

## Copper Queen Library receives national award through American Library Association

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Photo: Mark Levy, Herald/Review

Copper Queen Library manager Jason Macoviak talks about the award the library recently received through the American Libraries Association for the library's San Jose Annex.

**BISBEE** — Although the Copper Queen Library San Jose Annex is small, only taking up one classroom in the old middle school, it has made a big impact on the community, offering a variety of free educational programs and giving San Jose residents a space to gather with their families.

The annex, which officially opened in early December, was recently recognized by the American Library Association for its unique literacy-centered programs and contribution to San Jose, a neighborhood located several miles away from the bustle of Old Bisbee.

The annual EBSCO Excellence in Rural Library Service Award honors one public library serving a lower-income community with a population of 10,000 or less, according to the ALA. The Copper Queen Library was chosen out of numerous applicants from around the country, and will officially receive the award in a ceremony held in Washington, D.C. this summer, said library program coordinator Alison Williams.

“As much as I love the honor of it, more than that, it shows other libraries in the same precarious economic situation that they too can work within a smaller budget,” said Williams. “It lets people know what we’re doing and what is possible.”

Opening the San Jose annex — a neighborhood chosen due to its distance from the main library in Old Bisbee and its lack of community gathering spaces — was a two-year process that involved the work of many dedicated volunteers, library patrons, and partners, said library manager Jason Macoviak.

“What presented itself was the school district moving their district offices, and actually the school district reaching out to us to see if we wanted to partner by being given one of these classrooms,” said Macoviak.

The first grant the library received for the project was from Freeport-McMoRan Copper, he said. The annex’s partners now include the state library system, Step-up Bisbee/Naco, the UA Cooperative Extensive, and the Bisbee Unified School District, among others.

The community played a significant part in getting the little library off the ground: the Bisbee High School career technical education class built the bookshelves and tables, and many library patrons donated their times and books.

“We wanted a space where children and adults could coexist together but separate,” said Maciovak, gesturing to the annex’s cozy, divided reading areas. “We designed the space to have an adult area and children’s area, so there’s a connection but there’s also a little separation to give the parents the opportunity to connect with other.”

Up and running for only a few months, the annex has been getting regular traffic from community members of all ages. San Jose resident Cindy Baily, who works at the mainly volunteer-run annex, said she volunteered in order to support literacy in her community.

“I really wanted people to be coming here, doing more reading, finding out how it really expands into all of their lives — that the more they read, the more their kids read, they’re not always stuck in front of electronics,” she said.

Part of the reason the annex opened was in order to offer a jumping-off point for the library’s early literacy programs, said Early Literacy Outreach Specialist Heather Wiechert.

“The idea really is not only to provide early literacy experiences and to introduce some pre-literacy skills, but it’s also to provide families with resources so that they can do some of these things at home,” she said. “The idea is to have lifelong learning and lifelong love of reading, but it’s also to empower families to know that they are the ones that have a big impact on a child’s academics later in life.”

Among the annex's current preschool literacy programs are Open Playgroup on Mondays, Little Book Club on Wednesdays, and STEAM Ahead! on Thursdays. Both Copper Queen libraries are also working to develop more programs aimed at teenagers and adults, said Williams.

"The purpose of this is to start with our first learners, our early learners, and look at a 12-year arc towards a higher graduation rate, a higher university rate," she said. "That spreads out in a ripple effect because there are grandparents and other family members who are caregivers as well, so we want to support the whole family and the community."

Moving forward, the Copper Queen Library would like to open annexes in other Bisbee neighborhoods, said Williams. For the time being, however, they hope to continue getting the message out about the resources and activities available to them at the new annex, said Williams.

"Our main goal now is to be open consistently, regularly, with our programs staying at some set times so they can grow and be supported, and also to give the community some sense of stability," she said. "We are doing our best to make sure that is sustainable for the future."

### **Want to learn more?**

The Copper Queen San Jose Annex will hold an ice cream social on May 10 from 12.30 to 2.30 p.m. in order to let people sign up for the library's summer reading programs, as well as offer more information about other activities and resources.

Furry critters from 4-H, as well as local family band Auld Lang Syne, will be in attendance.



Photo: Mark Levy, Herald/Review

Copper Queen Library Annex volunteer Cindy Baily elaborates on how important the San Jose Annex is to the area.



Photo: Mark Levy, Herald/Review  
Heather Wiechert, an early literacy outreach specialist, and daughter Auden, 3, spend time last week at the Copper Queen Library Annex in San Jose.