

spark

.....

Interactive Zones Mix Learning, Play and Fun



**Discovery at
the Library**
...see page 3

STAFF

Library Director

Pam Sandlian Smith
psmith@anythinklibraries.org

Communications Manager

Stacie Ledden
sledden@anythinklibraries.org

Editor

Ken Devine
kdevine@anythinklibraries.org

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.

Published quarterly, *SPARK* is available at any Anythink library.

On the cover: Fraternal twins Zoe and Xavier Galaviz light up the Evolution of the Light Bulb experience zone at Anythink Wright Farms.

HOW TO REACH US

Questions or comments? Call us at 303.288.2001 or email us at itink@anythinklibraries.org.

FIND YOUR LOCAL ANYTHINK

Anythink Bennett

495 7th St. • Bennett, CO 80102
303.644.3303

Anythink Brighton

327 E. Bridge St. • Brighton, CO 80601
303.405.3230

Anythink Commerce City

7185 Monaco St. • Commerce City, CO 80022
303.287.0063

Anythink Huron Street

9417 Huron St. • Thornton, CO 80260
303.452.7534

Anythink Perl Mack

7611 Hilltop Circle • Denver, CO 80221
303.428.3576

Anythink Washington Street

8992 Washington St. • Thornton, CO 80229
303.287.2514

Anythink Wright Farms

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

Outreach/Anythink in Motion

8992 Washington St. • Thornton, CO 80229
303.288.2018

Visit us at anythinklibraries.org.

A Letter from the Director

"Success in today's society requires information literacy, a spirit of self-reliance, and a strong ability to collaborate, communicate effectively, and solve problems. Combining strengths in traditional learning with robust investment in modern communication infrastructures, libraries and museums are well-equipped to build the skills Americans need in the 21st century."

– Institute of Museum and Library Services, 2008

The Rangeview Library District has just completed its 2012-2014 Strategic Plan, which sets ambitious goals for our organization over the next few years. The previous years have seen tremendous growth in the infrastructure of the library, including buildings and collections. The next years will bring an evolution in the way we think about and deliver library service.

One of our key initiatives: Anythink is a learning organization. Because the library is a place of ideas, supporting curiosity and discovery is paramount.

Learning in the 21st century takes on very different forms. Previous learning centered around specific skills and rote learning, memorizing facts. Today's learning centers around thinking, problem-solving and collaboration. Communication skills combine written, verbal and technical skills, including photography, video, music and audio.



Anythink Bennett guide Emily Woodward plays with an Android tablet at a recent staff training day.

Our library is first working to support these skills in our employees, who in turn will develop programming and experiences to support these skills within our community. One such initiative that we have just begun is supported by the Anythink Foundation. The foundation is providing a rebate of \$55 to each staff member who purchases a digital reader within a three-month time frame. We are encouraging our staff to understand this new format by using and playing with it so that they can be conversant with customers who look to a guide, wrangler or concierge to answer questions about downloading e-books.

Book formats are transitioning. Libraries need to be versatile in the way we deliver our services and the way we support both our community and our staff.

We look forward to evolving over the next years so that Anythink remains at the heart of our community.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Playing with a Purpose	3
Family Services Director Wins Peggy Sullivan Award	5
Laptops Now Available at Anythink Brighton, Commerce City	5
Faces of Anythink	6
Events Not to Miss	8



Bishop Williams happily presents his planetary figures at the Eye Guys experience zone at Anythink Brighton.

Playing with a Purpose

Our libraries should transition to places to do stuff, not simply places to get stuff.... We need to stop being the grocery store or candy store and become the kitchen.

– Joan Frey Williams

If you've been in an Anythink library lately, you may have wondered why you've seen anything from baby chicks, 8-track players and pet fireflies to a life-size version of the classic board game *Operation*. These interactive spaces are called experience zones, and their goal is to provide moments of discovery and creativity in different parts of the libraries. These areas encourage customers to touch, play, connect and bring ideas to life in an organic way.

"To me, an experience zone is somebody coming into the library and finding an

'ah-ha' moment," says Sandra Sebbas, branch manager at Anythink Huron Street. "It's being able to come in and tinker with something and smile while doing it."

While these kinds of experiences aren't unique to Anythink, they are relatively uncommon in the library world. And although arts and crafts programs in children's libraries can be seen as precursors to Anythink's experience zones, the true inspiration comes

from the experience model that many museums use.

"The best museums are the ones that you walk into and actually get a chance to interact with the art or the science," says Anythink Director Pam Sandlian Smith. "There's a layer of understanding that goes beyond just looking at something and reading the title of it."

When Sandlian Smith began spearheading the transformation of Rangeview Library District into Anythink in 2008, she was a proponent of building experience libraries. She'd already helped implement such spaces in the early '90s as head of Denver Public Library's children's department, creating library experiences that marketed information

see page 4



Veronica Jaime shows off her creation from Wright Farms' Duct Tape Covers! experience zone.

from page 3

in a way that made it relevant and tangible.

At Anythink, Sandlian Smith and the district's design team ensured the libraries were organized in a way that supported the Experience Model, which focuses on the experience of every customer when they enter the library – from the way they're greeted to the way they interact with their environment. This meant nixing rows of tall, wall-to-wall bookshelves in favor of open areas where customers could relax, retreat and discover new things.

THE GAMES HAVE BEGUN

The recent increase in these interactive surprises at Anythink is a direct result of a staff initiative rewarding branches for the most creative experience zones throughout the year. Members of Anythink's experience zone team decided to solicit ideas from all employees, giving staff members the opportunity to see their meaningful contributions manifest into experiences that customers enjoy daily.

"Everybody has great ideas," says Rene Bohn, guide at Anythink Perl Mack. "For [staff] to be able to step outside the usual boundaries and do something

that's completely outside the lines, I think it's fun and rewarding."

The collective brainstorming has also yielded richer programming at the library. If there's a good idea for an experience zone that doesn't quite fit all the parameters, it can be parlayed into a program that does. One such example is Bohn's Melted Crayon Art program that will be held in April, in which participants melt wrapper-less crayons on a canvas to create a drippy piece of art.

LOOKING FOR THAT NEXT GREAT EXPERIENCE

The increased focus on experience zones is also having a positive effect on Anythink customers. In creating great experiences that forge an emotional connection to the library, expectations are changing.

"I have children running up to me now saying, 'Miss, Miss, what are we doing this week?'" says Laci Henning, guide at Anythink Washington Street.

Adds Bohn, "The kids really like having a place to come every day to be surprised – 'What's waiting for me here today?'"

Sometimes experience zones provide relief when customers just want to take their mind off things. Sebbas recalls a tassel-making zone last fall in which she approached a customer who came up with her own use for the zone. As she soon learned, the woman was having a rough day.

"She explained, 'This is my therapy – I needed to take this break and string all this yarn into a ball.'"

The beauty of experience zones is that customers can make them what they want them to be – even if it's just tidying balls of string.

As the year continues, Sandlian Smith says that customers will encounter even more engaging experiences to discover and contribute to at the library. For staff, this evolving initiative and the creative freedom it brings offers a world of possibilities, since experience zones can be big and small, easy or difficult. They can be anything – just as the Anythink philosophy suggests.

"As far as experiences go, we're definitely innovators in the library world," says Henning. "We're not just a house for books anymore."



Sisters Casandra Flores (front) and Yulisa Flores make new music to their ears at Anythink Huron Street's Singing Crystal Goblets experience zone.

Anythink Family Services Director Wins Peggy Sullivan Award

Anythink Family Services Director Lynda Freas was recently awarded the 2012 Peggy Sullivan Award by the American Library Association. The award is presented annually to an individual in a library administrator role who has shown exceptional understanding and support of public library service to children.



Throughout her career, Freas has dedicated her life to improving the lives of children and families through education and innovative library service. She has been instrumental to the evolution of Anythink's service by mentoring staff, reinventing the district's summer reading program, and bringing unique opportunities to children and families in the communities Anythink serves.

"Lynda has brought some tremendous programs for our families and children," says Anythink Director Pam Sandlian Smith. "She has a thoughtful, quiet manner, but is a powerhouse member of our Anythink team. She is so deserving of this award for her work throughout her career. She has always been on the side of our children."

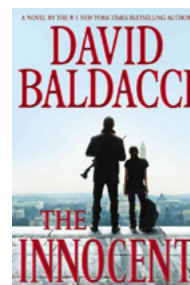
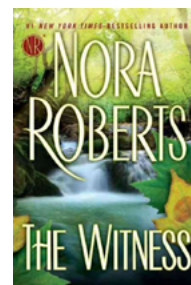
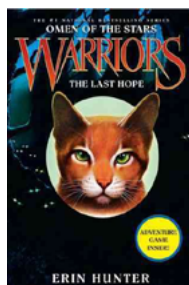
Freas will be recognized at the ALA Annual Conference on Sunday, June 24, in Anaheim, Calif., alongside Sandlian Smith, recent recipient of the Charlie Robinson Award.

New Books: Check 'Em Out

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

CHILDREN

- *The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?* by Mo Willems
- *Nancy Clancy, Super Sleuth* by Jane O'Connor
- *The Extraordinary Education of Nicholas Benedict* by Trenton Lee Stewart
- *If All the Animals Came Inside* by Eric Pinder



- *Omen of the Stars #6: The Last Hope* by Erin Hunter

ADULT

- *A Natural Woman* by Carole King
- *The Witness* by Nora Roberts
- *The Innocent* by David Baldacci
- *The Road to Grace* by Richard Paul Evans
- *The Fiddler* by Beverly Lewis

Laptops Now Available for Checkout at Anythink Brighton, Commerce City

Anythink customers can now check out laptop computers for two-hour, in-library use at Anythink's Brighton and Commerce City locations. Anythink Brighton has 24 laptops available and two ADA-compliant stations for people with disabilities. Anythink Commerce City has 12 laptops and one ADA-compliant station.

The technology was made possible through support from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Colorado Libraries. The grant will help

Anythink create a stronger culture of learning by providing better access to career support, educational resources and healthcare services. The computer centers are just two of 88 in the state of Colorado.

"We are so happy to be able to offer laptops to our customers," says Anythink Finance Director Mindy Kittay. "We hope that customers will take advantage of the portability of the laptops and find comfortable areas around our libraries to use them. We are also looking forward to continuing to help our community learn and use new technologies and tools."



Author Amy Denim has been working on her novel at Anythink Wright Farms since last fall.

Hopefully Romantic Author Gets the Write Tools from Anythink

Don't be surprised if one day Anythink gets some love on the acknowledgements page of Amy Denim's first novel.

That's because Denim, whose non-pen name is Aimee Denham, has leaned heavily on Anythink Wright Farms in writing her first novel, *Cookies and Cowboys* (a working title). Since last fall, she's nestled herself in the library's "retreat" area, typing away on her Toshiba Satellite laptop about four days a week.

Denim's writing schedule is the same as the work schedule of her younger sister, Wright Farms concierge Sheri McCaskill. The two have been living and carpooling together since last September, when McCaskill suggested that Denim ditch the distractions of writing at home, where productivity wasn't optimal.

"[Sheri] would come home from work and I'd be like, 'I didn't get anything done today – I watched *Cupcake Wars*

on Food Network,'" says Denim. "And she was like, 'Why don't you come to the library? We have wi-fi.'"

Denim, who was already familiar with Wright Farms from attending its grand opening in July 2010, quickly embraced Anythink's resources and facilities in support of her writing. Aside from the modern, comfortable environment, she's found that being around books comes in quite handy when she hits a wall. Recently when she was unsure of how to empower her main female character, she simply walked over to the self-help section and found something that relieved her writer's block.

"Sometimes I don't want to look on the Internet – I want a book about it," she says. "The library has everything I need for research right here."

THE DECISION

Less than a year ago, Denim was still writing, but living a different life in a place far from Colorado. As an English

teacher for International House Integra in Bielsko-Biala, Poland, she came to the conclusion that the best way to get published in America was to be in America. So with her family's blessing, she moved into the basement of their house in Thornton, with the goal of finishing her book within a year. She repays them by helping out around the house and with McCaskill's kids. If she's not on her way to getting published this year, Denim says she'll return to teaching as a career while making writing her hobby again.

Although McCaskill thinks she might have to extend Denim's self-imposed deadline, she remains supportive of her decision for a career change.

"I think it's pretty awesome," she says. "She's one of the people in my family who've found what they have a passion for and what they love to do, and have made that work."

WRITING AS A GET-TO

As a pre-published author with no source of income, Denim quickly became what she terms a "monetarily challenged starving artist." But now her luxury is time – something that few aspiring writers have much of. Denim wastes none of it, adhering to an almost daily writing schedule that's filled with writing, editing, critiquing, tweeting and blogging, making her passion and commitment to her work self-evident.

"Writing is a 'get-to.' If it's a have-to, you probably shouldn't be a writer," she says.

Currently in manuscript form, *Cookies and Cowboys* is being peer-reviewed by the Tuesday Typing Titans, a subgroup of Colorado Romance Writers who have met monthly at Anythink Wright Farms since last November – thanks to Denim's suggestion. Its 70-plus members include

see page 7

published romance authors like Melissa Mayhue, Pamela Clare and Robin Owens, whose books can all be found on Anythink's shelves.



Anythink Wright Farms concierge Sheri McCaskill, left, has been instrumental in supporting her sister's dream.

Denim has also volunteered Anythink in other ways. Last November, she was part of the effort that got Wright Farms to be a write-in location for National Novel Writing Month (NaNoWriMo), in which participants spend one month writing a novel of at least 50,000 words. From this session, Denim penned 20,000 words for her second novel, *Southern Comfort*.

"Everybody says, 'I'm gonna write the next great American novel,' but then they don't," she says. "It's just a great way to get started."

As a contemporary romance writer, Denim draws less from personal experience and more on her self-admitted "super-right-brained" imagination. Staples in her stories include a sexy hero and a strong, independent heroine. And, most importantly, a happy ending. Humor is also essential for her.

365 DAYS, 365 E-BOOKS

Perhaps Denim's biggest advocacy for Anythink is her love for all the e-books

the library offers. Through social media and industry interviews, Denim has raved about Anythink's extensive free e-book collection. She reviews many of these on her blog, *Amy Denim's 365 Days,*

365 E-Books, something she commits herself to writing daily.

Using her Kindle Basic and Sony PRS 505, she consumes e-books by the dozens and knows all the tricks to getting free e-books from retailers big and small,

and online resources far and wide. To date, she's downloaded about 7,000 for a grand total of \$12 – "maybe \$15."

Ironically, Denim didn't even start reading romance until a few years after she'd moved to Vietnam, where she first taught English as a foreign language. With an English literature degree from Colorado State University, all she knew were the classics. But after stumbling upon *SEAL Team 10* by Suzanne Brockmann (her all-time favorite author), she quickly fell in love with contemporary romance novels.

A FOOT IN THE DOOR

Denim's dream is to see her books on the shelves of Anythink or Barnes & Noble. She also wouldn't mind not having to live in her sister's basement.

"Everyone wants to be the next Nora Roberts, but really I think I'd like to be the next Katie MacAlister," she says. "It would be nice to be able to make a modest living out of it."

As someone who has a knack for sniffing out popular books well before they're popular (*The Hunger Games*, *Twilight*), McCaskill is one of the few to have read a working copy of Denim's manuscript. And even though she's more into teen fiction, she believes that her sister's talent, coupled with the environment that Anythink provides, makes a recipe for success.

"It's just a good place to be creative," McCaskill says. "And her book is a lot better-written than a lot of the things I've read, so I think she has a shot."

Thomas Locker Exhibit to Debut at Wright Farms



In late April, a special traveling exhibit featuring the artwork of the late Thomas Locker will debut at Anythink Wright Farms. The exhibit will include 10 of Locker's pieces that showcase the beauty of the natural world. There will also be programming designed around the exhibit, which will remain at Wright Farms until July. Locker hails from the renowned Hudson River School of painting, and his works appear in more than 30 books he wrote throughout his life.

Events Not to Miss



The Outrageous Times of Molly Brown **Thursday, April 19, 4-5 pm**

A costumed actress will trace Molly's life from her early childhood in Hannibal, Mo., to Leadville, Colo., where she met and married J.J., and finally to her days of glory in Denver and New York. A great program for all ages!

The Armory at Brighton Cultural Center
300 Strong St.
Brighton, CO 80601
303-655-2026



Get Your Tax Forms Here! **Tuesdays, April 3 & April 10,** **10 am-12 pm**

Need assistance finding your tax forms? Help is here! The Anythink Huron Street tech guide will assist you in finding and printing your tax forms from the IRS website.

Anythink Huron Street
9417 Huron St.
Thornton, CO 80260
303-452-7534



Easy "Tie Dye" and Other Wonders of Color **Wednesday, April 11, 5:30 pm**

Use food coloring, baby wipes, black paint and different crayons to explore your colorful creativity. Appropriate for students in grades 2-5.

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

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

Anythink Featured on KWGN TV and Imaginibbles.com

In the near future, you may be seeing Anythink on your TV and elsewhere on the web.

That's because a public service announcement for KWGN and a video for Imaginibbles were recently filmed at Anythink Wright Farms.



Amber DeBerry will use public libraries to help her daughter learn how to read.

The PSA, titled "At the Library," was filmed by KWGN Channel 2

to promote their Everyday Book Club and Colorado Libraries. In the video, customers discuss the many ways the library helps them and their family, from writing a business plan to downloading e-books to getting help with homework.

Meanwhile, Anythink will serve as the launch video for Imaginibbles' imagi-NATION

web series, which highlights innovation and positive disruption in organizations across the nation. The video mixes staff and customer interviews with a series of skits that illustrate how Anythink has disrupted traditional library services.

For more information, visit kdvr.com and imaginibbles.com.



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