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# Press and Publicity Report

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# Pueblo foundations launch campaign to renovate two district libraries

By: Spencer Kristensen

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PUEBLO, Colo. — The Pueblo City-County Library District and Pueblo Library Foundation will launch a capital campaign to fund renovations for two district branch libraries.

The campaign announcement will take place on Jul. 17 at 10:30 a.m. at the Lucero Library.

“This is the beginning of a transformative chapter for our community as we launch the Building Community Together campaign to renovate and expand the Barkman and Patrick A Lucero Libraries. This project is about more than just buildings; it’s about ensuring everyone in Pueblo has access to the resources they need to learn, grow, and thrive. Join us in creating a library that reflects the spirit and aspirations of our community,” Nick Potter PCCLD’s executive director of

library foundation and strategic initiatives said.

The Frank and Marie Barkman Branch and Patrick A. Lucero Library will receive renovations to keep up with the growing demands and rise in popularity that libraries are seeing in the Pueblo community.

The Barkman Branch has been a staple for Belmont and northern Pueblo for over 30 years. Renovations have already begun on the existing building, with the interior and exterior to be improved. Alongside the modifications to the structure, an additional 2,643 square feet will be added. Over the course of the last 11 years, the Barkman Branch has seen over 1.6 million community members walk through their doors.

Not far behind, the Lucero Branch still in its infancy since its opening in December of 2014, has already seen more than one million visitors. Housed in a smaller building, the popularity of this branch warrants an expansion to match the ambition of the community that uses it.

Through private and public funding, more than \$525,000 has been raised, with the total renovation costs to finish the projects expected to be \$8.9 million.

The Lucero Library will be set to close on Aug. 3 in preparation for construction work.

Plans to renovate the Lucero Library include:

- Expanded public meeting room
- Improved front entrance
- Larger spaces for children, teens
- New children's discovery area
- New Maker Space
- New audio/visual creative studio
- Refreshed book collection

Added areas will increase the building's size to 10,000 square feet which will allow visitors ample space to access the resources of the library.

The Barkman Branch whose construction is already underway is expected to be completed near the beginning of September.

To celebrate the reopening of the Barkman Branch Library a ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held at 9 a.m. on Sep. 10. Following the ribbon-cutting ceremony, a week of festivities will be held.

"It is the goal that through the renovation of both Barkman and Lucero Libraries that patrons will have access to improved and expanded libraries. Through improved facilities, library programs, and a great selection of print and digital books, we aim to ensure that there is something for everyone at Pueblo's libraries. We are committed to continually improving library services and facilities in our community," Executive Director Sherri Baca said.

To stay up to date with how the projects are progressing, you can visit the Pueblo Libraries website. [\\_\\_\\_\\_](#)

NEWS

## PCCLD launches \$2 million capital campaign for library renovations

by: [Norishka Pachot](#)  
Posted: Jul 17, 2024 / 11:24 AM MDT  
Updated: Jul 17, 2024 / 11:51 AM MDT



*Courtesy: Pueblo City-County Library District*

# PCCLD launches \$2 million capital campaign for library renovations

by: [Norishka Pachot](#)

Posted: Jul 17, 2024 / 11:24 AM MDT  
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(PUEBLO, Colo.) — The Pueblo City-County Library District (PCCLD) and Pueblo Library Foundation have launched a \$2 million capital campaign to fund renovations for two of the district's branch libraries.

The Building Together Capital Campaign will fundraise for the expansion and renovation of the Barkman and Patrick A. Lucero libraries.

“This is the beginning of a transformative chapter for our community as we launch the Building Community Together campaign

to renovate and expand the Barkman and Patrick A Lucero Libraries,” said Nick Potter, PCCLD’s Executive Director of Library Foundation and Strategic Initiatives. “This project is about more than just buildings; it’s about ensuring everyone in Pueblo has access to the resources they need to learn, grow, and thrive. Join us in creating a library that reflects the spirit and aspirations of our community.”

Both libraries will undergo improvements to enhance each location’s capacity to grow its services to meet the ever-changing needs of Pueblo’s children, teens, families, and adults.

Renovation costs are more than \$8.9 million; the price tag includes design, construction, furniture, fixtures, and equipment. Most improvements will focus on refurbishing, and expanding the interior of the buildings with some exterior site work. Currently, more than \$525,000 has been raised through a combination of public and private funding.

The Barkman Library will receive an improved interior and exterior while adding an

additional 2,463 square feet onto the building. Opened more than 30 years ago, Barkman has served the Belmont neighborhood and northern Pueblo for decades.

"It is the goal that through the renovation of both Barkman and Lucero Libraries that patrons will have access to improved and expanded libraries. Through improved facilities, library programs, and a great selection of print and digital books, we aim to ensure that there is something for everyone at Pueblo's libraries. We are committed to continually improving library services and facilities in our community," Executive Director Sherri Baca said.

Lucero Library has served over 1.6 million visitors during the past 11 years, is heavily used by the community, and has quickly outgrown its footprint. Renovation plans include expanding the public meeting room, improving the front entrance, a new children's discovery area, marker space, and a visual creative studio in addition to a refreshed book collection and larger spaces for children and teens.

Lucero Library will close to the public on Saturday, Aug. 3 in preparation for work to begin, with construction expected to be completed in 2025. The public is encouraged to visit other PCCLD locations including:

- Tom L. and Anna Marie Giadone Branch Library, 24655 U.S Highway 59 E.
- Greenhorn Valley Branch Library, 4801 Cibola Drive, Colorado City
- Lamb Branch Library, 2525 S. Pueblo Blvd.
- Library at the Y, 3200 E. Spaulding Ave.
- Pueblo West Branch Library, 298 S. Joe Martinez Blvd, Pueblo West
- Robert Hoag Rawlings Public Library, 100 E. Abriendo Ave.

Barkman Library is expected to wrap up at the beginning of September. A ribbon cutting is set on Sept. 10 at Barkman Library — located at 1300 Jerry Murphy Road — to celebrate the opening with a week full of festivities.

# The Pueblo Chieftain

## BUSINESS

### Let's Talk Business in Pueblo: Library upgrades

**Tracy Harmon**  
Pueblo Chieftain

A \$2 million capital campaign launched Wednesday by the Pueblo City-County Library District aims to raise funds to assist with \$8.9 million in renovations to two branch libraries.

“This is the beginning of a transformative chapter for our community as we launch the Building Community Together campaign to renovate and expand the Barkman and Lucero Libraries,” said Nick Potter, executive director of the library foundation. “This project is about more than just buildings — it’s about ensuring everyone in Pueblo has access to the resources they need to learn, grow, and thrive.”

The Barkman Library, 1300 Jerry Murphy Road, has served the Belmont neighborhood and northern Pueblo for more than 30 years. The ongoing renovation and expansion of the Barkman will improve both the interior

and exterior while adding an additional 2,643 square feet onto the building.

More than 1.6 million visitors have used Barkman Library during the past 11 years.

Lucero Library, 1315 E. Seventh St., will receive an expanded public meeting room and revamped front entrance that will increase the branch’s footprint to 10,000 square feet. Since opening to the public in December 2014, the Lucero Library has welcomed more than a million visitors.

More than \$525,000 has been raised so far through a combination of public and private funding.

Lucero Library will close to the public Aug. 3 and won’t reopen until work is complete in 2025. Barkman Library work is expected to wrap up in early September with an official ribbon cutting set for 9 a.m. Sept. 10.

Donors wishing to support the Building Community Together capital campaign on a more personal level will have the opportunity for naming rights within each branch. Available options range from \$50,000 for the children’s areas in both libraries to \$5,000 for a study room at Barkman Library.



ROCKY  
MOUNTAIN PBS

# It's a HardKnox life: How chess is helping reduce Pueblo gang activity

Jul 17, 2024

PUEBLO, Colo. — Quiet, still, alone. It was 1996, and Mark Salazar was serving the second year of his 10-year sentence at the Colorado State Penitentiary, down from the 96 years he faced originally before accepting a guilty plea.

Salazar was still in his early twenties.

In isolation, Salazar remembered playing chess with his father and brother, both of whom were also incarcerated. Salazar's brother was serving time in the same prison, just across the block from his own cell.

Salazar created his own chess board from memory. He sketched 64 squares on loose pieces of cardboard, and labeled paper cutouts "Q" for queen" and "K" for knight.

Salazar positioned his and his opponent's army on the cardboard chess board, then called out his pawn's first move.

Shortly, an inmate from a nearby cell responded with their pawn's first move.

And so started another match of solitary confinement chess, the matches inspired Salazar to found HardKnox Gang Prevention and Intervention, a youth-focused non-profit aimed at moving fighting from the streets of Pueblo to the checkered chess boards of the local library, upon his release in 2004.

"I'm a firm believer that the game of life is very much like the game of chess," said Salazar, now almost 50 and working full-time as a counselor and mentor for ex-offenders on parole, younger offenders on

probation and at-risk youth in Pueblo.

"If you can think two, three steps ahead with respect to the game of life, you're already taking yourself out of acting a fool before you even know it."

Pueblo city officials and the FBI have recently reported significant increases in violent crime around Pueblo, some of which is believed to be gang-related.

HardKnox, which is celebrating its ninth year of incorporation this month, hosts multiple chess meet-ups every week with the goal of teaching and fostering strategic and mindful thinking that will ultimately help prevent future violence, according to Salazar.

Salazar grew up in east Pueblo surrounded by friends and family affiliated with gang culture that he said compelled him to follow a similar path.

"As ignorant as it is to say, I actually looked forward to going to prison simply because I had thought that's where people like I belonged," he said.

According to Salazar, he aspired to be like the "OGs" around him, a mindset that frequently led to rash and impulsive decision making.

"I was intrigued with... I'm not going to say the lifestyle, simply because that is more of a deathstyle as opposed to a lifestyle, because we all know the end result."

In 1995, a shootout with a friend, and soon police, left Salazar near death in an ICU, and then incarcerated with a decades-long sentence at the Colorado State Penitentiary, where both his father and brother had also been imprisoned.

His brother had entered only a couple years before Salazar. While the two remained separated, they corresponded

frequently via handwritten letters.

The letters, which sometimes stretched 15 to 20 pages long, helped to cool Salazar's hot-head, and encouraged him to shift this gang mentality.

"I credit [my brother] for a lot of my successes, because if he had not taken the opportunity to challenge my ignorance, I would have continued to view life through clouded eyes," he said.

Salazar was placed in solitary twice while incarcerated. It was in this isolation, burdened and blessed with full days alone with his thoughts, that Salazar turned to one of the oldest strategic pastimes in history.

"My dad introduced my brother and I at a young age how to play chess," said Salazar, "but it wasn't until I was incarcerated in prison that I played a lot of chess."

"I spent a lot of time in solitary confinement, which is 24 hours locked down in a six by nine cell."

Salazar constructed the chessboards he remembered from his childhood. He got neighboring inmates to do the same, and soon he and others were calling out moves across their cells.

The engaged, strategic gameplay, matched with regular correspondence with his brother, helped Salazar refocus his mindset and further realize the benefits of chess.

"[Chess] enhances your critical way of thinking," said Salazar, "and in doing so, I was able to shift my paradigm and actually see life from a different viewpoint."

Salazar was later released on parole after serving eight and a half of his ten year sentence. He considered himself a "short timer," compared to the friends and



*lyla (left), who has been playing less than a year, now teaches others at HardKnox chess gatherings.*

*Photo: Chase McCleary, Rocky Mountain PBS*

acquaintances he knew who remained, sometimes indefinitely, in prison.

The transition back to life on the outside was far from smooth, yet Salazar focused on pursuing a new mission: preventing Pueblo's at-risk "youngsters" from making the same mistakes he had.

Salazar returned to school and received certifications as an approved Treatment Provider for Adult Parole, a Certified Addiction Specialist and a Certified Gang Specialist.

After working with a number social impact organizations and establishing himself as a voice for gang prevention and intervention, Salazar cashed in his 401k to found HardKnox in July 2015.

According to him, the name comes from a conversation he had with a "heavy-hitter" while still incarcerated.

"I had asked him, 'What do we all consider prison to be?' and we came to the conclusion that we all consider prison

to be the school of hard knocks," said Salazar.

"And so I asked him, 'Have you ever seen a doctor, a dentist, a lawyer, a judge go to college, obtain their degree, solidify their position in the community as such, only to go back to college to obtain the same degree?'"

"Why should any of us that graduate from the school of hard knocks?"

HardKnocks now not only works to prevent young Puebloans from entering the prison system, but it assists recently-released inmates as well to help them reintegrate into society.

During the school year, upwards of 50 kids will sometimes appear at one of two local Pueblo libraries to eat pizza and play chess. Among the regulars is lyla, a now devoted young chess player who hopes to one day compete in chess championships.

"When I started learning, I was already

feeling that it was going to be one of my new passions,” said Iyla.

Iyla is eight and is heading into the third grade this fall. She started playing chess only seven months ago, though is already starting to teach newcomers to the group.

“It really gives me a strong feeling. Like I’m good at everything, and like I’m getting sharper every single time.”

Mikko, an 8th grade football player who has been coming since he was only seven, has started bringing teammates.

“Usually, none of them really play chess,” said Mikko, “but a couple of my teammates, they came here once, and

they’ve been coming ever since.”

“They just get hooked... it’s addicting, you know?”

Mikko drew connections between chess to his own goals on the football field: break down the opposing line and take down the quarterback.

He also added that chess has helped keep his emotions in check and reminds him to think before acting.

“What I’m striving to do is to teach them how to think,” said Salazar.

“My hope is that these youngsters can apply that same sense of logic with respect to the game of chess, to the game of life.”

# The Pueblo Chieftain

## Pueblo libraries seek community support for major projects

James Bartolo

July 22, 2024 | The Pueblo Chieftain

The Pueblo City-County Library District has launched a capital campaign to raise \$2 million for major expansions of the Barkman Library and Patrick A. Lucero Library branches.

Expanding the two library branches is expected to cost nearly \$9 million. Construction has been underway at the Barkman Library, 1300 Jerry Murphy Road, since August 2023 to add a pedestrian bridge connecting to the nearby Belmont Park and over 2,600 square feet of space accommodating library-goers of all ages. The cost of improvements to the Barkman Library is about \$4.5 million.

Closed since Aug. 1, 2023, the Barkman Library is scheduled to reopen with a Sept. 10 ribbon-cutting ceremony followed by a week of festivities and events, according to a PCCLD news release. The Lucero Library, 1315 E. 7th St., will close for construction Aug. 4 and will reopen sometime in summer 2025, PCCLD Director of Community Relations Nick Potter told the Chieftain.

While the Barkman Library has served the Belmont community since 1990, Lucero Library has stood on the East Side since 2014.

"Some people might be thinking, 'Why is a library that new being renovated so quickly?'" Potter said. "The big reason is that we've outgrown our footprint and this library has seen the amount of traffic that a lot of our larger libraries, like our Barkman Library, see."

About 2,500 square feet will be added to the Lucero Library to increase the branch to a total square footage of about 10,000. This will allow for the creation of a larger meeting room space, additional space for children and teens, and a maker space, along with an audio and visual studio.

How community members can give to the 'Building Community Together' fundraising campaign

PCCLD launched the "Building Community Together Capital Campaign" on Wednesday, July 17. The campaign had raised about \$550,000 by Friday afternoon. Individuals can donate to the campaign by visiting [pueblolibrary.org/capitalcampaign](http://pueblolibrary.org/capitalcampaign) and clicking the yellow "Giving Opportunities" banner.

Enterprise Zone Tax Credit opportunities are provided for those who donate \$250 or more. Prices for naming rights to rooms and amenities, including the Barkman Library Pedestrian Bridge and Lucero Library Maker Space, also can be found at [pueblolibrary.org/capitalcampaign](http://pueblolibrary.org/capitalcampaign).

"Through improved facilities, library programs, and a great selection of print and digital books, we aim to ensure that there is something for everyone at Pueblo's libraries," said Sherri Baca, PCCLD executive director, in a news release. "We are committed to continually improving library services and facilities in our community."