



Friends of Libraries Section

FLS creates a network to connect and inspire Friends groups in all types of libraries to support the New York library community.

www.NYLA.org/Friends

Minutes from FLS Connections! Community Outreach Thursday, 9/15/22

Today's speaker was Amy Discenza, Outreach Coordinator for the Monroe County Library System's [Extension/Outreach Department](#). 34 individuals registered with FLS to attend and 24 people logged in, representing 15 Friends groups.

The Outreach Department is small department located behind the scenes in the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County with a staff of 2 full-time librarians and 2 part-time support staff. The department basically operates like a small branch with a collection of about 20,000 items including books (large and standard print), audiobooks on CD, DVDs, and some kits. Their mission is to bring library services to vulnerable and underserved populations. The Outreach Department is funded in part by coordinated outreach funds received by the Monroe County Library System (MCLS) and receives additional assistance from the [Friends & Foundation of Rochester Public Library](#) (FFRPL; say "fur-ple.") [Editorial note: Amy's department was recently highlighted in FFRPL's annual appeal letter, telling the impact of the department's services on homebound individuals and their other patrons. "These critical services bridge the gap in access to information and provide some of our most vulnerable neighbors with equitable services."]

Major services include

- A library delivery service for housebound individuals
- A micro collection lending program for senior living facilities
- Re-entry support to incarcerated and justice-involved individuals

Outreach Definition from the North Dakota State Library

Outreach means looking outside the walls of the library for ways to serve the community and it will look different for everybody. It might be a mobile services vehicle like a bike, bookmobile, or van; participating in community events like fairs and parades; or doing pop-up programming such as storytimes in the park or community-wide scavenger hunts. The possibilities are as diverse as the library and community.

More About Outreach

- Outreach often focuses on populations that don't have access to library services.
- Outreach helps raise awareness of the library and its services by increasing visibility in the community
- Outreach is an advocacy and fundraising tool especially when Friends, library staff, and the community collaborate

When asked why Friends should be involved in outreach, Sally Collins of the [Friends of the Livonia Public Library](#) (OWWL Library System) said "Outreach is a goal of the Friends because it is a goal of the library."

Amy stated that her presentation was a collection of outreach endeavors large and small undertaken by Friends groups in New York State. "I'm extremely grateful to all the lovely Friends volunteers who took time out of their busy schedules to talk to me on Zoom, on the phone, and in person in preparation for today."

Amy divided her talk into several sections as outlined below:

- Mobile Services
- Community Events and Civic Meetings
- Partnerships and Collaborations

Mobile Services

Examples of Mobile Services included Little Free Libraries, community bookshelves, mobile lending libraries, such as pop-up libraries, home delivery service, and senior housing services (deposit collections and “lobby stops”).

With **Little Free Libraries**, Friends can help by managing and replenishing collections in each box they “adopt,” checking for vandalism, and repairing damage if necessary. The [Friends of the Webster Public Library](#) stock nearly a dozen sites with “not quite perfect” donations that might not make the cut for their ongoing lobby book sale. On each Little Free Library they maintain, the Webster Friends place a sticker reading “Stocked by the Friends of the Webster Public Library” with their logo, email, and web address. **[Editorial note:** A Little Free Library is a covered weather-proof bookshelf, often constructed to look like a miniature house, for people to freely “take a book, leave a book.” This grassroots movement started in 2009 in Wisconsin; now Little Free Libraries are in neighborhoods and parks through the USA, promoting reading and fostering community. This nonprofit organization focuses on literacy and love of reading. Little Free Libraries are in all 50 states and 70 countries. The stewards of these sites can officially register their Little Free Library at <https://www.littlefreelibrary.org>. On their map, you can search for Little Free Libraries by zip code.]

Community bookshelves or a mobile lending library may appear in laundromats, food pantries, or other locations where people spend time in a waiting room. The mobile library planned by the Friends of the Livonia Public Library at the food pantry will expand on an existing partnership. Livonia staff currently hold monthly library card signup events at the pantry. The [Friends of the Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library](#) supply books to be donated in each bag of food, clothing, or hygiene products distributed at their local pantry site.

Since 2014, the “BookBox” project organized by Jason Poole, Outreach Services Librarian at the Webster Public Library, has been a weekly **summer “pop-up” library** to serve children in an apartment complex on the opposite end of town from the public library. Volunteers and library staff bring books to be signed out; snacks are provided by a local supermarket; the staff from the Town’s Recreation Department also lead games and other activities at the site. (See a full description of Jason’s “BookBox” initiative in “Focus on Friends Finale: Partnerships” in the [June 2021 issue of the FLS newsletter](#), “Friends News and Notes.” Jason also presented on this project in the FLS-sponsored webinar, “Friendly Partnerships Strengthen Communities,” which is available to watch at any time in the [NYLA webinar archive](#), free of charge, once NYLA members have logged into the NYLA Online Membership Center with their assigned username and password (received with membership confirmations/receipts).

Friends groups can provide **home delivery service** to community members who are not able to visit the library on their own. The [Friends Readers Outreach Service Team](#) (FROST) is a partnership between the Fairport Public Library and its Friends, coordinated by Marianne Michaud, Past President of the Friends. Interested patrons fill out a FROST application indicating their reading preferences and formats, genres, subject areas, and even favorite authors. Materials are selected by the staff liaison librarian. A Friends volunteer will then contact the patron to schedule an appointment and deliver items at a time that is convenient for them both.

Currently there are 23 program participants, most of whom receive a delivery every several weeks. The length of each visit is up to the individual. Some people like to sit and chat, others are more comfortable

with a door delivery. Volunteers are recruited on the Friends membership form. There are sometimes more volunteers than patrons.

Senior housing facilities (e.g., affordable age-eligible housing and independent and assisted senior living facilities) are another potential outreach opportunity for Friends. The Friends of the Livonia Library supplied donated books and movies to their local senior living facility for several years. Amy's Outreach Department runs a community library station program (a.k.a. **deposit collections**) for 25 senior living facilities. These micro-collections offer books (both large and standard print), audiobooks on CD, and DVDs for about 8-week cycles matched to the facilities' format, quantity, and reading preferences. An annual delivery schedule is set up with the facility and the library's Shipping Department.

Not all senior living facilities are equipped to handle such a program as it takes a dedicated staff person or team of volunteers to manage communications with Outreach Department staff, help facilitate materials exchanges, and monitor loans. Amy is currently exploring a variation on the pop-up library, **lobby stops**. Library staff and/or Friends volunteers would box up a variety of materials and set up a makeshift library in the lobby or a community room at a facility. This system would need a laptop to sign residents up for cards and a scanner to check out materials.

Community Events and Civic Meetings

Parades, festivals, and community events are all opportunities to increase awareness, recruit new Friends members, and distribute information about library services and programs. Examples include having a float in a parade, hosting Summer Reading Kick-Off events, and staffing an information table at the Farmers Market or an event run by the Kiwanis, historical society, or other civic service group. Amy's department annually attends a "Salute to Seniors" which includes music, dancing, and a picnic style lunch for older adults. She said, "We bring the library system's book bike to distribute large print books and books on CD and chat with folks about library services."

Amy shared photos of activities of the [Friends of the Town of Ballston Community Library](#) (Burnt Hills NY). Co-President Donna Keegan told Amy how the Friends participated in the summer reading program, both with a parade float and a kick-off event at a local park. The Friends also are involved in the annual **tree lighting ceremony** and host a **school district art show** at the library in the spring.

The Friends of the Webster Public Library share a table with library staff at their local farmers market for 4 hours every Saturday. Library staff bring brochures about programs and services, stickers and pencils; the Friends, identified by their cobblers' aprons embroidered with the Friends logo, bring membership brochures and books to giveaway. (As Amy says, "Library T-shirts are always ill-fitting. Branded aprons are the way to go!")

Partnerships and Collaborations

Queens Borough libraries provide **food bank distribution** sites two Saturdays a month at some of their branch libraries. The Friends volunteers assist library staff with the food distributions. Jerrie Grantham, [Volunteer Services Manager for Queens Public Library](#), shared that teen volunteers are also invaluable in this project and are gaining wonderful experience as they are mentored by the adult Friends members. The program started in April 2022. Originally it was supposed to run for 3 months, but it has been extended to December.

Other projects at Queens include **book giveaways** (new, purchased books) at street fairs and contributing school-specific materials to round out student backpacks and school supplies purchased by the Mets Foundation.

Amy shared information from her interview with Susan Lusignan, Director of Marketing and Program Development for the **Friends & Foundation of Rochester Public Library (FFRPL)**. Susan categorizes FFRPL's partnerships as internal, external, and hybrid.

The Rundel River to Roof Tours are an example of an **internal partnership**. The tours offer exclusive, behind-the-scenes views of the Rundel Memorial Building of the Central Library, including a stop on the library roof that overlooks the Genesee River which flows through Rochester. FFRPL hosts, organizes, and manages tickets for the tours, but staff from the Local History, Art, Shipping, and IT Divisions are all contributors.

An example of an **external partnership** is Rochester Reads, an annual community reading program. FFRPL's sponsorship helps to cover the cost of bringing the author to the library for free public readings, talks, and book signings.

Hybrid partnerships have an outside element, but FFRPL ties them to a library service or staff. [Books Sandwiched In](#), a decades-long lunchtime book review series offered spring and fall, highlights items from the library's collection with reviews presented by experts in the field. [Tuesday Topics](#) is a series of talks in the winter where library staff give presentations about noteworthy services and programs (e.g., children's services; market services provided by the Business Center) to help FFRPL fundraise for these services.

Donation Drives

Another great way to build partnerships with local organizations and to address important community issues is to host a donation drive or simply serve as a **collection point for another agency**. Donation drives allow individuals to donate new or sometimes gently used items to those who really need them, such as food, eyeglasses, pet supplies, socks, winter jackets, hygiene products, toys, and school supplies in oversized bins in the library lobby. The Cicero Branch of the Northern Onondaga Public Library has been a donation site for the Central New York Diaper Bank for several years. Library staff handle publicity and monitor the donation bin. When the donation bin is full, they call the Diaper Bank to schedule a pick up. See the attached PDF of a toolkit on how to organize a donation drive.

There were a few questions and comments at the end of Amy's presentation:

Friends of the Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library (FCPHL)

(from the chat) During used book sales, we give the community an opportunity to make donations to other community groups, including used jeans for Jeans for Teens, food/household goods, and coming up at the [September] sale, children's books to a nonprofit serving children, Capital Area Rescue Mission. Wilma Jozwiak clarified that shoppers could buy children's books at the sale and immediately donate them to this cause.

Louise Marks of the Friends of Kinderhook Memorial Library asked Amy to please elaborate on **outreach to a very rural community**. Amy said that many ideas could be tailored to meet small community needs: farmers markets, festivals, parades, Little Free Libraries, outreach to civic organizations through presentations, and home delivery services. **[Editorial note:** In the 2021 FLS survey of rural and small libraries in New York State, 48% of the respondents stated it was a challenge to participate in outreach to highlight their libraries' services to the community.]

Several additional suggestions were offered in the chat:

- pop up/mobile libraries in shopping centers or other community gathering places
- tutoring hours in a rural area and maybe "rent an expert" where people with skills volunteer to help people learn new things
- tutoring and sharing stories (i.e., storytimes) and helping with homework at a neighborhood trailer community. This idea would also work in a rural area at a local firehouse or community

center. Jo Anne Robbins of the Friends of the Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library (FCPHL) elaborated: “We have funded a summer reading program for children in collaboration with a PTA in communities where the children can’t often get to the library. We provided wheeled carts for carrying books and craft materials. At the event, held in a playground, on a tennis court, or in the neighborhood community room, there was a story time, arts and crafts activity, snack, and a free book for every child. We did this for several years.”

Round the Table Discussion

The questions posed to guide the open discussion were: (1) What outreach projects do your Friends coordinate? (2) How successful have these efforts been? and (3) Who are you reaching that the library couldn’t serve otherwise?

Leslie Riley and other members of the [Friends of the Cornwall Library](#) (Ramapo Catskill Library System) put the group’s projects into the hybrid partnership model, as they work with library staff for special events and programs. The “Shop Local” initiative has had a positive impact on the Friends-operated bookstore located in the library. The group also participates in off-site sidewalk sales in the spring and fall. The bookstore is a collection site for “Backpacks for Food.” The mission of Backpacks for Food is to provide nourishing food for weekend meals to elementary students in the Cornwall Central School District who are enrolled in the Federal free lunch program. When students are not worried about their basic food needs, they can be better prepared to focus on their schoolwork.

Ann Poelma, **Friends of the Fairport Public Library** (Monroe County Library System), shared that their Friends-operated retail shop, [The Corner Bookstore](#), is in the heart of the village, backs up to the Erie Canal, and is upstairs from the library in a shopping plaza. The store volunteers participate as active members of the Fairport/Perinton Merchants Association. Sidewalk sales during local festivals puts their store out into the community. Business is brisk on Saturday mornings with the farmers’ market just across the parking lot.

All summer long, visitors arrive by boat in town. The Merchants Association distributes “Boater Bags” to welcome the visitors, which include a paperback book supplied by the Friends. A bookmark and coupon to the store is also in the hospitality bag. This project puts “outreach” in a whole new realm, as the boats sail out of town!

The Fairport Friends have stocked some Little Free Libraries, aided a school that had a fire, and contributed raffle baskets to other local nonprofits for their fundraising. “Dex,” the library’s new mouse mascot based on [Ellen Stoll Walsh’s](#) characters in *Mouse Paint*, was purchased by the Friends and now participates in numerous library and community events. The group also donates to two local book festivals for children and teens.

Wood Library staff member, Stephanie Toomey, was thankful for the forum and has a lot of great ideas to share with the **Friends of the Wood Library** (Canandaigua).

The participants from FCPHL were busy in the chat, sharing additional ideas:

- We support several Library events including the very popular literary trails (i.e., StoryWalks®) in nature trail areas, support materials for our English language learner groups in the community, provide hospitality for events at the library (baked goods and punch, and cider and donuts during the Library budget vote, which is today!), and provide two community scholarships to graduating students from the tax district. We support the Library’s promotions published in a local paper. And so on ... 😊
- Our FOL has an annual community read program, Two Towns, One Book. We have a steering committee, volunteer reading groups, and take nominations from the community for books to consider. The nominated books are vetted by our librarians. Reading groups read 3 or 4 of the nominated books, report back to the Steering Committee, and hold a community vote for THE

BOOK. Programming and activities developed by the coordinating team and offered to the community [run] from January to May. This might include author events, local trips, book discussions, and craft projects.

[Friends of the Mendon Public Library](#) (Charlene Fisk) put her remarks in the chat, since she did not have a microphone: The Friends were involved with the local parade and festival for the first time this summer, giving out free books and promoting the summer reading program. It was fun being out in the community making connections. We are in the process of setting up a Little Free Library at one of the parks. I also like the idea of doing a shelf at the laundromat and/or food pantry and will share that idea at our next Friends meeting. The library staff already delivers to the local senior home, but I like the idea of starting a home delivery program, too! I also love that Friends apron that was in one of the photos on the slide show - great idea!

Carol Kuhr, President of the [Friends of the Argyle Free Library](#) (Southern Adirondack Library System) was looking forward to participating in Thistle Day, the town's annual celebration of their Scottish heritage. The Friends will help library staff with children's craft tables and display membership brochures. Past outreach activities have included participation in the Town Wide Garage Sale on Columbus Day weekend, using the sale at the library to both raise money and awareness of library and Friends. They also join in the town holiday celebration in December.

Newly appoint co-chair of the **Friends of the Webster Public Library**, Gail Dominik, was pleased to have attended her first Connections and to hear her library and group called out for their successful programs! Jason Poole, the library's Outreach Coordinator (a new position created in December 2021), is grateful to Friends groups everywhere for the work that they do through both their indispensable volunteer and financial support. He is excited about taking back ideas from this presentation to use in Webster: "more collaborations ahead!"

Liz Gliszczynski, bookstore volunteer at [Mainly Books](#), operated by the **Friends of the Parma Public Library** in Hilton (in western Monroe County), shared that the volunteers just held a ribbon cutting on September 12. Sales this week have been brisk! For several weeks in August, numerous volunteers worked to remove carpeting, paint, and put down new flooring, totally refreshing and reconfiguring their retail space on Main Street, just down a block and across the street from the library. Proceeds from the store help support the summer reading program and purchase the library's magazine subscriptions among other financial assistance. When the store raised their prices, they implemented a once a week offering of discounts for senior shoppers.

Announcements from the Friends of Libraries Section/NYLA

Join us on Thursday, October 6, for ["Partners in Planning: A Strategic Planning Approach for Friends Groups."](#) This one-hour webinar will start at 2 o'clock. Utilizing the approach outlined in her recent book, author and planning specialist Joy Fuller will provide a framework for how Friends organizations can cooperate with their libraries in the development of strategic plans.

Remember: there is no cost to attend the webinar for current FLS members or for officers and volunteers included in a NYLA Friends Group Organizational membership, as long as the membership is active through October 6. You'll find registration information on the FLS webpage, www.nyla.org/friends.

Next month, **National Friends of Libraries Week** will be celebrated around the country from October 16 through 22. We hope you are planning some special activities to draw attention to the contributions your Friends group makes to your library and to the community. The week is a perfect opportunity to plan a signature event, hold a membership drive, or present a special gift to your library from the Friends.

You may want to seek sponsorship for a resolution from elected officials in your local municipality, be it Village, Town, or County. Your group might consider having a banner made at your local office supply store to recognize National Friends of Libraries Week, which could be hung in the library or a prominent spot in your community. Do not let the week go by without drawing attention to the important activities your organization undertakes in support of the community's library!

This annual celebration is coordinated by [United for Libraries](http://www.ala.org/united/events_conferences/folweek), a division of the American Library Association. For some inspiration, check the United for Libraries website at http://www.ala.org/united/events_conferences/folweek.

NYLA Annual Conference, Saratoga Springs **November 2 through 5**

Friday is "Friends Day" and here are some of our program offerings.

- Keeping It Friendly: Connecting Staff and Friends (panel of staff liaisons from three different Friends groups)
- Trivia, Literati, and Wildly Successful Community Fundraising – Tompkins County Public Library Foundation (Ithaca)
- Field Trip to a Friends-Operated Bookstore (Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library)

We will also be offering a two-hour workshop on Saturday morning, "Keep It Growing! Strengthening Your Friends of the Library Group. See the [August 2022 issue of the FLS newsletter](#), "Friends News and Notes," for complete details about registration, programming, and information on all our speakers. www.nyla.org/friends > Publications. See you there!

FLS President Kerstin Cruger invites everyone to attend the **FLS Annual Membership Meeting via Zoom** on Wednesday afternoon, **November 16, beginning at 2 o'clock**. Come see how Kerstin passes the gavel from her right hand to her left hand as she begins her second consecutive year as FLS President! Meet the members of the FLS Board and our award recipients. We'll share the highlights of 2022 in our annual report to the membership. And there might be some surprises tied to our 30th anniversary! Registration for this meeting will open in October. Watch for our reminders to sign up so you'll receive the Zoom link.

Thanks to our FLS members in attendance for your support of the Section and we'd like to personally invite those of you who are not yet members to join us. We're really Friendly people! And helpful too. The more members we have, the more we can do! Head to www.nyla.org/join.

We are **looking for ideas** for our next FLS Connections gatherings. Do you have any suggestions for us? Contact us: FLS.NYLA@yahoo.com

It takes a village: many thanks to our technical assistant, FLS Second Vice President Terry Mulee; our chat monitor and author of Amy's introduction, Karen Ash, President of the Angelica Free Library (Southern Tier Library System); and scribe, Carol Kuhr, President of the Friends of Argyle Free Library (Southern Adirondack Library System). Thank you to Amy Discenza for sharing her remarks, which have been slightly edited for these minutes. Throughout the minutes, you'll find hotlinks to the topics and Friends groups discussed. Enjoy exploring these additional resources.

Keep It Friendly out there!
Lisa C. Wemett, emcee

The chat offered some laudatory remarks as people signed off, notes clutched in hand!

- Jason Poole, Webster: Thanks again to Amy and it was lovely hearing from you all! ❤️

- Jo Anne Robbins, FCPHL: A program like this is a wonderful way for FOL groups to get some new ideas. One thing COVID has done is provide an easy way to collaborate virtually.
- Ann Poelma, Fairport: This was great! Thank you so much!
- Mary Frances Verostek, FCPHL: Agree; wonderful session!
- Karen Ash, Angelica: Terrific information, Amy! Thank you so much! Thanks to our hosts Lisa and Terry for all their preparation time and technical expertise!
- Charlene Fisk, Mendon: Thank you! great information.
- Jerrie Grantham, Queens: Wonderful presentation, great info!

Attachment:

“Donate Now! The How-To’s of Coordinating a Donation Drive.” www.volunteerfairfax.org. This planning kit includes sample press releases, a step-by-step workflow, fliers, and a timeline to collect coats, hygiene products, or other goods.