What is a modern library?

by Heather Estrada
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The public library of 2026 looks very different than the public library of the past. The old idea that libraries are a place of quiet, smelling only of old books and copy machines, and shushing old women has been replaced by a vision of a space that is welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. A place to meet people from all walks of life and learn new skills. To have your mind opened in new ways, not only through the books you read (which are still there by the way), but by the new ideas and skills you can learn through programs and activities. In short, the modern library is, in many ways, the hub or heartbeat of a community.

If there ever was a library functioning in this manner it is the Stanfield Public Library. Cecili Longhorn, the Stanfield Library Director, has a distinct knack for making a partner out of every person she meets. And the results of this show. You will find her library right in the middle of every community event that is happening, and if Cecili wasn't the first person with the idea, she jumps right in, taking part in the collaboration. These events include activities like *Trucks and Tractors* that takes place on Arbor Day in coordination with local farmers, the police and public works departments. The *4th of July* celebration in town which includes most businesses and departments. The *Haunted Library and Halloween Block Party* in conjunction with local businesses and the police department, and the *Christmas lightshow* which brings together the library, public works, as well as local restaurants and coffee shops. She has strong and ongoing relationships with the Stanfield School District and the fire department as well. Stanfield is small town at its best, and Cecili and the library are right in the middle, connecting all the parts. Working together the different departments and organizations in Stanfield find ways to make programs and events happen for people of all ages, often on very little funding.

Cecili has worked with Good Shephard Community Health Foundation and the Greater Hermiston Community Foundation to help fund and pave a community walking path. The walking path was an off shoot of another partnership she formed with Oregon Health Sciences University for a walking group which is still going strong 3 years later. She partners with the Stanfield Community Center to host events, Easter Seals to fund senior part-time library workers, and local independent businesspeople to offer Yoga, Zumba and Senior Fitness in the library. Almost 2 years ago Cecili partnered with Age+ (a nonprofit organization that service seniors) to offer senior tech programs. These programs are a time where seniors can come in and get personalized help and classes on all things tech. The program on



using the Safeway app was one of the most popular! That program was so successful the State Library of Oregon is using a grant to help spread that program to other cities in Umatilla County (Athena and Helix) to reach this sometimes-overlooked population. These programs are happening now in all three communities!



She's created joint programs with the Hermiston Bowling Alley, a local beekeeper in Stanfield, and a summer Explorer Program that's a cross between summer camp and summer school for kids (with meals included) that runs all summer. She has created a teen program to teach teens leadership skills and job skills as they help run the Explorer program and has local teachers who volunteer their teaching skills for the summer.

The number of people and programs that Cecili has running and brewing at any given time is mind boggling. The Stanfield Public Library truly encapsulates the spirit of the modern library. Creating spaces to bring people together. To give people of all ages, kids, teens, older adults a space to learn new skills, meet new people and expand their horizons. These are the types of spaces that make a town livable and offer that invisible factor that makes a town inviting to move to. Stop by the Stanfield library on your next trip through, there is never a dull moment. Or stop by your own local library to find out what is happening in your own community! You can find out more about the Stanfield Library and all the libraries in Umatilla County at www.ucsld.org or on their social media pages.