

# CQ library hosts ice cream social, talk on backyard project

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The Copper Queen Library hosted its annual ice cream social at the annex last week in Bisbee. Alaizah Loreto, 2, enjoys a cool treat during the event.

*Mark Levy | Herald/Review*

BISBEE — What could be more fun — an ice cream social, clowns, free books, games, live music, even a ram who loves to be petted — all there for the pleasure of young and old as the Copper Queen Library kicked off summer reading programs and celebrated the future turnaround of the drab back yard at the San Jose annex.

Library Manager Jason Macoviak and library program coordinator Alison Williams were joined by the Bisbee Foundation, Cochise County Library District Director Amadee Ricketts and the Panther Band for an entertaining afternoon on the back patio of the Bisbee Unified School District's administration building.

It did not take long for the vanilla and chocolate ice cream, provided by the Arizona Community Foundation, to disappear along with the ample toppings as parents signed their children up for the successful summer reading programs, a sign that endeavors to get children interested in reading is working quite well.

Doug and Donna Dunn, members of the Friends of the Copper Queen Library and the Bisbee Community Foundation, said the earlier a parent can interest their child in books the better. To make the point, they had a display of pre-reader books to help young minds open up to the worlds of adventure reading offers. They are right up with the times as they showcased the "chewables" — soft books made for the very youngest of children to help them on their road to education.

In the midst of the mayhem of kids playing there was Sonia Allen, who works with toddlers to help them develop muscles for balance and poise, painting fanciful decorations on little faces.

Gretchen Hill, the library's new early literacy coordinator, was excited to see all the kiddos who came for the fun.

#### [Backyard project featured](#)

The gathering also provided the Bisbee Science Lab, a successful offshoot of the Bisbee Science Exploration and Research Center, the opportunity to showcase the basic ideas for a new back yard to foster environmental awareness, boost education and engage young minds, all while walking around an eight acre plot. It will focus on various interests like water harvesting and recharge, a community garden and a playground, all while seeing desert permaculture in action and learning about sustainability and harvesting the sun's energy.

Not only did the project team consider adult suggestions, it also went to the schools to get the students' ideas of what they would like to see. It is no surprise Greenway Elementary School students decided a zoo would be a great addition.

The project is a partnership with the Bisbee Unified School District, which supports the efforts of BSERC, and it was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the A for Arizona Expansion and Innovation Fund to create an outdoor space for the San Jose community to enjoy.

With a year of community engagement completed to gain insight, the team is ready to start looking for a landscape designer with a focus on education, environment, exercise and engagement, the four main areas interest voiced in community meetings.

SALT Landscape Architects' Michelle Frier was on hand to answer questions and explained the project's design team, which included Wilder LA, Psomas and Creative Machines. She said the idea is to incorporate educational elements in every aspect of the project including accessible, intergenerational and multilingual resources.

"This is an experiment in progress," Frier said. "We are embracing messy ideas to work beyond the fringes of the backyard box and are leaning into our experiment in progress with imagination and ingenuity."

Jennifer Patton with Wilder Landscape Architects was walking the grounds with drawings in hand to lay out the various activity centers and determine what plants and trees would be appropriate for the desert environment.

Thea Van Gorp, project director, said, “The BSL aims to create an engaging and innovative learning environment for children and adults in Bisbee and the surrounding areas by providing a fun outdoor space for the community while opening up a safe place for kids to play and learn.

“The kickoff event was an exciting day for the Bisbee community. The design phase for the Backyard Project is a significant step toward creating a unique and innovative outdoor space for all to enjoy.”

BSL also holds Science Fridays from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Melody Lane location. The two-hour programs cover a variety of scientific topics and are geared toward K-12 students. Each month will have a different theme.

The Copper Queen Library Annex will have a special show on Friday, June 2, at 1 p.m. which is sure to pique curiosity and offer some good belly laughs as comedian Wildman Phil offers tips on outdoor exploration and which desert critters to avoid and which are harmless.

Visit the BSL at <https://www.bisbeesciencelab.org/> for information and the schedule.

Visit the Copper Queen Library site at <https://www.bisbeeaz.gov/2155/Copper-Queen-Library> for all programming and services offered.



Derek Dodd and son Harper, 2, were on hand to participate in the Copper Queen Library’s annex event. The event is also a literacy fair.

Mark Levy | Herald/Review

