Welcome to season two and episode 24 of Check It Out, the Sno-Isle Libraries Podcast for life-long learners with inquiring minds.

The views and opinions expressed on this podcast may not necessarily reflect the official position of Sno-Isle Libraries.

Hi, this is Ken Harvey for the Check It Out Podcast.

And I'm Jim Hills.

And we are joined by Abe Martinez from North Sound Productions.

It's a great pleasure to be here.

So, Abe, you have been doing some great work for us to help put together some stories that give an opportunity to share with the audience some things that are kind of behind the curtain, that they may not realize goes on with Sno-Isle Libraries. We are going to, in this episode, present, in some ways, kind of a mini series, that it's kind of a two-parter that focus on some of the environmental stewardship and management that we do, as well as ... which goes towards sustainability practice. Then, I think some energy management work that's happened.

You interviewed for this, whom?

Brian Rush, who ... well, maybe you would know the title-

Yeah, it's Facilities Manager, I think, is his title.

Okay. Yeah, Brian is a fascinating guy, and I like the fact that when I was given this assignment by you to do this, it was under the umbrella of Stewardship Spotlight. I like the name of that, because this is really where we can focus on how Sno-Isle
Libraries can be good stewards of, not just the money that is ... tax revenues that are passed along, but as well, as part of a community member and organization, how Sno-Isle Libraries is using, well, the good Earth that we have been given here.

Abe Martinez: 02:07 So, it's about that, and we go into it in a variety of different directions, as you mentioned.

Jim Hills: 02:13 When I came to Sno-Isle three years ago, and was introduced to Brian, and his excitement about energy management. So exciting, that my daughter who was going to school at the time for mechanical engineering, I brought this story home, and I said, "You know, you should maybe think about an informational interview with Brian." She did that, she went away so excited. She's a mechanical engineer, she focuses on HVAC systems, and how to manage them, how to install them, how to be energy efficient with them.

Jim Hills: 02:46 Part of that was the excitement that Brian brings to building management, energy management, in the buildings, public buildings.

Abe Martinez: 02:55 That actually is very much is keeping ... I wondered whether you were going to say that your daughter was into engineering, and it turns out she is. Because, when you first talked to Brian, what you take away is his excitement for something that you would think is really boring, you know?

Jim Hills: 03:15 Right, right, exactly right. He makes it sound so cutting edge, and it is, he really is cutting edge.

Abe Martinez: 03:21 Oh yeah.

Jim Hills: 03:22 He is embracing everything he can do to squeeze out a bit of extra energy or reduce our consumption of that, or somehow be more environmentally aware and a steward of the environment on a impact of 23 locations for Sno-Isle Libraries. He's very mindful of that.

Ken Harvey: 03:43 Well, there are 24 different facilities within the Sno-Isle Libraries kind of domain.

Jim Hills: 03:50 Thanks for reminding me of the one we're sitting in.

Ken Harvey: 03:51 Yeah, the one we're sitting in, our service center, which is located in beautiful downtown Marysville, Tulalip. There's a surprising amount of work that goes into maintaining these
facilities, and with Brian and his team, Brian and Tona and Tom, they are really focused on ways of being good environmental stewards, as well as just really kind of ear to the ground and eye on detail, in terms of how we're spending the dollars that go into maintaining and working our physical assets.

Ken Harvey: 04:39 So, was there anything surprising to you as you were chatting with Brian?

Abe Martinez: 04:45 Well, in some ways, everything that I talked to him about was surprising. Number one, I wasn't aware of how much energy it takes to keep buildings going. As a result, I wasn't aware of how much savings there could be when things are done better. That was the first thing.

Abe Martinez: 05:05 The other thing was, in terms of the environmental stewardship, there are some things, it'll be in the episode that you'll hear in just a moment, but some just amazingly creative ways that Sno-Isle, specifically, has taken the lead in doing some things that are just ... you look back at them and you think, "Wow, that just makes perfectly good sense. Why doesn't everybody do it this way, you know?" That may be the question of the hour.

Abe Martinez: 05:36 But in any case, it really was surprising to me. The other thing, of course, was that in talking to Brian, we talked about how he's so excited about all of this. You give him one question, and he'll go on for half an hour, which is great, it does make it a little difficult to figure out what are the best parts. But there are a lot of things ... there are lots of pieces that I did have to leave out.

Abe Martinez: 06:00 One of those actually had to do with how things are done, in terms of security. That may be something that you'd want to talk about and give me an assignment in the future. So, I'm just giving you a heads up on that. But yeah, I mean, because it's one of those things where working with law enforcement, and with community services and such, we can make the libraries a place where it's really, really, a safe place that people can go to.

Abe Martinez: 06:28 So again, that's one of the things that didn't ... we didn't get a chance to get into. Be listening in the future as we talk about that. But I was so excited to be able to do this. In fact, as a result of it, I have told other folks that they have got to hear this particular podcast, this podcast piece. If they ever wanted to know how good stewards Sno-Isle is with their dollars, and with what they've ... we've all been given on God's good Earth here, that we would ... can I say that? I'm sorry.
Abe Martinez: 06:59 Yes, you can.

Abe Martinez: 07:00 Okay, well there we go.

Jim Hills: 07:00 Yeah, you can say that.

Abe Martinez: 07:01 Okay, well, good. In any case, this is one of those things that, again, lets you in on a backend of how Sno-Isles does things, and it's just very heartening, actually.

Ken Harvey: 07:17 Well, we have a two-parter coming up, and we'll listen to part one, take a little break, come back with part two. I think you're going to enjoy it, and maybe learn some things about how we're taking care of the environment and the public's money.

Abe Martinez: 07:36 Just for a moment, pretend that you're this guy.

Brian Rush: 07:40 I'm Brian Rush. I'm Facilities Manager, Sno-Isle Libraries.

Abe Martinez: 07:44 And since you are Brian, you're responsible for the maintenance of 23 local libraries in a variety of buildings, ranging from modern steel and glass structures, to historic wood-framed storefronts. Oh, and let's not forget the big brick service center in Marysville.

Abe Martinez: 08:02 By the way, these facilities are built to serve over three quarters of a million people spread out over two large counties, covering over 2200 square miles. But don't pity Brian, he loves his job.

Brian Rush: 08:15 I'm really into this stuff.

Abe Martinez: 08:17 This stuff he's talking about is what he's been focused on since he joined Sno-Isle staff seven years ago.

Brian Rush: 08:24 We want to reduce cost, provide the best service, and make sure that the people and the processes, and the places within the facility support whatever it is that we need to do.

Abe Martinez: 08:34 Which is Brian's modest, if not technical way of saying he's taken Sno-Isle facilities management to a whole new level, providing better service for the public at substantially lower costs. The most visible evidence of that is the way library facilities are kept clean and healthy.

Brian Rush: 08:53 So, I'll give you an example. We have libraries open seven days a week, many of those libraries only received cleaning maybe five or six days a week. We added days per week, so if it was open, it
got cleaned. We added carpet cleaning quarterly, we added window cleaning quarterly, many of those were only two times a year. So we doubled the window cleaning, the carpet cleaning, then also we added day porters at seven of our high volume locations. So the restrooms, entry areas, and any areas of focus that needed additional cleaning in the middle of the day, got cleaning. We added all of that, along with doing green cleaning, and we cut our costs by more than $100,000 per year.

Abe Martinez: 09:35 Sounds crazy, right? More and better service for less money? The secret is good management and consolidation of services. Think of it this way, the 23 community libraries that make up the Sno-Isle system share things like books, DVD’s, digital resources, and even special events. As a result, every Sno-Isle customer has access to a massive collection that no single community library could possibly have on its own.

Abe Martinez: 10:07 Well, Brian and his facilities team use that same economies of scale idea to streamline and consolidate everything from custodial contracts, to the purchase of cleaning supplies. They did it all while going green.

Brian Rush: 10:22 Sno-Isle Libraries was the first library system to incorporate LEED GS-42 green cleaning practices in any library district in this state.

Abe Martinez: 10:34 Translation, when it comes to cleaning, Sno-Isle Libraries strictly uses products and practices certified to be healthy for humans and sustainable for the environment. That’s actually a huge deal, since high traffic libraries are harder to keep clean than a typical office building. Yes, we were the first library district in the state to reach that green clean standard. But the sustainable practices don't stop there.

Brian Rush: 11:02 We know have a single stream recycling and composting in all of our libraries. We realized that 90% of our trash, in many cases, was just paper towels. We learned from a facilities tour of [inaudible 00:11:18] that they loved paper towels. We realized that's really all we have. We had very little solid waste, but yet we were sending all of our waste stream out to the landfill and paying top dollar for it. We paid a much smaller amount to compost those materials, we would have mulch brought back to our buildings, and we would become a full cycle compost and recycler.

Abe Martinez: 11:42 The fact is, for the past several years, Sno-Isle Libraries has been transforming itself to become a greener more sustainable operation in some pretty amazing ways. In the process, they’ve
saved hundreds of thousands of dollars. This has been especially true with regard to energy efficiency. But that is a story for next time in part two of our Stewardship Spotlight.

Abe Martinez: 12:08 For Sno-Isle Libraries, I'm Abe Martinez.

Speaker 6: 12:18 Is there a preschooler running around in your life? Then check out the Sno-Isle Libraries countdown to kindergarten list of 100 essential picture books. Find this book list and many more online at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 12:33 We love hearing from our listeners and subscribers, especially if you enjoyed a guest or have a suggestion for a future topic. Drop us a line at CheckItOutPodcast@Sno-Isle.org. Again, that's CheckItOutPodcast@Sno-Isle.org, and let us know what you're thinking. Don't be surprised if we read your comment or answer your question on a future podcast episode.

Abe Martinez: 13:02 Resource. That's a word we use a lot when it comes to libraries. It's often short-hand for things that library customers borrow, books, movies, downloadable audio, et cetera. Of course, any library user knows that resources also include computers, study areas, meeting rooms, special events, and most especially, librarians.

Abe Martinez: 13:26 But for Brian Rush and his facilities management team at Sno-Isle, the word resource has a more organic meaning.

Brian Rush: 13:35 So, energy, it's a resource, and we have stewardship of resources. So we see that as, "What's the most efficient way to provide the most comfortable building environment?"

Abe Martinez: 13:44 You may remember Brian in a previous Stewardship Spotlight. We focused on what he and his team did to dramatically improve custodial services at Sno-Isle facilities. Through consolidating vendor contracts and coordinating management across the entire system, Sno-Isle achieved a triple win for its customers, cleaner facilities, lower costs, and widespread adoption of environmentally sustainable cleaning practices.

Abe Martinez: 14:14 What they learned and achieved during that process, they soon extended into other areas of facilities management.

Brian Rush: 14:23 So that went from custodial, to window cleaning, to fire systems, to security systems, to parking lot maintenance. Instead of looking at a building singularly, we would look at all
the sites from a combined or synergistic approach of service delivery.

Abe Martinez: 14:44 In doing so, Brian applied his analytical approach where it would reap the biggest dividends, energy usage.

Brian Rush: 14:52 So, we start with the basics, mechanical systems, ventilation systems, air conditioning systems, lighting systems, roof systems. Because if things aren't insulated properly, no sense saving the energy here, because it just goes through the wall or up the roof. We assessed how we provided that resource delivery into the built environment, how much energy it took to get there, and we found ways to reduce that consumption.

Abe Martinez: 15:22 If this all sounds a bit complex, well, it is. Facilities management, on the scale required for the entire Sno-Isle system, depends on an array of technologies and operational tools. A key part of that is a centralized energy management system. Keep in mind that Sno-Isle Libraries owns or operates a variety of buildings that range widely in size, age and energy efficiency.

Abe Martinez: 15:49 Nevertheless, as Brian has worked his meticulous facilities management on each site, he has seen some incredible results.

Brian Rush: 15:58 To give you some examples of numbers, we reduced natural gas usage at Snohomish by more than 90%. Monroe, I think we're in the 75% range on natural gas. Utilities at the service center over the last seven years, we've taken where we used to use well over 900,000 kilowatt hours per year, we're just barely over 400,000 kilowatt hours per year.

Abe Martinez: 16:21 While it's wonderful to see such huge savings so soon, the real value of these improvements will be seen for years to come.

Brian Rush: 16:30 The thing about a library, unlike a business, is a library isn't going anywhere. You build it, it stays there, it's in your community, it could be there for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, years. If you put something in place that's going to pay back to the people that bought this, you could get your return on your investment over a much longer period of time and save the public, in this case, a tremendous amount of money over the life of the building.

Speaker 6: 17:12 Want to get the latest business news and solid financial advice from the experts for free? You can with your Sno-Isle Libraries account. Library customers can download the latest news and advice from publications like Entrepreneur, Kiplinger’s, Fast Company, and Inc. You'll find feature stories around the business of technology, leadership, innovation, the stock market, retirement planning, and achieving financial success. All of that with a library card just waiting for you online at Sno-Isle Libraries.

Ken Harvey: 17:43 We just want to take the opportunity to remind our audience that if you hear a podcast episode that covers something that is really meaningful to you, take the opportunity to share it with friends, or with family, or with coworkers and peers in your career. There are a number of ways to do that, that are just about liking it on social media and sharing it.

Ken Harvey: 18:07 What do you guys think?

Speaker 7: 18:08 Oh, yeah, absolutely. You know, right from your phone app, there's a share option, so that's the perfect place if you're listening on the go.

Speaker 8: 18:14 I get almost all of my podcast recommendations from my friends, and from family members, and there's a ton of podcasts out there. So, you can save yourself a lot of trouble by sifting through bad ones by forwarding the good podcasts to your friends. So the good podcasts, which means Check It Out, forward it, forward it, forward it, your friends and family will love you for it.

Ken Harvey: 18:36 Coming up next, Book Notes.

Ken Harvey: 18:44 In this Book Notes segment, I'm delighted to welcome a member of our reader services team, Michelle Callihan. So, Michelle is a librarian who works with this team, and they make suggestions for readers, music lovers, movie fans, of things in our collection that are worth checking out.

Ken Harvey: 19:06 Welcome to the show.

Michelle Callihan: 19:08 Thanks, Ken.

Ken Harvey: 19:08 All right, well, Michelle, what do you have to offer our listeners?

Michelle Callihan: 19:11 So, the first I want to talk about is actually a movie, and this is a mini series called North and South.
for a miniseries like Pride and Prejudice with a bit more historical grit? North and South by director Brian Percival is the perfect solace for someone who has watched all of Jane Austin's adaptations.

Michelle Callihan: 19:31 Margaret Hale, played by Daniela Denby-Ashe, comes from the South of England, where she lived with her mother and father in perpetual springtime. Her father, a former vicar, relocates the family to a factory town in the North where life is grimmer, and many people live in poverty. John Thornton, our hero, played by Richard Armitage, is a factory owner who has helped his family make their way out of poverty. He is fierce in his protection of his family and his livelihood, and like in Pride and Prejudice, Margaret does not have the best opinion of John, based off of his actions. As she gets to know the North better, she starts to understand the basis for his behaviors, and that's when they really come together.

Michelle Callihan: 20:13 So, mix a little pride, prejudice, and misunderstanding, plus a healthy dose of smoldering worthy of Colin Firth, and you get this addicting tale of love, loss and enterprise.

Michelle Callihan: 20:26 My second is actually a book, which I listened to on audio. It's called The Wall of Winnipeg and Me by Mariana Zapata. For two years, Vanessa Mazur has been working for the man known as The Wall of Winnipeg, a top defensive end named Aiden Graves. Aiden is a gruff, uncommunicative and unappreciative boss who's sole focus is football. Vanessa makes it through each day by secretly flipping off her boss, but she's finally had enough. After Vanessa walks out, Aiden appears at her apartment with a proposition that may be too good to pass up.

Michelle Callihan: 21:05 The best, and most frustrating thing about Mariana Zapata's books are that they're a slow burn. There's no insta-love, and definitely no falling in love at first sight. So instead, they show the progression of the relationship through everyday events that, while small, start to add up. When you get to the end of the story, you have a couple that can outlast any kind of hardship, because those feelings and emotions have been well earned.

Ken Harvey: 21:31 How did you come across these titles?

Michelle Callihan: 21:33 So, for North and South, I'm definitely a Janeite, in that, I love watching Jane Austen adaptations, I've read all of the books. So I really started searching a while ago for different movies or mini series that might be similar, and that's when I came across North and South, and I really enjoyed that.
Michelle Callihan: 21:52 Then Mariana Zapata was actually an author that I heard about on Goodreads, and that she was really gained kind of a reputation on Goodreads, and in kind of smaller circles where people really enjoy her books. So, Sno-Isle actually has all of the audiobooks for her books, and they're great to listen to.

Ken Harvey: 22:13 Well that is exciting. So, you mentioned audiobooks. So, print and audio versions?

Michelle Callihan: 22:19 So, we only have the eAudio for Mariana Zapata's books. North and South we have on DVD as well.

Ken Harvey: 22:26 Great. So, I think that our listeners should be very excited to know that these are available through Sno-Isle Libraries. As a North and South fan myself, I can tell you that for any guys out there, or for any women who have guys that you'd like to get involved in a fascinating story, it's definitely worth watching.

Michelle Callihan: 22:53 Absolutely. It's got a lot of historical aspects to it that would appeal to anyone.

Ken Harvey: 22:59 Well, thank you very much for joining us, and we look forward to having you back in the future with more suggestions for our listeners.

Michelle Callihan: 23:04 Thanks, Ken.

Ken Harvey: 23:06 If you enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe so you can receive every episode automatically. Until next time, remember your library has a lot to offer you. So what are you waiting for? Check it out.