represent Colorado’s second congressional district. In Congress, Polis serves on the House Education and Labor Committee and Subcommittees on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education, Higher Education, Lifelong Learning and Competitiveness, and Healthy Families and Communities – among many others.

“Education is the key to future prosperity,” says Polis. He believes libraries also have a role to play, especially in the information age. “Librarians are necessary to help navigate all the information that’s out there and help people find what they need.”

During the 2006 election, Polis was a huge supporter of the mill levy increase on the ballot in Adams County. “I was

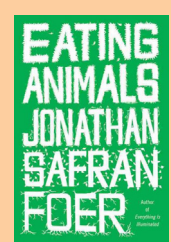
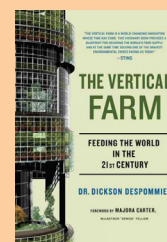
so thrilled when it passed.” He applauds Rangeview Library District and the changes it’s made. He believes the district has created “a model for what a 21st century library should be.” This was one of the reasons he nominated the district for the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. “It’s been exciting to watch the evolution of what a library can be.” The interactivity for children and the technology all add to its value, he says.

When asked about some of Colorado’s toughest obstacles ahead, Polis cites the state’s important budget issues. Despite that, “Colorado is a great place to live.” As the economy rebounds, there will be a lot of opportunities for job growth, especially with Colorado leading in renewable energy industries and technology, he says.

“State-of-the-art libraries like those at Anythink,” says Polis, along with Colorado’s public schools, will allow the state to continue to move forward. “As a congressman, I regularly use libraries for my community meetings,” and he encourages schools to do the same, to utilize resources available at public libraries. Through collaboration – which already occurs with after school programs, he says – libraries and schools can work together to improve public education and the quality of life here in Colorado.

JARED’S BOOKSHELF

When not signing bills or rallying concert-goers – as he did earlier this year at the Fourmile Canyon Revival benefit concert to help families devastated by the Boulder fire – Congressman Polis finds time to read about topics of interest to him. Here’s what he’s reading now:



Events Not to Miss

Anythink Cafe Ribbon Cutting

Join us as we celebrate the opening of the new Anythink Café at Wright Farms. Library customers will now have access to delicious coffee, sandwiches, salads and tasty treats catered by Thornton's own Bagel Bakery.



Thursday, Jan. 13, 11 am
Anythink Wright Farms
5877 E. 120th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80602



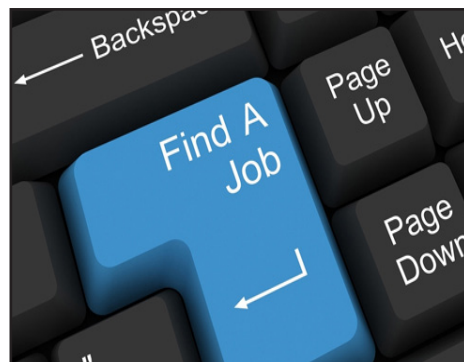
e-Book Extravaganza

Interested in learning about that new e-book reader you received over the holidays or just curious about all the hype? Check out this drop-in session where you will have a hands-on opportunity to experience the most popular e-readers on the market. Learn the capabilities of each and which are compatible with Anythink's downloadable media.

Monday, Jan. 10, 6-8 pm
Anythink Brighton
327 E. Bridge St.
Brighton, CO 80601

Anythink Works

Anythink Works is the monthly meeting of workforce potentials (a.k.a. job seekers). We'll provide snacks, moral support and library resources to find the perfect job for everyone.



Thursday, Jan. 20, 10-11:30 am
Anythink Huron Street
9417 Huron St.
Thornton, CO 80260

*For a complete listing of
Anythink events, visit
anythinklibraries.org*

from page 2

libraries. They wanted to do a cover story on our library. The article, "In the Country of Anythink," was published on Nov. 15, 2010.

We opened our stunning Anythink Commerce City in November to rave reviews. Our grant to Tri-County Health Department for two community gardens received funding, so both our Perl Mack and Commerce City communities will have community gardens this summer.

But the year finished with the most amazing news of all. Our library, the library that used to be the poorest library system in Colorado, had won the National Medal for Library Service. Michelle Obama presented this award at the White House on Dec. 17, 2010.

Congressman Polis was with our community representative, Donna Kelly; our board chair, Kay Riddle; and me as we accepted this honor on behalf of our community. Being honored by a White House ceremony is one of the most amazing events of our lives.

So, what does this all mean? We are fortunate to have passed our mill levy to improve our libraries at just the right time. Our entire team works tirelessly to provide libraries that measure up with the best libraries in the country. More importantly, our community has growing, thriving libraries that belong to Adams County citizens. Wow, what a year! I can hardly wait to see what 2011 has in store for us.

-Pam Sandlian Smith

CALL FOR ENTRIES

As a recipient of the 2010 National Medal for Museum and Library Service, Anythink will be visited by StoryCorps in May 2011. StoryCorps' mission is to provide Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs with the opportunity to record, share, and preserve the stories of our lives. Interested in sharing your story? In 75 words or less, send us your story suggestion and who in the community you might want to interview – or be interviewed by.

Send suggestions to sledden@anythinklibraries.org with STORYCORPS IDEA in the subject line.



When you're done reading SPARK, share with a friend, give back to your librarian or recycle.