

spark

Celebrating Imagination Through Nature



**Nature
Explore
Classrooms
in the
Works**

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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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On the cover: Children playing with Nature Art items at a Nature Explore Classroom. Photo courtesy of Nature Explore.

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Visit us at anythinklibraries.org.

A Letter from the Director

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

– Henry Ford

Anythink is celebrating its two-year milestone. Our new style of library launched with the opening of our Brighton branch. Now that the Rangeview Library District has finished our capital projects of four new libraries and the renovation of three, our work turns to transitioning our service to 21st-century learning skills.

Libraries are places of continual learning, whether you are a pre-schooler or a retired senior. The key role of libraries is to connect people with information and ideas. Libraries are becoming places that go far beyond a place to check out a book or DVD – they are centers of discovery of information, centers of thinking, centers of creativity.

That is why Anythink has begun to explore new ways of learning and experiencing information at our libraries. This summer at our Commerce City and Perl Mack locations, residents worked on their plots at community gardens, learning to grow



Don't miss the "Power of Creativity" exhibit at Anythink Wright Farms.

and eat healthy vegetables. Our gardeners have shared vegetables with each other, as well as gardening tips. Getting to know our neighbors and grow community is as important as the gardens.

We continue to raise funds for our Nature Explore gardens, outdoor classrooms that help children learn to interact with nature. Working with the Arbor Day Foundation and our local communities, Anythink will be developing these gardens, starting this fall.

The launch of our "Power of Creativity" exhibit at Anythink Wright Farms focuses on understanding key elements of creativity. All people are creative and innovative – we just don't always think of ourselves that way. Whenever you solve a prob-

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Helping Kids Fall in Love with Nature



Planning and development for Nature Explore Classrooms at Anythink begins this fall. Photo courtesy of Nature Explore.

These days there are a lot of distractions that prevent kids from spending quality time outside. Research shows that children who lack sufficient interaction with nature can have issues with obesity, dislike of the outdoors, and increased reliance on behavior-regulating medications.

Because children are the future, it's only right that they get a proper playground. That's why the Rangeview Library Friends Foundation is using the proceeds from this year's Sparkopolis event to fund Anythink's Nature Explore Classrooms – creative outdoor spaces that help connect kids to nature. By building Nature Explore Classrooms, Anythink will help to encourage a healthier lifestyle with unique exposure to nature during children's key formative years.

Instead of man-made, cookie-cutter playgrounds that yield largely

unchanging experiences, Nature Explore Classrooms give kids room for creativity while improving math, science, language and socialization skills. Children can build, crawl, climb and dig their way around in these dynamic playgrounds. They can also pound out tunes with marimbas and rain sticks, or create their own nature artwork.

Nature Explore is a joint project carried on by the Dimensions Educational Research Foundation and the Arbor Day Foundation. The first Nature Explore Classroom was built in 2003. Currently, plans are laid out to have classrooms at Anythink's Brighton, Commerce City and Wright Farms locations.

Lynda Freas, the Family Services director at Anythink, says that Nature Explore is a natural extension to the No Child Left Inside movement.

"It adds a dimension that's outdoors while expanding on our experiences inside the library," she says. "Whereas a playground is just a metal swing that a child gets tired of after a while, Nature Explore can really spark imagination."

There are several key elements of a certified Nature Explore Classroom, such as areas for climbing, building, making music, and getting messy. They synergize so well that landscape architect Jim Wike often describes them as "flirting with each other." In terms of design, no two Nature Explore Classrooms are alike – they make unique use of each space where they're installed, be it a day-care center or an alleyway in a city.

At Anythink, Development Officer Mahala Evans is most excited about this prospect at Anythink Brighton.

"They'll be able to take the empty lawn in front of the parking lot and make it a fun extension of the library," she says. "It's a shame when it's 80 degrees and sunny, and no kids are playing outside."

Freas says the beauty of the program is that it not only gets kids get outside, but encourages librarians to connect the Nature Explore Classroom with books, programs and experiences in the library.

Anythink's Nature Explore reality wouldn't be possible without the district's annual fundraiser, Sparkopolis, which was held on Sept. 24. Flagship branch Anythink Wright Farms

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which was held on Sept. 24. Flagship branch Anythink Wright Farms morphed into a marvel of creativity and playground of the senses. Most of the memorable sights and sounds that people fell in love with last year – the mixology station, Chef Ian, the disco ball – returned. But several additions – the hip music of The Fever, the flair from Fashion Denver, and “The Power of Creativity” exhibit – spiced up the party to make the second incarnation of Sparkopolis unforgettable. Toward the end of the night, there was also a special “miracle fruit” tasting unveiled, where sour foods magically turned sweet.

Partygoers also got to see where their donations were going. The outside

patio featured a table full of Nature Explore materials (tree cookies, rain sticks and a wooden marimba) that allowed guests to get a feel for the unique learning classrooms.

The word “library” typically conjures an image of an indoor space. But whether it’s Sparkopolis or Nature Explore, hardly anything about Anythink is typical. The first Anythink Nature Explore Classroom will be the first such public installation in Colorado, and will make Anythink just the second library in the nation to have a certified Nature Explore Classroom.

“I think it’s just gonna be a fun, unusual space,” says Freas. “After seeing a preview of it, it’s magical. We know kids are gonna love it.”

To help make Nature Explore gardens a reality, consider making a donation at anythinklibraries.org/donate-now.



James Brown, left, and Steve Miller enjoying a beautiful evening at Sparkopolis. Photo by Sean Fister.

Northglenn Transformed into Service Center



The nearby Crossroads Church has turned the old Northglenn Library into the GoServe Center.

In its long-running existence, the building that housed the old Northglenn Library is no stranger to multipurpose.

After serving as a library for 39 years, the facility closed its doors in Dec. 2009 for the move to the Anythink Huron Street location. From then to

mid-August, the building was used solely for library storage.

Now Anythink is leasing the top floor to Crossroads Church, situated almost catty-corner to the property, about 100 yards away. The downstairs floor remains dedicated as an Anythink depot.

Crossroads has divided the floor in half, using the right side as a food bank and the left side as a meeting space for mentoring groups from Vantage Point High School and the Hope House of Colorado. As part of its benevolence mission, Crossroads

also uses this space to offer bill-payment assistance for those in need. The move to the GoServe Center, as it’s now called, has allowed Crossroads to go from serving out of a 400-square-foot space in the back of their church to a 5,400-square-foot facility.

“We were really fortunate that the library district let us use this building,” says Chip Case, the business administrator for Crossroads’s south campus. “It was in great shape.”

According to Case, the church has been interested in the facility for the last few years in order to expand its Crossroads Community Outreach program, now in its tenth year. Crossroads also has a north campus in Thornton.

The extra real estate has enabled substantial growth of the operation.

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Now there's a lobby and a waiting room with children's books and a television. But most importantly, there's much more room for food storage – enough so that Crossroads has significantly improved the customer experience. Before, each client was handed a prepackaged bag of food, regardless of family size. Now, they get to pick out foods that suit their needs.

"People are very pleased with being able to shop for their own food," says Sue Melvin, the benevolence director at Crossroads Church. "Empowering them – I think that's the biggest benefit."



Sue Melvin helps a customer shop for some canned fruit.

During a walkthrough, Melvin shows off another benefit of the space, which is having room for a large walk-in cooler and a professional-grade freezer stocked full of perishable items like meat, milk and eggs.

The GoServe Center has traditionally opened its doors on Tuesdays and Thursdays to people residing near Northglenn, but recently added a Saturday slot to accommodate the demand. The month of September

saw about 200 more patrons than July or August.

The benevolence mission is completely volunteer-led and includes some 80 people, the majority who attend Crossroads services. The church is a key in supporting the mission, with its monthly outpouring to the benevolence fund. Melvin says that at the beginning of each month, the white donation barrels are regularly flooded with sundries like soap, toothpaste and shampoo from the congregation that totals around 2,000.

Melvin is more than generous with her commitment to the mission. In a part-time position, she works five days a week to stay atop "the many things going on behind the scenes" – all of the food ordering, pickup and stocking. And because she's the sole holder of the check-book, she's always on call.

"If we're out of peanut butter on Sunday night, I'm going to Wal-Mart to get it," she says. "But I'm more than happy to do it. This is what my life is all about."

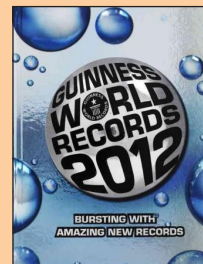
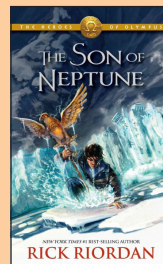
While it's common for churches to keep their benevolence fund within the congregation, Case says Crossroads wanted to share the wealth with the community.

"We just found more opportunity to

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New Books: Check 'Em Out

We've got great new titles for children and adults in October at Anythink.

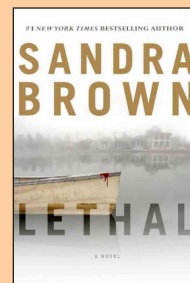


CHILDREN

- *The Son of Neptune* by Rick Riordan
- *Guinness World Records 2012*
- *Darth Vader Strikes Back* by Tom Angleberger
- *If You Give a Dog a Donut* by Laura Numeroff
- *The Bippolo Seed and Other Lost Stories* by Dr. Seuss

ADULT

- *The Litigators* by John Grisham
- *The Best of Me* by Nicholas Sparks
- *Life Itself: a Memoir* by Roger Ebert
- *Lethal* by Sandra Brown
- *What It Is Like to Go to War* by Karl Marlantes



FACES OF ANYTHINK



Denver native John Clute is the beekeeper for Anythink Commerce City. Photo by Shirley Clute.

Being the Bee Man

John Clute has a message for you: There's a bee crisis, and it means that you may not be eating many fruits or vegetables in the near future.

The Denver beekeeper who manages the hives at Anythink Commerce City warns about the serious issue of colony collapse disorder, where bee colonies suddenly vanish from their hives. It's something that's been regularly plaguing the worldwide bee population since 2006, with little understanding why. Clute throws out some serious figures: Commercial beekeepers have lost 30-40 percent of their hives; 86 percent of our food supply is derived from pollinating bees.

"It's not something most people pay attention to," he says. "But if somebody were to tell you, 'Look, in five years we won't have any pollination going on – you're not gonna be eating

tomatoes and potatoes at your table.'"

Theories ranging from radiation to pesticide contamination have been deduced to explain the phenomenon, but for now the issue remains unsolved.

A self-professed outdoors enthusiast and lover of nature, Clute is determined to do whatever he can for the cause. What piqued his interest in taking on the beekeeping duties at Commerce City is the rooftop camera, which was installed so that Anythinkers could view the vegetation on the xeriscape roof. But with the addition of the hives, Clute can use the camera to remotely monitor the bees from a computer.

In June, he installed two Italian honeybee hives amid the rooftop flora in order to aid the harvest in the nearby garden plots that were hatched in April. Another hive will be installed at Anythink Perl Mack this fall or next spring.

Although the initial reaction to having beehives nearby is usually one of fear, Clute has another message he wants to share: Most bees get a bad rap. That's because the more aggressive yellow jackets are the usual culprit for most bee stings in the general population.

"All they know how to do is protect themselves," he says

of the typical honeybee. "They're not the ones to blame for chasing you down the street and stinging you."

Clute says that most of his friends who come to his house are initially wary about sitting outside near two hives that he maintains. But after a brief education on the docile nature of bees, nerves are eased, and before long they're watching the bees with a newfound appreciation.

The backyard by his hives are a special space for Clute. Over the buzz of bees and the running water from the nearby brook, this is where he and his 18-year-old daughter Sierra have bonded and had some of their best conversations, be it about bees or life. Sierra is comfortable enough where she occasionally dons a beekeeper outfit and tends to the bees with her dad. But you won't find Shirley, his wife of 27 years, following suit.

"She's been my partner in everything I've done – except bees," he jokes. "It's just not her idea of fun."

"If the bee disappears from the surface of the earth, man would have no more than four years to live."

– ALBERT EINSTEIN

The two met at the Owner Builder School in the early '80s. Clute was teaching classes about home construction, and Shirley was a secretary there. Although Clute has worn many hats throughout his life, his contract-

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Clute rids dead bees from the honeycombs of a frame.

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ing and animal-trapping businesses have been his primary lines of work. Clute also has a habit of fixing and flipping houses – his current home is the eleventh such one, and he built it all from materials he found on Craigslist. He plans on building one final home – a straw-bale house. Straw bale is one of the few home-building materials he's yet to work with.

Although Clute had wanted to be a beekeeper for decades, he didn't have the time until he sold his lumber business in 1997 and started easing into retirement over the next few years. Then in 2002, Shirley and Sierra got him the perfect Father's Day present – enrollment in a beekeeping class.

"A swift kick in the back side is what I needed to get started," he says of the gift. "The next spring, I bought bees

and got my beehives going."

Although Clute has been a beekeeper for almost seven years, he refers to it as a hobby on top of his three-day-a-week gig as a general handyman. At Anythink Commerce City, where he checks on the hives once or twice a month, he sees his work as a way to give back to the community.

On this last Tuesday of September, he's here to medicate the hives with Fumagilin-B and apistan strips, which protects them

from mites and parasites. Clute says that the main job of a beekeeper is containing the bees in the hive and making sure they're healthy and producing larva. The key is removing superfluous queen-bee cells and preventing subsequent swarming. When a new queen is born, a swarm will form and leave the hive. A thriving hive can grow exponentially from 5,000 bees in the spring to 50,000 by this time of year.

When Clute is ready to inspect the hives, he climbs into his white, one-piece beekeeper suit, complete with a large astronaut-looking helmet.

"This is where I

turn into an alien," he wisecracks.

But after all the talk about bees, there are almost none to be found. Clute lifts the lids to the hives, only to find them abandoned – two more victims of colony collapse disorder. Disappointed, he searches for an explanation. All the honey has been consumed by robber bees, which is typical for an abandoned hive. But what puzzles him are the few dead bees that remain burrowed face-forward in the honeycombs, "like time just froze."

This is not the first time Clute has lost a hive. Last year, seven of his were emptied suddenly, though between his properties in Lakewood and Hudson, he's back up to nine.

This being the tail end of bee season, Clute still has some time to capture replacement swarms for Commerce City. He's working with someone now who will let him take his hives off his hands.

While Clute isn't happy with the fate of Commerce City's hives, the incident reaffirms the reality of the situation and the ever-increasing importance of solving the mystery of the disappearing bees.



Two bees pollinating an acorn squash plant at Clute's home in Lakewood. Photo by John Clute.

Events Not to Miss



Family Place Workshops Thursdays, 11 am-12:15 pm

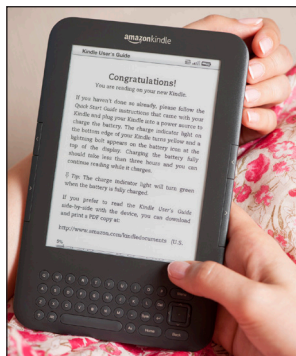
Family Place Libraries is a national network of children's librarians who believe that literacy begins at birth. Parents and caregivers with children ages birth-3 are welcome to sign up for this five-week series. Different childhood experts will be on hand to talk to parents and play with children. Each week, new learning and exploration activities will be offered.

Anythink Perl Mack
7611 Hilltop Cir.
Denver, CO 80221
303-428-3576

Exploring E-Readers Thursday, Oct. 13, 7 pm & Tuesday, Oct. 18, 10 am

Have an interest in getting an e-reader? Want to know the different types of e-readers? This class will discuss e-readers and how you can use them with library resources. Please bring your e-reader, laptop and questions as we discover the digital side of reading.

Anythink Brighton
327 E. Bridge St.
Brighton, CO 80601
303-405-3230



Your Money, Your Life Mondays, Oct. 17, 24, 31 & Nov. 7, 14, 3:30-4:30 pm

Financial literacy is crucial in today's economy. This five-week course for grades 6-12 covers many areas of personal finance, including budgeting and savings, checking accounts, credit cards, big purchases and paying for your education.

Anythink Commerce City
7185 Monaco St.
Commerce City, CO 80022
303-287-0063

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

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serve people this way," he says. "If we have the opportunity and the resources to be able to help, then we should do it."

It's this philosophy that extends beyond the GoServe Center. Crossroads members have also been involved with several Northglenn service projects, including painting, park-renovating and playground-building. Case says

Crossroads is also considering adding ESL courses at GoServe.

"We have to assume that we're planting a seed of hope in people's lives," he says.

"And at some point, whether it's Crossroads Church or some other church somewhere else, they'll be able to look back and remember, 'Wow, I really got some help from what happened there, and maybe it's time for me to help out, too.'"

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lem or put two disassociated things together to form a new idea or a new way of thinking about something, you are experiencing bursts of creativity.

Over the next months, visit our creativity exhibit at Anythink Wright Farms and then think of ways to incorporate creative thinking into your life. That's the Anythink way.

– Pam Sandlian Smith



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