Anythink Libraries Director Wins Charlie Robinson Award

Pam Sandlian Smith Receives Prestigious Honor from Public Library Association

THORNTON, Colo.–February 14, 2012–Anythink Director Pam Sandlian Smith is the recipient of the 2012 Charlie Robinson Award for her “transformative vision and leadership in reinventing the Rangeview Library District.” Presented by the Public Library Association, this prestigious award honors a public library director who has been a risk taker, an innovator and change agent for a period of seven years, just as the eponymous director for Baltimore County Public Library was decades ago.

“What an honor to be recognized for rethinking our libraries,” says Sandlian Smith. “Just like every business, non-profit and governmental agency, libraries have to examine their core business in a creative way. At Anythink, we continue to adapt and invent the library for the future of our community.”

Sandlian Smith arrived from West Palm Beach in November 2007 to overhaul what had been the worst-funded library district in the state of Colorado for over 50 years. Her innovative and progressive view of libraries inspired the development of Anythink – an innovative new approach to library service. Under her leadership, the district implemented a bold new brand; built four new libraries and renovated three; replaced the Dewey Decimal system with WordThink, the district’s user-friendly, word-based classification system; restructured the organization; eliminated overdue fines; and reinvented programming with a unique, hands-on approach. All of this occurred in a three-year period after her taking the position.

This is not the first time Sandlian Smith has turned an underfunded public library into a center of community and creativity. At the West Palm Beach Public Library, wine, jazz concerts and beach-like spaces became staples, while an original hospitality model created new service attitudes in its staff.

“I have come to the conclusion that she creates magic,” says Sharon Morris, director of library development for Colorado State Library, who nominated Sandlian Smith for the award. “Pam dreams big, she inspires others to share a grand vision, she empowers them to do amazing things, and she creates fun ways of making change happen. She is reinventing what the public library is all about.”

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The Charlie Robinson Award will be presented to Sandlian Smith on Sunday, June 24, 2012, at the ALA Annual Conference in Anaheim, Calif.

About PLA
The Public Library Association (PLA), with more than 11,000 members, is one of the fastest growing divisions of the American Library Association (ALA), the oldest and largest library association in the world. Founded in 1944, PLA is a member-driven organization that exists to provide a diverse program of communication, publication, advocacy, continuing education, and programming for its members and others interested in the advancement of public library service. For more information, go to ala.org/pla.

About Anythink™
Anythink is a new style of library – a place of unlimited imagination, where play inspires creativity and lifelong learning. Rangeview Library District serves the residents of Adams County with seven Anythink libraries and Anythink in Motion – the district’s mobile library – and is one of the recipients of the 2010 National Medal of Museum and Library Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. For more information, go to anythinklibraries.org.

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