

# Coloradoan wins annual United Way award

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(Photo: Morgan Spiehs/The Coloradoan)

United Way of Larimer County presented its inaugural Campaign of the Year award to the Fort Collins Coloradoan at the Agave Room in Fort Collins on Feb. 5.

The Campaign of the Year is a point-based competition among local businesses that host a United Way employee giving campaign and implement best practices, which include giving back through corporate volunteerism, hosting special events, and increasing employee participation.

There were 23 of United Way's participants in the competition.

The Coloradoan team increased total employee participation by 17 percent and increased total dollars raised by nearly 12 percent. The 4th Annual Coloradoan Shred-A-Thon benefited United Way, and employees also participated in a Make A Difference Day flood recovery project in Drake and led do-it-yourself "Service-To-Go" volunteer projects in their office.

"The passion and active participation shown in The Coloradoan campaign reflects the heart of the employees who care deeply about helping people in our community," said Gordan Thibedeau, President and CEO of United Way of Larimer County. "From special events to raffles, incentives, and more, their team went above and beyond. Thank you to The Coloradoan for inspiring us and helping change more lives in Larimer County."

United Way also awarded three Spirit of Giving Awards and the Campaign Coordinator of the Year award.

•Spirit of Giving Awards: Town of Estes Park, Anheuser-Busch Company, and The Group, Inc.

•Campaign Coordinator of the Year: James Walters, Enterprise Holdings

The following 23 organizations participated in the Campaign of the Year competition:

Advance Tank & Construction; Advantage Bank; Anheuser-Busch Company; Avago Technologies; Banner Health; City of Fort Collins; Cornerstone Home Lending; Crop Production Services, Inc.; Enterprise Holdings; Fiberlok Incorporated; FirstBank; Flood and Peterson; Fort Collins Coloradoan; Hach Company; Health District of Northern Larimer County; High Country Beverage; In-Situ, Inc.; Intel Corporation; Larimer County; Poudre River Public Library District; Town of Estes Park; Warren Federal Credit Union; Woodward, Inc.

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**DARLENE MUELLER MORSE**  
SOAPBOX: BOOKS

## Books are sacred, not decorative building blocks



I've never written a soapbox about something published in the "Your Home" section. I am now.

It must have been a slow news day. Nothing in Fort Collins to write about when the topic is "home." What to do? Publish three articles from the Associated Press. Safe enough.

When I got to the "Your Home" section of Saturday's (Valentine's Day) edition, my eye immediately went to the large type proclaiming, "home décor takes a page from books." The magic five-letter word, and I'm not talking décor.

As I read the article, I began a slow burn. It seems that since we are now in the digital age, books are clutter and "why would anyone own them?" So what the savvy decorator has discovered is that books can be "repurposed" as nostalgia items, "not unlike displays of other authentic objects that originated in earlier eras, like wagon wheels or washboards."

I didn't know that my extensive collection in my many bookshelves was now lumped with wagon wheels and washboards. I just bought a book a few days ago with a publishing date of 2015.

Meredith Wing, the "brains" behind this new versatile but meaningful design, has bought "books by the foot, covered them in white paper and created a 'minimalist library wall.'" I wonder what the price is for a foot of books.

Another artistic person uses the colors of the spines to spell out words. He took 4,000 romance novels with white spines and uses ones with red spines to make words such as "forever." I suppose this might be a legitimate use of romance novels.

And finally, interior decorator, Liz Toombs, gushes about buying book collections at estate sales. "If they have a worn patina, it's more interesting." And, get this, sometimes she "turns a book on a shelf around so that the pages, not the spine faces out, to add 'a little funky spin to it.'"

I read a column in The Denver Post about the question of keeping books on a shelf after one has read them. The consultant said if you have read them, donate them. Why keep them around?

Books mean much more to me than mere decorating items. I look at my books in their case. An author wrote the words. Some of these authors are my friends. Other books are signed by the author. The words contained within these books took me places I'd never been, gave me many moments of pondering life, and elated me as I turned page after page after page. Many have left my shelf, read by others and returned along with delightful discussions.

I wonder if things would be different if these designers actually read a few of these re-purposed books. Would they then be as likely to cover them in white paper?

I know I'm not the only one who regards books as almost sacred (some are). I think of times in history when books were banned or burned and people's lives were at risk for owning them. Use them as decorating items?

The next time there is a slow news day, remember: There is no slow news day. Send the Coloradoan reporters out and let them find the richness in the lives and homes of local residences and don't rely on mindless AP drivel.

*Darlene Mueller Morse lives in Fort Collins.*

# Homeless people, libraries need each other

By Travis Loller  
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — Jeffery Bailey spends nearly every day at his public library.

It's not just that he loves books. For the 43-year-old who sleeps in a tent outside a local church, the library is pretty much the only place he can go that won't charge him to provide safety, warmth, useful services and entertainment.

Many public libraries discourage homeless people from hanging around all day. "It could be the way you dress, the way your hair is," says Bailey.

But just as Bailey needs his library, the library needs him: In this digital age, many people who used to depend on libraries can find what they need online without leaving home. Menaced by budget cuts, many public libraries are effectively failing to justify their relevance, reducing their hours year after year.

At the same time, libraries are more important to people who can't otherwise get connected: Nearly two-thirds provide the only free computer and Internet access in their communities, according to the American Library Association.

In the 25 years since the ALA adopted a policy urging full access for poor and homeless library patrons, few have taken this mission as far as Nashville's main downtown library, where Bailey arrives early each day, standing on an icy sidewalk in below-freezing temperatures with a half-dozen other people until the ornate bronze doors open.

Once inside, he goes directly to the third floor, where rows of computer terminals are quickly occupied by people carrying bags filled with their worldly possessions.

The library recently renovated this section with their homeless patrons in mind, ditching countless shelves of bound copies of Popular Mechanics and other periodicals that are now available electronically, and making way for 68 computers and more tables with Ethernet connections and power outlets.

"They have a good book selection, a good music selection, movies," Bailey said one morning after using Facebook to check in with his family. Without being able to stay at the library, "I'd probably do a lot of walking and trying to find a place to use the Internet."

The single most important thing libraries can help people do online is find a job, the ALA found. Even fast food restaurants require online applications now. But many libraries still require patrons to have an address and photo identification to get a library card, and then limit the time patrons can spend online.

Librarian Liz Coleman, who serves on a new homelessness advisory committee at the Nashville Public Library, says her co-workers are frustrated they can't help everyone. One regular patron died of exposure; another was hit by a car and died shortly before he was to receive housing.