

FAREWELL TO CHARLENE PARKER



# High Plains Library District CommUNITY

JANUARY 2026



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# ARRO

## Reading When it Fizzles: Adults Read On 2026

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## What do **YOU** have to **SAY** about our newsletter?

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# ARO

## Reading When It Fizzles: Adults Read On 2026



Sometimes I hate to read. I'm a librarian with a Master's degree in English literature, and I'm constantly surrounded by new and exciting books. Yet I struggle to read sometimes. You know you have to pick out a book and find some time to start it. I have a hard time reading if there's other stuff going on in the room that I'm in, and I can't read at night because I'll fall asleep. And I can't really read during the day because, despite how cool it would be and how often we get asked, librarians don't in fact get paid to read on the job. Sometimes I can read on weekends if I don't have to go to the store or give my dog a bath. Or there's the perpetual reminder to re-pot a plant that has become increasingly morose.

I know this article is beginning to sound like an anti-reading version of *Green Eggs and Ham*, "I CANNOT READ THEM IN A BOX. I DO NOT LIKE BOOKS WITH A FOX."

All that to say, I'm empathetic to library patrons who tell me that they do not have time or desire to [join our reading program, Adults Read On \(ARO\)](#). I'm even understanding if they say that they don't need another acronym in their life right now. I get it.

There's this great Audrey Hepburn and William Holden movie, [Paris When It Sizzles \(1964\)](#), where a screenwriter (Holden) explains to his secretary (Hepburn) how to structure a movie story arc. Holden's character refers to a plot twist, as "the switch". Well, here is "the switch" of this article (in other words, where I explain that reading is kinda fantastic and you might as well get prizes for it).

Everyone loves stories. Everyone loves to tell stories and hear stories. We understand ourselves through stories and learn about the world through story devices like plot, character, setting, etc.

When I was a kid, I did the summer reading program with the library. I was not a strong reader, but

I scraped by getting my reading log minutes in with action chapter books like *The Three Musketeers*. The prize was that I could have pizza with the rest of my more literary-adept siblings, but the real prize was the impact that reading had on my confidence and how the stories encouraged me to see new perspectives.

Adults Read On is designed to encourage adults to have the same love of reading we had when we were younger. Or maybe you never had that love of reading, but you have a love of stories. It's not about what you read, how you read, why you read, when you read, or for how long you are able to read. ARO 2026 is 20 books of any kind in 12 months. Pretty doable, right? Adults have to do all the hard stuff, but reading and getting prizes for that can be simple-ish. Wouldn't it be nice to read whatever your grown-up version of *The Three Musketeers* would be? Wouldn't it be nice to find out you like green eggs and ham?

Here's some advice if you're an avid reader or just coming back into it:

**1. Stick to what you enjoy**

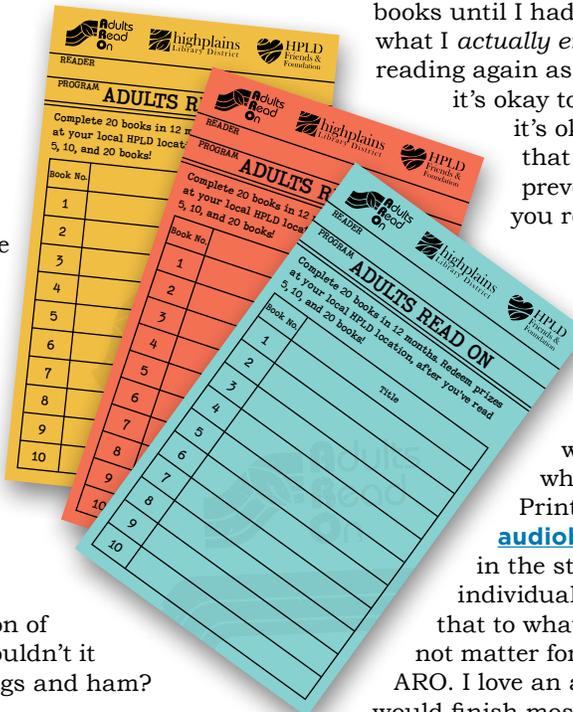
I recently tried to read a book I thought was popular and “cool”, so that I could talk about with people. I slugged through it for 3 months and did not get back into other books until I had finished it. Once I started reading what I *actually enjoy* (serial western mysteries), I was reading again as fast as *Tokyo Drift*. The moral is that it's okay to read for personal enjoyment, and it's okay to not read that popular book that everyone is recommending if it's preventing you from engaging with what you really like.

**2. Read in the format that works for you**

Maybe you love graphic novels or manga. Read those. Reading is reading and here at HPLD, we want to make it easy for you to find what you like to read if it's in Large Print, e-book, e-audiobook, or [Playaway audiobooks](#). Whatever gets you engaged in the story and is appropriate for your individual needs, we want to help support that to whatever extent we can. The format does not matter for it to count toward the 20 books for ARO. I love an audiobook, and there's no way that I would finish most Stephen King books without them. Do what you have to do.

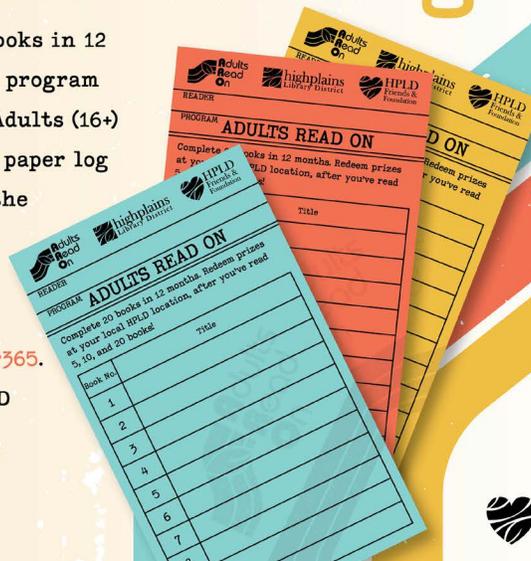
**3. Avoid the sunk cost fallacy**

If you are trying to finish that one book you started



# READ All Year Long

Challenge yourself to read 20 books in 12 months with the Adults Read On program and earn prizes along the way! Adults (16+) can participate by picking up a paper log at any branch, by downloading the Beanstack Tracker App and following the instructions, or by visiting [highplains.beanstack.org/reader365](http://highplains.beanstack.org/reader365). Redeem prizes at your local HPLD location, after you've read 5, 10, and 20 books! For more details, check out [www.MyLibrary.us/aro](http://www.MyLibrary.us/aro).



because you're already halfway through, but you know you hate it, you don't have to finish it. The number of books you can read in your lifetime compared to how many books are out there is... well, an absurd ratio. You may not ever finish that book if you know you don't enjoy it, so it's okay to find something else you like. If it really bugs you not knowing how it ends, which is completely understandable, you can always look at a spoiler or hope they turn it into a movie like I did with *Gone Girl*. Spoiler: Watch out for Rosamund Pike's character.

#### 4. Try out our Personalized Reading Lists

Listen, HPLD staff love to help people find books. It's borderline obsessive with certain staff members. I won't call out these people by name here, but the letters of their names are contained in this article (some of you *House*

*of Leaves* fans may be able to decipher). The point is, you can tell us exactly what you do and don't like (authors, genres, cursing, strong female leads, spooky settings, etc), and library staff across the district work together to compile a list of suggestions based on your individual interests. [If you need help finding some new book ideas, Personalized Reading Lists are a great place to start.](#)

#### 5. Don't sweat it

Adults Read On is not going anywhere. Last year, we saw tremendous growth in this program with over 1300 participants in 2025! Each year the goal of this program is simple: keep reading. If you're over 16 years old and want to [participate in Adults Read On](#), you have the entire 2026 to start! We'll be here when you're ready to sign up, get prizes, and to remind you what that acronym stands for.

**Did YOU have a great library experience? Like, ever?**

If you're reading HPLD's newsletter, we're betting the answer is "Yes." Or possibly even "YES!"

To let our staff know that they're having an impact in your community, we're proposing a [quick letter-writing campaign](#). Write your favorite HPLD staff member a letter, and if they're up for it, we'll ask them to read it out loud for the first time on video. That way, they can see how much you appreciate them, and you can see how much your words mean to them!

# Book Club

## Questions

I hear from time to time that you all are not having the most fun conversations at book clubs.

And it's tough, right? Some people come to the book club looking to have a deep discussion of literature, some people come looking more to socialize around books. Some people come entirely because they want to talk about their most recent vacation (EVERY book club has at least one member who seems to be constantly on vacation somewhere fabulous. If you're that person, know that we love you, but maybe don't complain that your calves are really sore because you spent too much time walking on the beach, that you put on a few pounds eating French pastries, or that the room you had on the cruise was nice, but lacked a balcony).

Book club members can be shy, too, which makes conversation harder to start than the 50th yank on that snowblower's ripcord. It's an understandable awkwardness, it's a weird moment. You go from doing a very solo thing, reading a book, having your own thoughts about it, and now you're supposed to share those thoughts with other people, maybe even STRANGERS!?



You don't want to hurt anyone's feelings if you loathed a book, but you also don't want to make others feel like they can't say anything negative when you loved a book.

And when you look online for questions or ways to turn up the heat on conversations, there's a lot of the same sort of stuff. "What was your favorite part?" "Do you think this would make a good movie?" "We ALL peed our pants when we read chapter 2 of that Swartzwelder book, right?"

This is why I've constructed a 42-Question List for Book Clubs that asks some different questions, gives you some new angles to take with your book club.

Disclaimer: You'll hate some of these questions. Some of them will get you some odd looks from your book club members. And you know what? That's okay! Because, part one of the magic here, YOU didn't write these, I did. If anything is weird or someone hates a question, it's cool, just blame your local library!

But more than that, I want you to think of this list as a framework, some different directions to take, and then

you can make your own questions that you like SO MUCH BETTER.

These questions are the drywall, and I hope you'll hang your own artwork over it. Especially if that artwork is one of those [Alison Friend paintings where dogs eat donuts or cats eat Cheetos](#).

1. If you had to edit this book, and there was a mandate to cut something out, what would you pick to cut out, even if you liked the book a great deal and don't necessarily want to cut anything?

2. Which other books/movies/tv does this book remind you of?

3. Is there someone in your life you would consider gifting this book to, and if so, what about them and this book makes it a good choice?

4. Did you talk to anyone about this book while you were reading it, and if you did, what were those conversations like?

5. If anyone in the book club listened to the audiobook, what did you think of it? How was the narrator? Did this book seem like a good fit for audio, or was it one that you'd advise others to read in print?

6. Can you place this book between two other books we've read for this book club, or, if you're new to the book club, between two other books, in terms of how much you liked it? In other words, can you think of one book you liked a little better and another book you liked a little less?

7. If you didn't particularly enjoy this book, can you think of some things about it that might appeal to other people? Let's not be cruel here, it doesn't count if you say, "Yeah, STUPID people would like this because it's STUPID."

8. If you DID enjoy this book, can you think of some things about it that might be a turnoff for some readers?

9. Is this book kind of typical of the sorts of things you read, or is it more of a departure for you?

10. Some books seem to be more pleasing because of their plots and/or the information they share, where some books seem to be more about style of writing or just the way it makes you feel. Which of these things do you think was more to your taste when it comes to this book?

11. The author Tom Spanbauer says any book should make the readers laugh, teach them something, and break their hearts. Do you feel this book did any of those things? All those things? Did it do them equally, or was one element or another a bigger player in the story?

12. If you read this book a second time, let's say 5 years from now, do you think you'd appreciate it more, less, or about the same? What would be most different the second time through?

13. At what point in the story would you say you were closest to giving up on the book? Even if you enjoyed it, what was a possible low point or slow section for you?

14. If you had to pick a character or individual from this book to spend an entire day with, doing activities they picked, which person would be your choice, and what do you think you'd end up doing? What would you most fear that they would want to do?

15. Is there any part of the story that really stuck with you? This doesn't have to mean a favorite part, by the way. Sometimes this can be a high point, and other times, there can just be odd bits, lines or sections, that stand out in your mind for no real reason.

16. If you had to memorize and retell this story in the ancient tradition of oral storytelling, which parts of the story do you think would be most important to get right?

17. If there were two movies made based on this book, one a barebones, low budget, indie movie that sticks very closely to the book, and the second being a big budget, major studio movie with well-known actors, but it takes a lot of liberties with the material, which would you be more interested in watching and

why (thanks to the author [Chuck Klosterman](#) for inspiring this question)?

18. If you were in charge of doing a One Book, One Community type of thing in your city, and if this book was the book that had been selected, what sorts of events might you do around this book to help get people interested in reading it? What different events might you do that were intended for people who'd *already* read it?

19. If you ran a used bookstore and tried to shelve similar books together, what would you shelve near this one?

20. Do you think you'd feel differently about this book if



you'd read it 10 years ago as opposed to now?

21. If you could go back in time to just before you read this book, and if you could give yourself some advice specific to reading this book, what would it be?

22. When you came to the book club today, was there a particular book club member you were curious to hear from?

23. If this book had a pocket carved into it so that it functioned as a book safe, would it fit in with what's on your bookshelf at home, or would it stick out as odd?

24. While you read this, was there any point you were wishing you were reading something else on your to-read list instead? If so, what were you wishing you were reading and why?

25. Oftentimes, people will associate books with events that were happening in their lives at the time they were reading them. Was there anything in particular that happened that you think you'll remember when you think of this book? It can be a major life event or even just something minor like the season or something you snacked on while you read.

26. If you had to do chores or housework or run errands while listening to this book as an audiobook, which activity would you pick to do while you listened, and do you think this book would make the task more enjoyable?

27. If you had to do something artsy—painting, drawing, woodworking, clay modeling, fiber arts—what would you pick to do while listening to the audio version of this book?

28. Did you have any actors in mind for a movie version of this book while you were reading?

29. Has this book been made into a movie, and if it has, have you seen it? Why is the book better? (Note: I'm assuming the book is better because it is like 99.9% of the time, but if by some miracle the movie was better, please tell us why)

30. If you had to take something from this book, something a character does routinely, a way a character acts, and incorporate it into your own life, what would you pick?

31. Who did the characters remind you of when there was dialogue in the book? It can be someone well-known or someone in your personal life.

32. Was this a book that felt quick to read, or was it a slower pace for you? What about the writing or the way the

story works set the pace?

33. There are some people who, especially with mysteries, skip to the end, read the ending first, and then start the book at the beginning to see how the book moves the story from one end to the other. If you read this book that way, do you think it'd be better, worse, or the same?

34. Would you be happy to hear the author of this book was working on something similar, or would you prefer to hear they were taking a very different direction with their next book?

35. Did you know anyone else who'd read this book before you, and if so, what did they tell you about it? Did it meet your expectations based on what they said, or was it a different experience than you expected?

36. If someone had asked you about this book when you were halfway through, do you think your opinion would be different from the opinion you have of it now that you've finished?

37. How many pages into a book do you usually know whether or not you're enjoying it, and how did you feel at that point in this book?

38. If you had quit reading this book halfway through, what about the second half would you be the most curious about?

39. Some people like to listen to music while they read. What would you consider listening to while you read this book? Does your music choice match up with the book's tone?

40. If you ran a used bookstore and a copy of this book came in, what price would you pencil in the top right corner of the first page?

41. Looking at the outside, we don't like to judge a book by its cover, but, c'mon, lots of work goes into book covers. Do you think this book's cover is effective? Does it match up with the contents of the book? Do you think it'd attract the kind of reader who would be likely to enjoy it, or do you think it's meant to draw in people who might not pick it up otherwise?

42. If you found out this book had some deep, subliminal, hidden meaning that wasn't immediately apparent, what would you suspect that hidden meaning might be?

### **Suggestions for Forming Your Own Questions:**

- Look up reviews of the book on Amazon, Goodreads, etc. Find some glowing, 5-star reviews as well as some lower, negative reviews. Bring them to the book club and ask what the members think of those reviews, whether they agree with them or not, whether the reviewer is being



reasonable. This can be a useful way to talk about a book because it allows book club members to talk about the opinion of an anonymous stranger as opposed to someone else in the room, who may feel defensive of their taste.

- Remember that in addition to talking about the book, people want a chance to talk about themselves. Consider how you can take a typical question and make it about the reader instead of the book. Instead of asking about which genre the book fits in, ask the reader how the book made them feel. Instead of asking whether the book is a downer or a happy book, ask them if the book made them feel hopeful or defeated. You can always tweak a typical question about a book and make it into a question about the reader instead.

- Try and ask open-ended questions. An open-ended question is one that doesn't contain the answers in the question itself, like a yes/no question or maybe a "rate from 1 to 5" sort of question. "Did you like the book?" is a closed-ended question that can be answered with a "Yes" or "No." "How much did you enjoy the book?" is better, there's a wider range of answers. But a question like, "Which part of the book did you enjoy most and why?" leaves the options very open.

- Good questions usually ask things the reader hadn't necessarily considered before. This doesn't mean the question has to be wildly insightful or unique to the book, just that it can be helpful to ask people the sorts of things they don't always get asked about books. When you ask a question like, "Did you enjoy the book?" remember that the reader has probably already had this thought and knows their answer, even before they come to the book club,

which means that question isn't going to activate their thinking much. One good option is to present the reader with new information. Look up an interview or listen to a podcast the author did. Even just reading the book's Wikipedia entry might give you some trivia or a slightly different angle to consider.

- When you work on your questions, think about questions that, after you ask them, you'd be curious to hear the answers from various book club members. If you can imagine one of your book club members answering the question, and if their answer is of interest to you, it's a good sign. If you imagine asking the question and then looking through your papers to decide on the next question while people answer, it's a sign that maybe the question isn't super interesting.

- Don't throw out a question just because it seems silly. Sometimes, a silly question can cause a reader to think about a book in a new way. They may take the question and answer it in a way you didn't intend, which is a good beginning to a discussion.

*Next time, we'd like to cover some tips that'll help book clubs facilitate conversations. [Send us a message and let us know about some problems you've come across when it comes to chatting in book clubs](#), whether you feel the book club strays off topic too much, seems reluctant to talk, or if the conversation tends to be dominated by one or two individuals.*

**APRIL 2026**

# READ CON

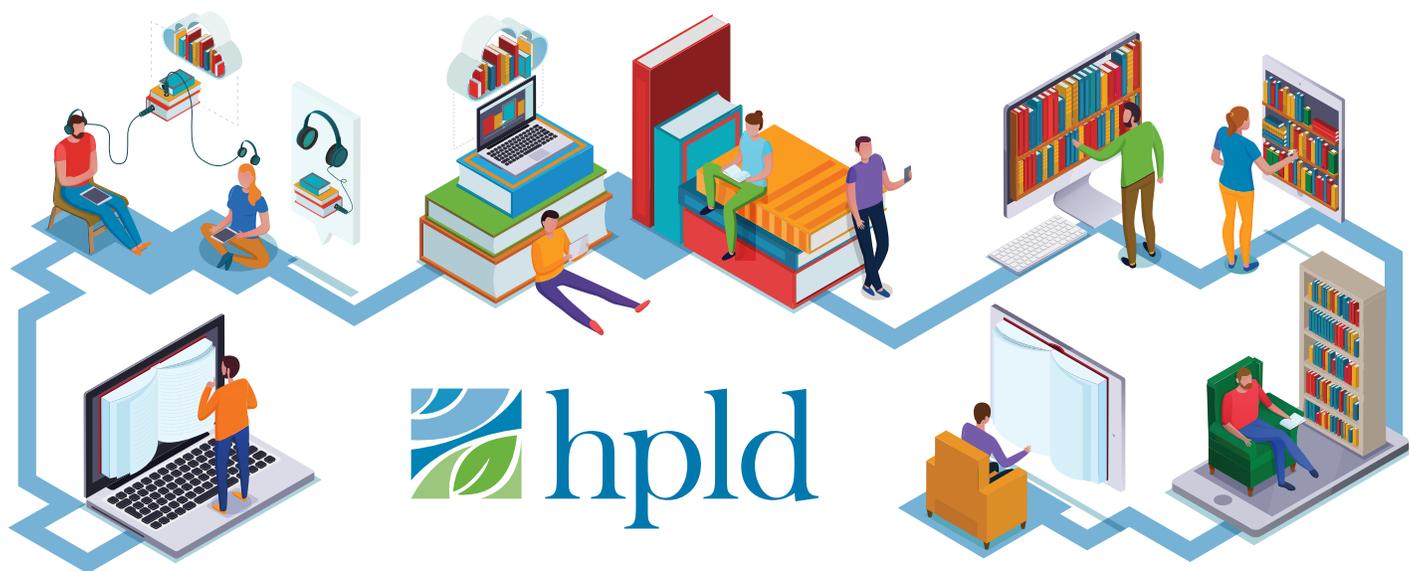
**April 24th • 5:30-8:30pm**

**Kristin Koval**   **Lisa Zimmerman**   **Leigha Huggins**

**highplains** Library District   **HPLD** Friends & Foundation

**LINC Library Innovation Center 501 8th Ave, Greeley**

# Visiting the *Virtual Library!*



Nothing beats going into the library and seeing all the wonderful things it has to offer, but sometimes life gets busy, you're on vacation hundreds of miles away, or you just got hit with a nasty cold. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to have library help?

Well, you do! Look no further than the virtual library. We are here specifically for you! Yes, you!

We are a dedicated group to answer your calls, chats, and emails. Think of the Virtual Library as you would any other branch in our district. We have been around since 2012 (though brainstorming started as early as 2009), and we have been constantly evolving to make sure we help you the best we can.

There is quite a bit of history behind the start of our virtual branch. In the early days, it was a third-party service that had calls sent elsewhere, but that original concept was later discontinued because it did not provide the level of service we were striving to give our patrons. After many months of trial and error, the final version went live in 2012 with a dedicated library team to answer the community needs, and the rest is history!

It may sound silly, having a branch dedicated to phone calls, chats, and emails, but our District has grown so much in the past few years that it would be very hard to

juggle both in-person and virtual questions without some help.

Our services also help those who may not have access to a physical library and cannot otherwise come in for help. The virtual library is the advocate for our virtual patrons no matter where they are. We even get calls from people across the nation and even some very rare calls from other countries!

Last year alone we had 26,080 inquiries and we are looking at beating that this year! Most of the calls are about renewing items, placing things on hold, and other library related questions, but we also help troubleshoot our [resources like Libby, Hoopla, and Kanopy](#) to name a few.

We also get an assortment of non-library questions like, "Do you know the number for town hall?", "Do you know the weather and snow levels right now for New York, New York?", "Is my child's school closed for a snow day?" While we may not know all the answers to these questions right away, we will help you find the answer or point you in the direction of someone who does!

The virtual library may not be a brick-and-mortar location, but it does work hand in hand with all your favorite libraries, and rest assured that we are working diligently to help all our patrons no matter where they are!

# A Farewell



2026 is starting off on a bit of a down note for HPLD.

I'm sad to report that Charlene Parker, manager of Farr Regional Library and longtime HPLD staff member, has left the District.

Now, the rumor is that she retired, and I guess I'll assume that's accurate until I see proof that she's left libraries to do something else, possibly writing a gory mystery series under a pen name like...Slaylene Parker. ChardOfGlassInTheEyeLene Parker?

Anyway, Charlene has been with HPLD for, like, forever, pre-dating the name HPLD.

Whenever you lose a longtime staff member, there are lots of business ways to say it: "loss of institutional knowledge," "a piece of the organization goes with her." I prefer the less-business-y phrase: "good for her, sucks for us."

But there is a silver lining here.

See, Charlene was a humble type, didn't like to make a big fuss. She never wanted to be included in staff anniversary celebrations, didn't do the whole HPLD anniversary card

thing, and seemed to kind of actively dislike that stuff. She had a farewell party, but it seemed, at least a little, like it was somewhat of a hostage situation.

I'm sure, if I'd asked, that she would not have been in favor of an article in the newsletter all about her.

And that's the upside of the fact that Charlene's not here anymore! She can't hurt me now! So we can make a big deal out of her, consequence-free! HAHA!

The following is a bit about Charlene, maybe a bit more about me. It's about Charlene, through my eyes.

Hey, this is how biography works sometimes. It's not like we can just ASK a notorious serial killer what they think about themselves.

And now that I've sort of, accidentally, compared Charlene to a serial killer, we'll move on.

~

I'm not out to embarrass Charlene, so let's just say she started with the library long enough ago that her career

would likely make a lot of groaning noises when it gets out of bed in the morning, but not so long ago that it'd be ready to seriously consider those Scandinavian river cruises for seniors that I keep getting mail about and that...honestly, my interest is piqued.

How about this: Charlene started the same year we all laughed along with Douglas Adams' *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, the year we also laughed, but in a different, more hoity-toity way, at Ignatius J. Reilly in *Confederacy of Dunces*.

There, now if you really want to know, you'll have to look up A BOOK. That seems like a reasonable way for a library newsletter to pique interest in books and reading: If you want to snoop into someone's possible age, you'll have to investigate a book slightly.

I think, and I may not be right, but I think Charlene's HPLD's longest-running staff member. Or, at least, she was.

It's just not possible for me to sum up a career that long, varied, and interesting, so what I'm going to do is tell you about is something that I haven't really shared with a lot of people because, well, it doesn't make HPLD look great. Not the HPLD of today, but of the distant past.

Back in 2013, we did an event called ReadCon. I'm not going to belabor this too hard, me talking about ReadCon 2013 feels like a jock talking about his high school football days, the time he, er, fullbacked a play right up the middle and touched a score down(?)

Just as a note on the whole library nerds versus jocks thing: Sometimes people will tell you to be nice to nerds, that nerds will grow up and be the boss of jocks, and I haven't found that to be true whatsoever in the library. I'm not sure where elite athletes go once they run back into their little tunnels under the stadium for the last time, but it ain't library school. Just a note for you jocks out there: Don't be nice to nerds because they'll be your boss. Maybe just be nice to them because, eh, why not?

ReadCon was a success, and I KNOW Charlene had a good time. I remember we chatted during Books & Brews, and she was smiling big, small cup of beer in hand (hey, statute of limitations on that one is...you know what, you can't fire her, SHE QUIT! Retired! Whatever, you have no power here, HPLD!).

Our ReadCon guest of honor was the enigmatic Craig Johnson. I say he's enigmatic not because he's mysterious,

but because it's kind of hard to believe how nice he is. This guy drove down from Wyoming in his pickup, unloaded his own books from the truck bed, sat and signed and took pictures with EVERY single person who waited to meet him, and just couldn't have been a better guest.

What's your deal, Craig Johnson? What are you hiding behind being the nicest guy ever?

Among all the books he signed, Craig (he's so nice I feel like I can call him "Craig") signed a Longmire poster that hung in Charlene's office for the last 12 years. It was right there, as you walk down the hall towards her office, you see good ol' Walt and a signature from Craig Johnson that says "Boy howdy!"

After that ReadCon, a bunch of coworkers who worked on the project nominated it for a couple awards at the annual CAL conference. Awards we won! Take THAT, whoever else applied for those awards like 12 years ago!

And I do mean "We" won because even though, okay, it's my name on one of the awards, it was a true team effort.

And Charlene was a major part of that team. Because it's not exactly common to find a manager who's willing to let you move a bunch of shelving, accidentally tear up some carpet, serve beer in the library after hours, plaster the entire entrance with posters, and generally turn a library into a ruckus.

And a big part of why I/we won the award was

thanks to a letter Charlene wrote. I don't remember the full text, but part of it was her spinning the tale of me helping someone with an Ipad, working on ReadCon, all while dressed as Spider-Man (it was Halloween, okay? I was in my Halloween Spider-Man getup, not my more formal Spider-Man outfit).

After we won the awards, I had a meeting with our old Executive Director. Not our current ED, please don't take any of this out on him. He's a nice guy, and he told me his son wanted Birkenstocks for Christmas, shoes that are ruined if they get WET, so he's got enough on his plate.

Our old Director was a person I really didn't know. I knew who she was and a little about where her preferences for library stuff were, but I wouldn't say we were acquainted or anything.

This one-on-one was part of a series she was doing, the idea being that she'd talk to all the staff members in the District, get a little insight, maybe hear some ideas, stuff like that.



And...maybe this individual wasn't really suited to that sort of thing. Because she spent most of these sessions talking about what SHE was up to. Which is why those of us still around from that time all know that she dabbled in the piano as well as beekeeping.

My one-on-one session, in addition to including a rundown of hobbies, was a little different.

Basically, our Executive Director berated me for winning the awards. She said she looked foolish because she didn't even know I'd been nominated, and when someone else brought it up to her, she felt stupid for not knowing. She said the process for awards nomination works differently, that I shouldn't have done it the way I did, it should've gone through admin.

I tried to tell her that I had nothing to do with the nomination process, and in fact, when others suggested we pitch the event for "Library Event of the Year," I wasn't interested. And I DEFINITELY didn't know I was being nominated for Librarian of the Year until I won.

I was a young, new librarian who'd just done a big event and won a big award. I didn't exactly expect a reprimand. So I came out of the meeting pretty baffled. Pretty deflated. The word "crestfallen" would probably be an appropriate, businesslike way to describe it. "Hurt, demotivated, and pissed" would be a little less professional, so I won't say those things. Again.

Now I'm a little older, a little wiser, and would probably stand up for myself a little better, but at the time...I didn't know what else to do but to go back to my desk and stare out the window, which was near the drive-thru checkin at Farr. Yes, I saw ALL of you hit the curb when you tried to pull in close enough to reach the return slot. Multiple times. And I thank you for those driving failures. The amusing chirp of a tire against the curb, the sight of someone reversing in the drive-thru, was often a beacon of light during the darkest days.

Charlene stopped by my office and asked how my meeting went, and I told her the whole story. Charlene was as baffled as I was, and she told me (probably for the first and only time) that maybe I should just take the rest of the day

off, blow off some steam. She said I'd get through it. And she was right, I did get through it.

Charlene didn't forget, though, because years later, when another HPLD staff member won the same award, and when our Board made a big deal out of it, she came out and told them, pretty point blank, that someone ELSE had won this award before, and that Board hadn't said a word about it at the time.

The Board was very nice about it, they asked me to come to a meeting, gave me a bookstore gift card, and I was kind of embarrassed in a certain way. I mean, it was like 5 or 6 years after I'd won the award. I didn't want to seem like I held a grudge, I didn't. I was totally over it. Totally.

But that's Charlene. She's got your back, and when she's got your back, she's got it for life.

And that might not sound like a big thing, but I think you have to understand a little bit about me and what it's like to be my boss. Because it's not easy to have my back when I do stuff like, for example, badmouthing a former HPLD Executive Director (just a little!).

I have a lot of ideas, and many of them are terrible. Like the idea to put a conveyor belt throughout the library that'd rotate the entire collection past people as they sat in chairs or on the computers, forcing them to at least BRIEFLY see the books.

When I was at Farr, our librarian/supervisor group meetings almost always ended at the point when I'd gone off the rails, like the

time after we'd gotten vending machines for the first time, and I was really hot on getting an old west type sign made that dubbed the vending area "Dubya Dee's Feedbag!" after the library's namesake, W.D. Farr.

And then there's the toilet story. But that's a story for another time.

~

I tell you about those stories not to give HPLD reason to reexamine my career and maybe let me go (I looked it up, guys, statute of limitations on toilet-based pranks is 3



years from the date of incident).

I tell you all this to also tell you that Charlene, with me, was put in a position where she had to reign me in a little. And you know what? She was good at it. I learned a lot from Charlene.

And Charlene never treated me like a problem child. She treated me like a good employee, and here and there, I'd like to think she treated me like a friend.

We both had braces later in life, and we had a very slow-motion tooth-straightening race to see who'd get their braces off first (it was her by a (s)mile).

We engaged in some light, non-toilet-based pranks together, occasionally sending odd objects through the library courier system to a particular employee with nothing but a note that said, "Per our conversation," a tradition that continued after I left Farr when I got a small baggie full of tiny screws with a note that read, of course, "Per our conversation."

Charlene respected my opinions and even let me help in the hiring of some high school student summer interns and volunteers. One of them started library school last year!

If you told my high school English teacher that I'd be helpful in getting more students into Library School, he'd probably have an existential crisis. You'd find him wandering the desert years later, his hair and beard wild, his eyes vacant. *The universe no longer makes sense! There have to be SOME rules!*

What I learned from Charlene is that my ideas ARE good, I CAN do good things. Sometimes the ideas just need a little edit here and there.

~

You didn't think I was going to end there, did you? That's classic cheese! "And what I learned was..." C'mon, I'm better than that. You deserve better than that. And Charlene definitely does, too.

A couple weeks ago, Charlene was in the admin building, where I now work, and she brought by a gift: her signed Longmire poster, the one from her office.

With it was a little card, and inside she wrote...I'm not going to say.

I'm not going to type it out verbatim because it's for me. Haven't I given you all enough of myself?

But I will say that the card thanked me for giving her one of the best, most memorable days at Farr, and she reminded me that I can do great things.

~



I was looking up some old *Tribune* articles Charlene was mentioned in, and I found one from 2002. It's about the annual Teddy Bear Bash that used to be hosted at Lincoln Park:

"'We're going on a bear hunt!' declared Charlene Parker, a Weld Country librarian, to a group of children who sat attentively around her, eyes fixed in excitement. Parker's words and gestures led the young audience through a dangerous trail, over hill and dale, in search of something with fur and paws.

"'But we're not afraid,' Parker said to the children. And the children mimicked her gestures as they went 'not over, not under, but through' whatever obstacles stood in the way of their target."

And that's the thing, that's what I want to end on:

Charlene, you've spent an entire career helping people be brave enough to do things. Whether it's kids hunting bears (which hopefully none of them took too literally) or folks struggling with a Kindle, or a newbie librarian getting the smackdown from a much more experienced adult who should know better, you've had a career focused on helping other people see that there is a path forward.

Sure, it's not always easy. And sometimes you can't go over or under, you just have to go through.

But with your help, through was always an option.

# LOCATIONS

## LIBRARIES Visit [www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours](http://www.MyLibrary.us/locations-and-hours) for library hours

### Administration & Support Services

2650 West 29th Street  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Carbon Valley Regional Library

7 Park Avenue  
Firestone, CO 80504  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Centennial Park Library

2227 23rd Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80634  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Eaton Public Library

132 Maple Avenue  
Eaton, CO 80615  
(970) 454-2189

### Erie Community Library

400 Powers Street  
Erie, CO 80516  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Farr Regional Library

1939 61st Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80634  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Fort Lupton Public & School Library

370 S. Rollie Avenue  
Fort Lupton, CO 80621  
(303) 339-4089

### Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

400 S. Parish Avenue  
Johnstown, CO 80534  
(970) 587-2459

### Grover Library

402 Chatoga Avenue  
Grover, CO 80729  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Milliken Location of the Glenn A. Jones, M.D. Memorial Library

1109 Broad Street  
Milliken, CO 80543  
(970) 660-5039

### Hudson Public Library

100 S. Beech Street  
Hudson, CO 80642  
(303) 536-4550

### Kersey Library

332 3rd Street  
Kersey, CO 80644  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### LINC Library Innovation Center

501 8th Avenue  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Nantes Library

703 Birch Street  
Gilcrest, CO 80623  
(970) 737-1035

### Northern Plains Public Library

216 2nd Street  
Ault, CO 80610  
(970) 834-1259

### Outreach

2650 W. 29th Street  
Greeley, CO 80631  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

### Platteville Public Library

504 Marion Avenue  
Platteville, CO 80651  
(970) 785-2231

### Riverside Library & Cultural Center

3700 Golden Street  
Evans, CO 80620  
1-888-861-READ(7323)

## AFFILIATED LOCATIONS

### Hazel E. Johnson Research Center at the City of Greeley Museum

714 8th Street, Greeley, CO 80631  
(970) 350-9220

### Poudre Learning Center

8313 West F Street, Greeley, CO 80631  
(970) 352-1267

## PUBLIC COMPUTER CENTERS

### Briggsdale Community Library

210 Main Street, Briggsdale, CO 80611

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