

# Safety of library staff, patrons is top priority

BY DIANE LAPIERRE

The aftermath of even the most troubling events can sometimes present opportunities for valuable community conversations that otherwise would not occur.

I hope that will be the outcome when the Loveland Public Library hosts a Dec. 18 forum on safety and security, a discussion driven by a disturbing event that occurred late on Sunday, Nov. 10, outside the library.

While you will find details of the community forum below, first consider the details of the event that leads us there, and the steps we already have taken at the library in response.

As the library was closing, one of our teen customers was confronted by a man who shouted at her and threatened her as she was leaving the building with her younger brother. The suspect in the incident was arrested and charged with harassment, as well as weapons and drug-related offenses. He is subject to an order barring his entry to the Civic Center Complex for six months and has been suspended from the library for a year.

## HITTING HOME

The incident is profoundly upsetting to me as library director, as the parent of a child who is a classmate of the teen who was attacked, and as a Loveland native. I moved back to Loveland with my family in June 2017 when I accepted my current position. While growing up in Loveland, I spent much of my childhood hanging out at the library when it was located on Sixth Street.

The safety of library staff and patrons is a top priority, and I will continue to work with city leadership, library staff and law enforcement to address safety and security concerns. I also recognize that Loveland is changing, and that this incident reflects a larger trend in our city and across the country.

## COMMITMENT TO PATRONS

As a public library, we face challenges in balancing safety and security with open access to a welcoming environment for everyone who walks through our doors, provided they adhere to our policies, procedures and the law.

In striking the safety-and access balance, the city uses contract security guards to patrol the Civic Center Complex including the library and Chilson Recreation Center. Two months ago, the library hired a full-time security monitor to enforce our customer behavior policy and respond to incidents inside the library. We work closely with Loveland Police and appreciate the speed with which they respond to library incidents and their follow-up.

While mindful of security, we also strive to support individuals by helping them find jobs, secure housing, connect with mental health services and improve their job skills. We connect patrons who may be experiencing homelessness, mental illness and addiction to community resources that can help them get on healthier, more stable footings.

## WE SAY 'WELCOME'

The teen who was attacked Nov. 10 is a frequent visitor to the library, along with her siblings. After school and on the weekends, you can find her hanging out with her friends and doing projects in the Teen Hangout. She has positive relationships with our staff and a place to come after school and on the weekends where there is structure, support and opportunities to learn and grow. The library is an important place for her and many teens in Loveland.

Every day, our staff provides information, inspiration and connections for anyone who walks through our doors.

We believe strongly that together we make an important difference in the community, and we strive to make Loveland a better place for everyone.

## **VISION FOR THE FUTURE**

As we track the ways Loveland is growing and changing, we have engaged in a series of community conversations over the past year to understand the aspirations, concerns and vision Loveland residents have for their future.

We take that process a step further as we host a community forum focused on safety, in partnership with the Loveland Police Department, at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 18, in the library's Gertrude Scott Room. Please join us as we work to understand the issues facing our community and how we can work together to build a safer and stronger Loveland.

Learn more online at Love [landPublicLibrary.org](http://landPublicLibrary.org) or by calling 970-962-2404.