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crosswalks. I think this is a bad idea."

Charlie Loventhal via Coloradoan.com

Viewpoint



TODAY'S TOP GALLERIES

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An animal afternoon

Liji David, left, and her son Ethan read to Ace during Animal Afternoon in Old Town Library Sunday. Larimer Animal-People Partnership pet therapy teams visit Fort Collins libraries on Sundays for children to read books to friendly story-loving animals.

Chelsae Ketchum/The Coloradoan

Thumbs up and thumbs down, Aug. 6

Coloradoan editorial board and Coloradoan readers 5:38 p.m. MDT August 5, 2016



Thumbs up

Thumbs up to the 35 host families who stepped up to help fill the need for housing for international CSU students through the Fort Collins International Center's HomeStay Program. After the Coloradoan reported the need for hosts to provide temporary housing for these students, who need a place to stay in the gap between the time they arrive and when they can get into student housing, program coordinator Barbara Stallings saw an influx of volunteers. Our thanks to them for being up for the challenge of offering a first impression of Fort Collins and for helping to establish Fort Collins' reputation for hospitality and inclusivity.

(Photo: Coloradoan library)

Thumbs down

Thumbs down to whoever removed the Bingham Hill Cemetery guest book from the historical landmark. While the logs are recent, the signatures and comments continue the legacy of this site, where some of Fort Collins' pioneers are buried. This is a senseless act against a volunteer-run enterprise, and not the first time it's happened. If you know where the book may have gone, please help it find its way back.

From our readers

Thumbs up to the unknown lady that found my wallet (which I had carelessly left at a self-checkout terminal at the Old Town Library) for turning it in to the library office, and the library staff for promptly notifying me. I love Fort Collins, friendly and honest people!!

Bernard Cameron, Fort Collins

Thumbs down to the Coloradoan Xplore section for their July 24 piece on the Lower Dadd Gulch trail. You have ruined another quiet, pristine spot in the canyon with this useless fluff. On Monday morning there were five vehicles in the parking lot instead of the usual zero or one. Really appreciate it.

Richard Freman, Fort Collins

Three finalists vie to be Poudre library director

Kevin Duggan, kevinduggan@coloradoan.com 3:42 p.m. MDT August 8, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

Three finalists are in the running to become the next executive director of Poudre River Public Library District.

The district will conduct a public meet-and-greet session for the candidates 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Thursday at the Coloradoan, 1300 Riverside Ave.

The finalists will give presentations on what they want to accomplish as the library's executive director.

The presentations will be followed by a panel discussion taking questions from the audience. A short reception will follow.

The candidates are:

- Christian Kruse, former library director for Live Oak Public Libraries in Savannah, Georgia. Kruse has 26 years of professional experience with libraries and managed 12 facility construction projects.

Kruse has a master's degree in library and information science from the University of Western Ontario.

- Kari May, assistant director, Utah State Library Division in Salt Lake City, where she oversees the resources and development departments. Prior to working in Utah, May was director of the Pines and Plains Libraries in Elizabeth.

May has a master's degree in library and information science from the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, and a master's degree in English from Appalachian State University.



(Photo: Courtesy photo)

- David Slivken, assistant director, public services, with the Dayton Metro Library in Dayton, Ohio. He is on the design and construction committee for a new main library in downtown Dayton and 16 new branch locations.

Slivken has a master's degree in library science from the University of Iowa.

The finalists are vying to replace Holly Carroll, who retired as executive director in May after seven years with the district.

Library district names new director

Coloradoan staff 9:51 p.m. MDT August 17, 2016



(Photo: Courtesy of Poudre River Public Library District)

The entity that operates Fort Collins' three libraries selected its new director Wednesday.

Trustees of the Poudre River Public Library District selected David Slivken for the post, filling the vacancy left by the retirement of Holly Carroll.

Slivken, assistant director, Public Services, for the Dayton Metro Library in Dayton, Ohio, has more than 20 years of professional library experience, according to a library district release.

WINDSOR: [Site chosen for new Clearview library \(/story/news/2016/07/08/site-chosen-new-windsor-library/86805384/\)](/story/news/2016/07/08/site-chosen-new-windsor-library/86805384/)

"I am honored and humbled by this opportunity, and I look forward to joining this wonderful organization," Slivken said. "I am excited to work with the talented library staff and our community partners as we continue to advocate for literacy and lifelong learning."

The district expects Slivken will begin work in Fort Collins Oct. 24, following approval of his contract during the district board's Sept. 12 meeting.

Slivken was chosen following a nationwide search for Carroll's replacement, beating out [fellow finalists \(/story/news/2016/08/08/three-finalists-vie-poudre-library-director/88410924/\)](/story/news/2016/08/08/three-finalists-vie-poudre-library-director/88410924/) Christian Kruse of Savannah, Georgia, and Kari May, of Salt Lake City.

The district serves more than 191,740 people in Larimer County. Learn more about Poudre River Public Library District's facilities and programs at [poudrelibraries.org](http://www.poudrelibraries.org) (<http://www.poudrelibraries.org/>).

SERVICES: [Check out a Colorado state parks pass at the library \(/story/sports/outdoors/2016/06/20/check-out-colorado-state-parks-pass-library/86158624/\)](/story/sports/outdoors/2016/06/20/check-out-colorado-state-parks-pass-library/86158624/)

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Con with a cause: Fort Collins Comic Con enters second year

Erin Udell, erinudell@coloradoan.com 11:21 a.m. MDT August 16, 2016



(Photo: Coloradoan library)

You don't have to drive to Denver or empty your pocketbook to get an authentic Comic Con experience.

Entering its second year, Fort Collins Comic Con will be back and better than ever Aug. 27 and 28, with extended programming, panels, guests and special events.

"We learned a lot from the first time around," Fort Collins Comic Con co-organizer Nick Armstrong said of the event, which aims to encourage youth literacy through comic books and other pop-culture mediums.

The event is volunteer-run. Proceeds from badge sales benefit the Poudre River Public Library District, which received \$15,000 from last year's Comic Con.

This year, Armstrong says they're aiming to raise between \$20,000 and \$25,000.

FILM: [Fort Collins natives bringing coming-of-age film home \(/story/entertainment/2016/08/10/foco-natives-bringing-coming-of-age-film-home/88543054/\)](http://story.entertainment.com/2016/08/10/foco-natives-bringing-coming-of-age-film-home/88543054/)

There are 2,500 total Fort Collins Comic Con badges, 1,800 of which have been released to the public so far. Like last year, Armstrong says he expects the event to sell out.

Because of this, he encourages interested parties to secure their badges online through the [Comic Con website \(https://fococomiccon.com/\)](https://fococomiccon.com/) to avoid another year of kids in cosplay being turned away at the door.

Badge prices are \$20 for anyone 13 and up, \$10 for anyone 6 to 12, and free for children 5 and under.

"Traditionally, you do have to drive down to Denver and get a hotel and it's expensive," Armstrong said of other area Comic Con experiences. "It's an ordeal. But here we can really emphasize local artists, local creators."

"On purpose, we've kept our (badge prices) at \$20 or less" and vendor booth prices low (\$50 for the two days), Armstrong added, saying that a February Fort Fund grant awarded through the city helped keep Comic Con's costs down, allowing it to expand to two days of events instead of just one.

EVERYTHING'S PEACHY: [Fort Collins and the giant peach festival \(/story/entertainment/2016/08/15/fort-collins-and-giant-peach-festival/88762788/\)](http://story.entertainment.com/2016/08/15/fort-collins-and-giant-peach-festival/88762788/)

"We're really excited that almost everything there is to do at the Con will be free," Armstrong said. "Once you're there, all the activities, the retro video games, tabletop gaming, Ghostbusters training camp, crafts, almost all of the panels will be free."

"That just didn't exist in our community before," he said.

The event will include classes and workshops that take on cosplay body painting, steampunk 101, fanfiction, podcasting and more. There will also be panels with actress GiGi Edgley ("Farscape" and "Rescue: Special Ops"), actor Richard Hatch (Battlestar Galactica), and filmmaker, producer, and Viacom Interactive's Star Trek consultant Robert Meyer Burnett.

For badges and a full schedule, [v \(https://fococomiccon.com\)](https://fococomiccon.com) visit [fococomiccon.com \(http://fococomiccon.com\)](http://fococomiccon.com).

Fort Collins Comic Con 2016

When: 9 a.m.-8 p.m Aug. 27; 9 a.m.-9 p.m. Aug. 28

Where: Northside Aztlan Community Center, 112 Willow St., Fort Collins

Read or Share this story: <http://noconow.co/2bxHzkG>

Fort Collins Comic Con expands for second year

Comic book and fantasy gathering offers more panels, guests and diversity.

By Michelle Vendegna

Reporter-Herald Staff Writer

POSTED: 08/24/2016 07:24:01 PM MDT



Fort Collins Comic Con is Saturday and Sunday at the Northside Aztlan Center, 112 Willow St., Fort Collins. The convention has expanded to two days, added more vendors, more guests and more panels. *(Special to the Reporter-Herald)*

If you go

What: Fort Collins Comic Con

When: Saturday and Sunday

Where: Northside Aztlan Center, 112 Willow St., Fort Collins.

Cost: Ages 13 and older, \$20; ages 6-12, \$10; kids 5 and under are free.

More info: Go to fococomiccon.com

The cosplay costumes are getting the final touches, the vendors are packing up their stock and the Fort Collins Comic Con organizers are preparing for their expanded two-day convention this year.

"We want to grow a natural con experience for Northern Colorado," said Nick Armstrong, co-organizer of the event.

The convention is on Saturday and Sunday at the Northside Aztlan Center, 112 Willow St., Fort Collins. It's in its second year and celebrates all things pop culture. They have added an additional day to the event as well as more panels and guests. There are 145 vendors scheduled and food trucks will be on site. Armstrong said they kept the cost for attendees and vendors the same as last year.

"We wanted to encourage as many families as possible to come out and have a good con experience," said Armstrong. Badges for range from free for kids under 5 to \$20 for adults.

"Our con is really designed for the first time con-goer, the small family and the people that don't necessarily need to or want to travel two hours to Denver to go to a con," Armstrong said. Vendors fees started again this year at \$50.

"Our goal is to honor the artist and honor the vendors that want to be here," Armstrong said. This year they welcoming a few bigger named guests.

"We have added two guests from TV you would recognize and one from behind the scenes that you might not recognize, but you know his work," he said. Gigi Edgley, who played Chiana on the TV series "Farscape," will present and take questions from the audience at 1 p.m. Saturday and 10:35 a.m. Sunday. Richard Hatch, an actor from both the original and the reboot of "Battlestar Galactica," will be presenting at 3 p.m. Saturday and 11:35 a.m. Sunday. From behind the scenes, filmmaker Robert Meyer Burnett will discuss his work in films such as "Free Enterprise," "The Hills Run Red," and "Paradox," at 3 p.m. Saturday and 1:35 p.m. Sunday.

"The ultimate goal with the con is to keep it as local as possible while still bringing in folks that elevate the community for us," Armstrong said. For example, Hatch is made a short film called "Cowboys and Engines," a steampunk western. It combines the elements of a Western with science fiction influenced by Victorian times and steam-powered technology.

"It's very much in line with our community and culture," Armstrong said of the Western element, but he said organizers also work to recruit as much local talent as possible such as comic writer Mike Baron.

The events and panels available for convention-goers range from Ghostbuster and Superhero Training Camps for youths to "The challenges of creating inclusive comics and LGBTQ characters in Brazil," presented by Kris Barz. The idea was to make sure there was something for everyone. One of the ideas behind the convention was to include a variety of panels on diversity and inclusion. Armstrong said the team behind the con frequent conventions around Colorado and wanted to make sure to address issues they have seen in the past. They wanted to make sure families could attend.

"You grow your family and your kids are not able to go — and all of a sudden you, as the geek of the family, are not able to participate anymore," he said, so panels like "Nerd/Geek Culture and the Family" and "Cosplay with kids and families" were included. There are also more-serious topics discussed in panels like "Body Positivity and Diversity in Cosplay," discussing all body types and backgrounds in costume play; and "When Nerds Become Bullies," discussing elitism and sexism in the pop culture community.

"It was always our intent to bring social questions to the forefront," Armstrong said. He mentioned the idea to include these types of panels came from personal experiences of himself and friends. The group works to ensure everyone has a good time whether with friends or family.

"It's important to us as a team that as many people as possible get in to experience this thing," Armstrong said.

Last year the event hosted 1,800 attendees and raised \$15,000 for the Poudre River Public Library District. Organizers are hoping to top that with 2,500 attendees this year and to reach \$20,000 for the library district.

"We are able to do things because of our awesome community supporting us," Armstrong. That includes the team behind event, volunteers and sponsors and attendees.

Armstrong said the badges are close to selling out and most likely there would be none left to buy at the door. To help with the limited parking, there will be additional parking at Odell's Brewing, 800 E. Lincoln Ave., Fort Collins, and In-Situ, 221 E. Lincoln Ave., Fort Collins. Both are short walks to the venue.

"It's pretty easy, even if you're wearing full armor," he said.

Go to fococomiccon.com for a full schedule of events.

Michelle Vendegna: 970-699-5407, vendegnam@reporterherald.com

Creating Flawed Protagonists That Make Teens Think

An Interview with Author Amy Kathleen Ryan ▶ DIANE P. TUCCILLO

I met Amy Kathleen Ryan when she moved to Fort Collins, Colorado, several years ago. She was a fairly new YA author at the time, but soon became popular among our local teens. She was engaging and inspiring in talks with them about magical realism and the art of writing. She also appeared in a *Bookends* television show with our Interesting Reader Society (Teen IRS) teens which is done as a partnership with Poudre School District Channel 10 (<http://epresence.psdschools.org/1/watch/934.aspx>). Her books were, and are, a well-loved part of our teen book collection, and we miss her since she moved back to her hometown of Jackson, Wyoming. We have kept in touch, and I was thrilled that she was able to do this interview to share her perspectives on her books and writing, despite being extremely busy working on her new novel. If you and your teens are not familiar with her work, this introduction will get you connected to some great reading.



AMY KATHLEEN RYAN

DT: Hi, Amy! I'm so glad you were able to have this chat with me today. I think it might be nice to start at the very beginning, so can you tell me if, like many teens do today, you wrote as a child and a teenager?

AKR: I was a very nerdy kid, frequently slumped over spiral notebooks making up stories. I also spent many a night honing my future legal signature, Amy K. Hasselhoff, because I was destined to marry the *Night Rider*. Seriously, though, I think most professional writers start out playing around with writing just for the fun of it. Even now, drafting a novel is like play for me. I sweat out the many revisions my books go through, but the first draft is usually great fun. I'm always glad to hear of children and teens playing with language because I feel certain that at least of few of them are future authors. In fact, on my website at <http://www.AmyKathleenRyan.com>, I have a page that advises teens how they can develop a writing career, beginning even in high school.

DT: It's great that you provide such a wonderful resource for teen writers. You said you enjoyed making up stories as a kid, but what inspired you to write your first actual book?

AKR: Short answer: Judy Blume and Madeleine L'Engle. Long answer: I had recently moved from my hometown of Jackson, Wyoming, to Burlington, Vermont, where I didn't know anyone. The winter evenings were long and dark, and I spent many of them drafting a novel about a girl in Jackson Hole who survives an encounter with a grizzly bear. It became my first novel, *Shadow Falls*, which, sadly, is no longer in print. Writing was how I dealt with my homesickness for my little mountain town.



DT: You have a writing style that really connects with teens. Why do you think this is true?

AKR: I try to be a chameleon as a writer, changing my prose to match my character and themes, so, in a sense, my style changes with every book. *Vibes* had a snappy, bitterly humorous first-person voice that suited my troubled protagonist, Kristi. *Zen and Xander Undone* depicted a more introspective narrator, so Zen's voice was more literary, less conversational. My *Sky Chasers* series, beginning with the novel, *Glow*, has a traveling third-person viewpoint between three different teen leads, Waverly, Kieran, and Seth, with adjustments to those distinct consciousnesses. If there is one underlying principle guiding my writing, it's an honest attempt to be unflinchingly honest. I don't gloss over emotional problems or minimize the effects of abandonment or violence as you might see in lots of movies these days. I don't write about big heroes who always know what to do. To me, it's more interesting to write about kids thrust into serious situations, making serious mistakes, and learning from them. I think that's what teens respond to best.



DT: I think that's a great point and I agree. When you write a novel, is there also a message that you want teen readers to grasp?

AKR: Never. I only want to make them think.

DT: I've heard such good feedback at our Teen IRS meetings about how your stories make them think. Have you received some interesting comments or feedback from other readers that you would like to share?

AKR: I always love the comments from readers that say they didn't like reading before they found my books. That puffs up my ego hugely! But I think the most interesting response was from a reader who had an objection to the way I described a kid with severe acne in *Vibes*. He felt those passages were a disservice to kids with the same problem. I wrote back that I had depicted this case of acne so that I could show my character going to a dermatologist and getting help, because that is precisely what I had never known to do for myself as a young adult with acne. Funny how those intended messages of positivity and hope can actually turn out to be painful to a reader in ways the writer can't anticipate. I'm not sure I would choose to do anything differently, though. I think a writer could twist herself into knots trying to anticipate how every little passage might make someone feel upset.

DT: Yes, I think teens can learn things about themselves and others through reading, and authors never really know how each individual reader will respond to his or her work. I know that one element in your books that resonates with teen readers is magical realism. How has this played a role in creating your books?

AKR: I speak Spanish, and I double majored in anthropology and Spanish language, so I read **100 Years of Solitude** in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's original gorgeous prose. And, of course, Isabel Allende's **The House of Spirits** was also a major magical realist book that slew me with gorgeousness. Because of those early literary experiences, most of my books have a sprinkling of magical realism. Even *The Sky Chasers*, which is a *bona fide* space opera, has a prophet in the second and third books.

DT: *I was captivated by your The Sky Chasers series. Our teens have been, too, and I even have adult readers who have truly enjoyed it. I recommend it often to both age groups. Although it takes place in outer space, a question is popping into my head. Authors often create characters based on people from real life. Even in your science fiction series, are your characters and situations based on real people or things that happened?*

AKR: Yes, but I am rarely aware of this while I'm writing a first draft. I had published the entire first novel of *The Sky Chasers*, **Glow**, and was half-way into the second novel, **Spark**, before I realized that **Glow** was a depiction of the 9/11 attacks. I lived in New York while the World Trade Center burned—I had only moved there three months before—so I witnessed the devastation, experienced the fear, and navigated the aftermath along with the twelve million other traumatized inhabitants. The event shocked the entire country, but being in New York was very frightening for a small town girl from Wyoming. For months afterward, the subways would stop in the middle of the tunnels because of some perceived threat, and we'd all sit there in total silence, trying not to be afraid. Armed guards with machine guns stood outside subway stops. I did clerical work in a hospital at the time, and to get to my office, I had to walk past long lines of frantic people desperately searching for their family members. The entire experience was traumatic. The plot of **Glow** is drawn directly from those experiences: an attack on an unsuspecting people by religious extremists that leads to devastating loss of life. The imagery from that time period informs the entire work, but I was dealing with all those horrors in a very subconscious way as I wrote about them. In fact, I was a bit stuck on **Spark** until I realized the second book had to be about the negative effect of 9/11 on America's moral code, and the third book, **Flame**, is about how our government has been hijacked by a shadowy oligarchy in the post-9/11 era.



DT: *And all that comes together in a tension-filled, space-travel adventure! That's amazing. I know you enjoy reading as well as writing. What books have most influenced your life and writing?*

AKR: Madeleine L'Engle will always be my favorite writer, I think. I was kind of an unhappy kid, and her depictions of a loving family life and flawed characters finding strength within themselves to confront their own problems was solace to my soul.

DT: *She is a wonderful writer, and I know she is still a favorite of many young readers. Getting back to your own books, do you have a favorite, and why?*

AKR: I think *The Sky Chasers* series is my best work. I tried to create morally complex situations that mirror the fog of war and attempt to make readers question what they think they know about themselves. Would you ever engage in torture? What about if you thought you could save your parents by torturing someone you despise? And afterward . . . How well did that work out for you? These are tough questions, but teens are ready to confront issues like these, and I think they appreciate a book that doesn't simplify the tough questions for them.

DT: *I think The Sky Chasers would be a perfect selection for a book discussion group because of those reasons. Moving on, I remember you saying you are working on a new book project. Can you give us any hints about it?*

AKR: It is called **The Hinterlands**, and it's about Aurendil Kempe, a Saxon midwife and wise woman living in ancient Europe. Stay tuned!

DT: *I can't wait until it's published so I can read it! I hope I'm on your list to receive an ARC. Speaking of getting published, teens are always wondering how they, too, might see their writing in print. So are adults. What advice would you give to teenagers and adults aiming toward writing as a career?*

AKR: Be tenacious. Don't give up. Never stop trying to improve. Take classes, form a writer's group, schedule writing time and stick to that schedule, and read a lot. There's no magic formula. Creative writing and publishing is one of the most competitive fields there is. Only the most determined and persistent writers make it.

DT: *It certainly is a competitive field, and hard work and determination are important. Have there been any particularly challenging aspects to your own writing?*

AKR: I want to tell you something cute and funny and flattering to me, but I will tell you the truth: I think I push the envelope on likeability of my protagonists, and maybe that's why I'm not a top tier author. I always love reading about a flawed protagonist, but maybe I take that a little too far. I just hate those plucky, cutesy heroines you see in movies for women, and in some teen fiction for girls, the ones who never get too mad, never cry ugly, never embarrass themselves, and never make disastrous choices. Life is messy and ugly, and many times, so are people, even the best of us.

DT: *I do agree that flawed protagonists are more interesting and can actually become likeable, because we can see ourselves in them better. Besides the value of flawed protagonists, what other valuable things have you learned from writing your books?*

AKR: Don't get comfortable. If you feel too cozy when you're writing, you are churning out crap.

DT: *That is saying it bluntly. It makes sense. If you could ask teen readers some questions, what would they be?*

AKR: I think I would want to know what they struggle with in their own lives, and if my writing could address their struggle better? I would ask them, "What am I missing? What do you need?"

DT: *Is there anything else you would like to share about writing for teenagers?*

AKR: Just that I think I have the best job in the world and I hope people keep letting me do it! Thank you so much for this interview! ■

BOOKS BY AMY KATHLEEN RYAN

Flame: *Sky Chasers, Book 3.* St. Martin's, 2014. 336p. \$18.99. 978-0-312-62136-0.
Spark: *Sky Chasers, Book 2.* St. Martin's, 2012. 320p. \$17.99. 978-0-312-62135-3.
Glow: *Sky Chasers, Book 1.* St. Martin's, 2011. 320p. \$17.99. 978-0-312-59056-7.
Vibes. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010. 264p. \$14.95 Trade pb. 978-0-547-24889-9.
Zen and Xander Undone. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010. 224p. \$16. 978-0-547-06248-8.
Shadow Falls. Delacorte/Random House, 2005. 224p. O.P. 978-0-385-73132-4.

Diane P. Tuccillo is teen services librarian at the Poudre River Public Library District in Fort Collins, CO. She is the author of *Library Teen Advisory Groups* (Scarecrow, 2005) and *Teen-Centered Library Service: Putting Youth Participation into Practice* (Libraries Unlimited, 2010). She is a longstanding member of the Editorial Advisory Board for VOYA.

