

**Delray Beach Public Library's Submission for the Beyond Words Storytelling
Competition 2025**

Submitted by Mykal Banta, Executive Director

The small book with the deep purple cover had stood straight on the shelf of the Delray Beach Public Library for 10 years, a life somewhat longer than the average span of a public library book.

But this book was not an average book.

Indeed, this small book was so important in the realm of books, that it stood with four of its twin copies, twin sisters – five copies in all, so that there would nearly always be a copy available to check out. The book was classified, as were its sisters, with the same designation on its spine: B FRAN, meaning that the book was a biography of a person whose name began with the letters Fran.

And because it was collected among thousands of brother and sister books, all lined up proudly on row after row of shelving, B FRAN came to understand her purpose among her fellow brethren. She had learned the over-arching mission of the very building where they served: To be the great storehouse of the stories and wisdom of Mankind, to archive it all so that each piece could be found, and to offer it without charge so that all might have access to the happiness they were born for. Ultimately, the duty and mission were to inspire hope.

The book had come to understand that its pages told the story, in diary form, of a young, Frankfort girl named Anne. The book understood, as well, the underlying fear and trouble that wove deeply into the fabric of entries, darkening everything with a growing dread. The book knew that everyone who held her, read her words, was carried to a place of empathy and often tears.

The book understood, from the hundreds of times it had been read, that it had enhanced the lives of all who read her words across all age groups. For the curious, the book had filled many minds with wonder and, by the story of this one Jewish girl, had provided a microcosm of how humanity worked in every living being. For the lonely, her words spoke of loneliness so that no would feel alone. For those afraid, her words read of bravery in a fear so profound that one couldn't help but feel braver for the reading. For all readers in Delray Beach, she had provided a perfect window to the larger world beyond as her story radiated out like water ripples, over and over, year after year.

One day, her routine of being read and returned changed. She had been left out in the rain and would not be returning to the shelf.

But B FRAN (copy 3) was content. She had inspired everyone that held her, filled every reader with a collective humanity. She understood her work was done, and it had been good work.

And B FRAN new that she would be replaced by a fresh copy and the story she told would be eternal.

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