

A: Hello and welcome to We LOVE the Library, a twice-monthly podcast brought to you by the San Luis Obispo County Library Foundation. I'm your host, Rachel Duchak. In this fourth episode, we introduce a new feature, profiles of library power users. Our first guest is Sammy, a 12-year-old reading enthusiast and someone who, like us, loves the library. Next, we'll learn more about the well-stocked Explorer Backpacks from the Library of Things, as well as California and local parks passes that library cardholders can check out from their local branches. We discuss these unique library items and more with Suzy Reddy, Outreach Chair of the Moro Coast Audubon Society. Thanks for supporting your public library. I'm here with Sammy and Sammy's mom. Hi, Sammy.

B: Hi.

A: Hi, Sammy's mom.

C: Hi.

A: How are you doing, Sammy?

B: I'm good. I'm excited to get into this.

A: Good, because you are a, you are someone who really enjoys reading, and that's why we're here today. Listeners, we are at Mitchell Park in San Luis Obispo, so you're going to hear some traffic sounds and some children playing. But Sammy has agreed to meet me to talk about his interest in reading, and he is going to be the first segment of what we are calling a library power user. Sammy, I know you're dad, and I was asking him questions about his use of the library. He's like, "you should really talk to Sammy." So let's begin with, tell me what you love about the library.

B: I love that I have access to all the books I want, basically. And there's the community room, and that has a bunch of cool events, like the comic book signing, which was really cool.

A: Did you go to that?

B: Yeah.

A: That looked really cool, the Comic-Con at the San Luis Obispo Library?

B: Yeah.

A: Awesome. I want to hear more about that.

B: So we were downtown, and my dad has a friend who was actually a pretty good comic book artist. So we went over to that, and we got one of every comic that his nephew made, and we each got posters made by him, which was really cool.

A: Very cool. Comics are super interesting. I really like graphic novels, which is like a next stage of a comic, where you have a graphic story with window panes, right?

B: Yeah.

A: But very cool.

B: Like Dave Pilkey and Dog Man and those books.

A: Yes! Then the community room, you're talking about the San Luis Obispo Library. That's your library, right?

B: Yes.

A: Cool. That's so neat that you went to that. I was busy that day, and I was like, oh, that is really cool that they're doing those kinds of events. You've participated in a Million Word Marathon.

B: Yeah.

A: Can you tell me about that? So basically, my school for fourth through sixth graders did this challenge to get you to read more. It was basically, if you read a million words, you get to go to this party. And it was like, for my first two years, it was you got to watch a movie. And then my third year, it was actually a bowling party at Mustang Lanes, which was so much fun.

A: Bowling is very fun, no matter how old you are.

B: Yeah.

A: Cool. And so do you know how you got excited about reading? Like, how did you become such a strong reader?

B: My dad read me this book called *By the Great Horn Spoon*, and it just got me so into it. He read it to me once, and I just loved reading after that.

A: You know, you were hitting later on down my set of questions here, because I was going to ask you if you knew what his favorite book was that got him excited.

B: And it's *By the Great Horned Spoon*.

A: It is. And I actually listened to this book yesterday. There's an audio book of it that's got all these different characters playing Jack and Praiseworthy and all these other characters. And it's pretty good. I listened to it yesterday while I was doing stuff with my hands. So I can see why your dad likes it. Lots of problem solving and interesting twists and turns with this story. Can you tell us what the plot is of *By the Great Horn Spoon*?

B: So basically, Jack and his family's butler, Praiseworthy, hop on this boat because their money got stolen and they want to go find gold. And they take the route around Cape Horn, and they end up actually cutting through the Straits of Magellan, I'm pretty sure is what it's called. And they end up beating this other ship called the Sea Raven, I'm pretty sure, to the San Francisco Bay.

A: Because it's the gold rush. And everyone's trying to get to the gold before everybody else digs it all up.

B: Yep. And basically, they don't have enough money to get a ride to Sacramento. So Praiseworthy starts haircuts and stuff. And he makes money off that. So they then end up going to Sacramento. And they can't find a plot to mine gold. But they meet this guy, I don't remember his name, but he helps them find a stake. And after that, Jack accidentally bought his ties. After he mined up a gold nugget. So then they end up making money off that because someone's wife came to town. So they had to sell them all.

A: So I'm going to interrupt you here because this is an intricate story full of problem solving. So every few chapters, there's another problem to solve. Who stole our money? How do we introduce ourselves to the captain as stowaways, etc. But it's, I think, now did your dad grow up in California?

B: Yeah.

A: Yeah. So maybe this is a book that is part of the curriculum. So listeners, that's called *By the Great Horn Spoon*. And it's a fun read. So especially if you are 12, which is how old you are, Sammy, right? I wanted to tell you that this book, as I was listening to it for the first time yesterday, it reminded me of the book that got me excited about reading. And can I tell you it?

B: Yeah.

A: All right. It's *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson.

B: I haven't read it, but that name sounds pretty familiar.

A: I think you're going to love it. It's about treasure and pirates and a treasure map.

B: That sounds pretty good.

A: It's really, really fun. So I read it when I was younger and I was excited about getting to someplace more interesting than the suburbs where I was growing up in. So I got to go into this world with these pirates and this kid who, you know, overhears these pirates making plans and all the stuff. So that's what I would recommend for you to read. My last question for you is what kind of book do you suggest that I read?

B: Do you like fantasy books?

A: I have not really gotten into fantasy, but what's a good one I should start with?

B: So there's this book that my brother actually is starting to read now. It's a six book series. It's called *City Spies*. It's about a bunch of teenagers who end up like solving a bunch of crimes and they have to stop this group led by a guy called Le Fantôme, I'm pretty sure. And it's a really entertaining story. There's lots of turns and plot twists, which I like.

A: That sounds fun. Give me that name again.

B: *City Spies*.

A: *City Spies*. Cool. All right. Well, Sammy, thank you so much for meeting with me and talking to us about how you enjoy the library and that it's such a cool place to spend time at. There's all kinds of programming that they're doing to try to make it interesting for people of all ages. And it's super cool that you went to that comic con. I think that's really great. Thank you for meeting with me.

B: You're welcome. It was so much fun.

A: If you or someone you know is a slow county library power user like Sammy and you want to share with the listeners of this podcast how much you love the library, reach out to us by email.

The address is podcast@slolibraryfoundation.org. Coming up next on We LOVE the Library, we meet with Adult Services Coordinating Librarian Monique Matta to learn more about the Explorer Backpacks and other library materials that can help us enjoy learning more about and experiencing nature. Then we'll meet in the field with Suzy Reddy of the Morro Coast Audubon Society to consider more ways the public library helps connect us to nature. We're with Monique Matta, who is the Adult Services Coordinating Librarian for the San Luis Obispo County Library System. How are you, Monique?

D: I'm great. How are you, Rachel?

A: I'm good. You're going to tell us today about another really unique item in the library collections.

D: This came about as a result of the California State Parks partnership with the state library. We have been working really hard with them to get people more active and engaged with the outdoors. I know Governor Newsom has been very active in implementing what he calls the Outdoors for All program. As part of that, to all of our libraries in the state, they were all sent state parks passes, vehicular day passes that people can check out for free with their library card. For three weeks at a time. There's no replacement costs for those as well. I mean, if something happens to it, we get a free replacement. So there's no charge or any kind of fee or barrier to access associated with it, which I think is an important part of the program. These Explorer backpacks came about as another component of that to kind of complement the state parks day pass program.

A: Awesome. There's some really interesting stuff in these backpacks. There's a brand new, what looks like a brand new pair of Bushnell binoculars.

D: Yes.

A: There's a little headlamp that is very cute in its own little package. It comes with a...

D: Gotta have a compass.

A: There's a compass and a magnifying glass. And a list of rules and tools or information. It's an information card.

D: It's an information card just to give you a sense of, you know, some best practices when you're outdoors.

A: In Español y Inglese.

D: Yes.

A: So that's great.

D: And we also include some trail guides as well.

A: Cool. Yes, there's trail guides. You also have these identification blurbs or brochures for birds, wildlife, trees, wildflowers.

D: We want people to get the most out of their outdoor adventures they can. So we just tried to provide things that would be helpful and educational for them.

A: Cool. I also noticed there's a little bit of sand in this backpack.

D: This one apparently was used recently. So it needs to be cleaned, but that's what we want. We want people to use these backpacks.

A: You absolutely want them to use it. And then everything, all of these components come inside of a waterproof bag since we're going into the rainy season.

D: So if you want to get someone of any age to use these backpacks, they'll be able to keep all the gear safe and dry.

A: And again, you can check these out for three weeks at a time.

D: For three weeks. And they, I believe there are renewals available for these. I'm not sure. But yeah, you can check them out for three weeks at a time. You can place a hold on them if they're currently checked out. These are actually quite popular. So you can reserve a copy as soon as one becomes available.

The park passes are also really popular.

A: They are. I've gotten on a list and I've had to wait some weeks for it. But then when it shows up, you're like, "Okay, we're going!"

D: And one really nice story that came about as a result of this program, too, is that the County reached out to us and said, we really think this state parks program is awesome. So we're going to donate county parks passes. So now we only have, I want to

say, 13 or 14 of those. And we have quite a few of the state parks passes. So I believe, I'm pretty sure that the county parks passes are all in use right now. So you're going to have to wait a little bit for those and get in line as soon as you can.

A: But that's what the great part about the digital front door to the library is that you can go in and put holds on items, especially from this "Library of Things" that the library has, that you can put a hold on, not just books and movies.

D: Exactly. We have what we call a "Library of Things," which consists of sort of non-traditional items. It's not just books and movies or music. It's things like sewing machines and induction cooktops, things that make your life better that you might not be willing to, you know, or able to spend the money on.

A: I would love to talk to you about that next time.

D: Okay.

A: Thank you for explaining these. And they are called the Adventure Backpack...

D: Explorer Backpack.

A: I'm sorry, Explorer Backpack...

D: But you take them on an adventure though.

A: Yeah.

D: So it works.

A: Thank you for explaining this item in the collection.

D: Happy to be here. Thank you so much.

A: Hi, we are here with Suzy Reddy with the Moro Coast Audubon Society. Hi, Suzy.

E: Hi, Rachel.

A: We're also here with, it has moved on, but an adorable little hermit thrush was just hopping around in the grasses before us. We are sitting here in Sweet Springs Nature Preserve.

E: Yes, we are here in Sweet Springs. Moro Coast Audubon owns and operates this property, and we are very proud of this place. And we know it's a community jewel. We know a lot of our neighbors come here often, and everyone is welcome to come here and enjoy some peaceful time in nature.

A: It's so wonderful. We love it. And I actually, I particularly like it when the volunteers are here working up on the hill with planting or weeding. Fixing irrigation.

E: Yes, we have monthly work parties. I think the next one will be December 13th. And we're doing a lot of habitat restoration here, removing non-native invasive plants and putting in beautiful California native plants.

A: Right on.

E: Yeah.

A: So we are here to talk about how the library, the public library, helps people connect with nature. And I was able to meet you during the Outside Together event that we had back in September. And you were on the panel. And our friend Preston Allen had given us your name as someone who helped to organize a Black Birders event here at Sweet Springs. Can you tell us what the Black Birders event was here?

E: Yes, I can. Preston's wonderful. Morro Coast Audubon worked in conjunction with Preston and Courtney at R.A.C.E. Matters SLO to organize a field trip here at Sweet Springs in celebration of Black Birders Week, which is a national event that promotes and celebrates black birders and black naturalists and black scientists. So we had a really awesome field trip here. And I think we had about 20 people out here birding. It was really a fun event.

A: And there was a wait list. There were like 40 people who wanted to come, but you can't have a giant group of people if you want to be able to see birds.

E: No, we usually try and keep it to maybe 20 or less, just so people enjoy the birds more. But hopefully we'll be doing more events with R.A.C.E. Matters SLO in the future.

A: Cool. Well, here's the connection with the library. Preston is not a birder at the moment, but he could go to the library and check out an Explorer Backpack, which has a pair of binoculars and some bird guides and other tools that you just heard about from Monique Matta. And so he could, for no cost at all, just

going in to use your free library card, would be able to access a really nice set of binoculars and try to see if he liked birding.

E: Yes, and I think that's wonderful. A lot of people think you have to have binoculars to go birding and look at birds. You don't. You can just go out with your eyes and your ears and your senses and enjoy birds, but binoculars do enhance the experience. So if this is something you're curious about, you know, binoculars can be an investment to buy. So I think it's really cool that the library has these backpacks as a free resource. It's a great way to try out a new tool and see if it's something that you want to buy someday.

A: Awesome, awesome. So I stopped in at the Los Osos Library, which is my local library, and asked the librarians about how does the library help connect people with nature? And they gave me this huge list. There's a seed library at a number of the libraries where you can just go and you don't have to return the seeds, obviously, but it would be nice if you submitted some more of your own seeds for the next season of growing. There's a, they do a plant swap in the middle of the library because they have that open floor plan. And I said, what does the library have to do with swapping plants? And one of the librarians said, "it's fun!"

E: That does sound fun. I did not know they do a plant swap there. The SLO City branch is my library branch, and I've seen their seed library. I think that is really great. One of the best things you can do to help birds and attract them to where you live is to plant particularly native plants. They provide great food for birds and they're beautiful to look at. So I think that is really neat that the library is promoting that.

A: Yeah, they are so great. And of course, in their collections, they have things like David Attenborough documentaries. My husband and I recently watched *The Life of Birds* and some pretty unbelievable camera angles.

E: Yeah.

A: In that film, they have one where the camera is in the water and there is a kingfisher that is making a dive directly at the camera. I have no idea how it didn't hit the camera, but it's crazy.

E: That is amazing. I watch a lot of nature documentaries also, and it seems that the camera technology has advanced so much. Now they can really capture those fast movements. We have kingfishers here at Sweet Springs Preserve and they move very quickly. And so they just zip right by you. So it's wonderful that you can see it in slow motion and really enjoy what they're doing because they're pretty remarkable.

A: One of my favorite things about the kingfisher, which is kind of the symbol of this particular nature preserve, is that there aren't other birds that really look like them.

E: No.

A: So you don't get them confused. Like sparrows all look the same to me.

E: Yeah, sparrows can be tough. There's a lot of sparrows, little brown birds and they're on the ground.

A: We call them LBJs, little brown jobs.

E: Yeah. But yeah, kingfishers are definitely unique. I think they kind of have a football shape to their body.

A: Oh, they are really cool. And they make that big rat-a-tat sort of noise.

E: They're loud.

A: That's how I generally notice them flying around. So I also learned that not only are there things in the collections and these events that happen in the library, but that there was a presentation with a volunteer who helped with putting together Pismo Preserve down in Pismo, that wonderful new 11-mile trail system. And so he's also got a guidebook to Pismo Preserve. So they had a presentation by him and you can also check out the book. So there are so many resources in the library for helping people connect with nature.

E: Yeah, that's wonderful. Pismo Preserve is a beautiful place to go hiking. I love seeing all the beautiful oak trees there. And that brings up something I love about our local birding and nature

community here in San Luis Obispo County. We talk a lot about the wildlife here and how we're so lucky there's a lot of birds and other wildlife here. But we have a very vibrant community of naturalists and people who love nature here. There's a lot of people here that are experts in all kinds of things. And they volunteer their time with Morro Coast Audubon Society, with the Land Conservancy and Pismo Preserve. And it's such a great resource here. Our people power in our community.

A: That is so great. And before we started recording, you had some other ideas about how the library can help people connect with nature.

E: Yeah, so I am a lifelong avid reader and I'm a lifelong library user. I grew up going to libraries. One thing I love about the library is they have a lot of books about things that interest me like birds. They have a lot of different field guides available. There are so many different field guides out there. And if you're just starting out, if you just wanna buy one, but you aren't sure which one, you can go to the library and explore the different options before you make that commitment. They also have a lot of great nonfiction books about birds, which I love. I do also love to support our local bookstores like Coalesce in Morro Bay and Volumes of Pleasure in Los Osos. But I can't buy every book I want to read. So the library is another great way to read all those wonderful bird books. There's been a lot of birding books published in recent years. So I encourage people to see what the library has.

A: Yes, and if you don't know the name of something, you can either do a Google search before you go in and have an idea of what you're looking for or the wonderful librarians will just help direct you to the section.

E: Yes.

A: And one of the great things about physically going into the library is sometimes the book that's the most interesting to you is next to the one you thought you wanted.

E: Oh, exactly. There's that old saying about don't judge a book by a cover, but I love going in the library and browsing because they face some books out so you can see the cover. And I have found some really interesting books that way that I wasn't even aware of. So thank you to the library staff for doing that.

A: Well, thank you, Susie, for meeting with us today. And I think we're gonna turn off this recorder and take a walk around with our binoculars.

E: Yeah, let's go birding.

A: That sounds great. Thank you for joining us.

E: Thank you for having me.

A: We hope you're learning more about your public library and enjoying our We Love the Library podcast. I had so much fun talking to Monique and Susie that I forgot to mention that library card holders can also check out GoPro cameras from the Library of Things for your next outdoor adventure. Very cool. Next time, we'll speak with Jackie Kinsey, Outreach Coordinator for the Library of Things. She's the Outreach Coordinator for the SLO County Library System. She'll explain the difference between a bookmobile and a mobile library. She'll describe the Library by Mail program for homebound adults. And she'll highlight several other ways she's helping bring the library to all of us through the Branch Out program. Then we'll drop into Poetry Night, a poetry reading event held after hours at the Los Osos Library. Poetry Night curator and organizer Beverly Boyd joins us as well as poetry enthusiast Christine Ahern to explain how this program works. Never having attended one of these Poetry Nights, I was impressed by the enthusiastic turnout, especially on a rainy night. Reading, writing, and listening to poetry is good for us. And Poetry Night makes this happen for our community and beyond. Also, Lisa Coffman, one of the local professional poets who presented during Poetry Night in November, will share one of her poems with us.

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