

Chaffee's Got Heart Community Spotlight: Julia Makowski, Buena Vista Public Library

The Chaffee's Got Heart Committee is extremely proud of local businesses and individuals that have gone above and beyond by doing extraordinary things during these uncertain times.

From innovating ways to thrive despite trying circumstances to showering struggling members of our community with generosity to prioritizing the health and safety of our most vulnerable, these businesses and individuals, who have been nominated for this honor by fellow community members, have shown what it really means when we say: **Chaffee's Got HEART.**

Today, we sat down with **Julia Makowski, Youth Services Coordinator for the Buena Vista Public Library** to find out how she took on the challenge of reconnecting families to the library in a safe and meaningful way during the pandemic. In the words of the library's Director, Cecilia LaFrance, "Julia is a local hero in the time of the pandemic, supporting the mission of the Library to inspire discovery and growth in the community's youth."

How did COVID cause you to innovate or change the way you do business?

I joined the library in July 2020 and the director tasked me with getting our programming up and running within the regulations our county had in place. So, in September, I launched our robust "take and make" program, which provides weekly activities connected through a monthly theme. All materials are provided and activities go beyond reading to included science experiments, math skills, and arts and crafts. We also offer ways to encourage continued exploration and curiosity in kids beyond just the activities provided.

We wanted to support parents by promoting early learning and literacy and also wanted to give families an opportunity to still be connected with the library even from a distance. It was extremely successful and we got great feedback from parents. We were surprised to find out that we were giving them time together in a shared experience, or at least they were using it that way. We hadn't anticipated that, but it makes sense since connections are what people are missing right now.



Why did you decide to go above & beyond to contribute to our community?

I don't think it's above and beyond. I think it's what we are supposed to do. It's the purpose of our library and though we needed to pivot and change how we approached our mission, we still wanted to meet community needs.

Where do you see examples of the idea that ‘Chaffee’s Got Heart’?

I’ve seen this by watching our parents handle this situation. They miss us and want to be here more, but they have been very understanding and patient. In trying to make those connections with friends, family and the community in different ways, they have all been very respectful with each other because they know this isn’t just about them.

What’s your biggest takeaway from 2020?

That I am incredibly fortunate and lucky to live here and be part of this small community that is so supportive. I can’t imagine what this past year would have been like in a larger city.

Cool Tidbits:

Each month, Julia designs monthly themed take and make kits to provide a new opportunity to interact, explore and learn each week. Between September and December, the Library distributed over 800 kits to youth ages 0 - 5th grade. Examples of work [may be seen at the youth page on the Library's website.](#)

Sign up for take and make kits through the [website.](#)

[Register for Play, Learn, Grow: An Early Learning Zoom Workshop Series](#) supported by Colorado State Libraries.

Summer Reading Program plans are shaping up for in-person, outdoor activities including a variety of animals and fun. Learn more or volunteer by [emailing Julia.](#)

Stories of Chaffee County individuals and businesses rising to the challenge abound.

We will be shining a light on those doing extraordinary things for the community throughout the upcoming months. Visit our websites ([Chaffee’s Got Heart](#) or [CCPH](#)) or follow us on [Facebook \(@COVID19ChaffeeCounty\)](#) to see more.

Know a potential candidate, or are you one yourself? Send nomination ideas to: health@chaffeecounty.org.