

Minutes from the FLS Connections Meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, May 12, 2021.

Lisa Wemett, FLS Past President, opened the meeting at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone, including Karen Sperrazza, the current FLS President. Other FLS Board members attending were Terry Mulee, Second Vice President, and Members At Large Christine Beck and Marie Bindeman. Lisa stated that this is the first FLS Connections session sponsored by the Friends of Libraries Section of the New York Library Association. These meetings are a chance for Friends groups from across the state to share how they have been resilient and kept going during the past year.

Lisa started the discussion by telling the group about the FLS organization and the makeup of the FLS Board. Lisa shared how meetings to exchange ideas among Friends organizations started in 2015 in cooperation with local libraries around NY State. FLS is trying these virtual discussions since we could not meet in person in 2020 or 2021. This is the first of three Zoom meetings scheduled.

Lisa thanked everyone for trying something new. She asked everyone to introduce themselves, their organization, and what they do for their library or Friends group. There were 16 people in attendance representing 9 Friends groups.

Lisa introduced the first speaker, Karen Ash, Chair of the Friends of the Angelica Free Library (a member of the Southern Tier Library System). Karen shared that they are a new Friends group (4½ years old), and they are working on library outreach in the community using social media. They have a Facebook page, Friends of the Angelica Free Library. Karen, as the site administrator, posts content twice a week. The page currently has 250 followers in a town of 1,000 residents. There are 7 active members of their Friends board.

The Friends utilize Facebook for five purposes: advocating for the library (e.g., vote for the library's budget), focusing on young people (e.g., promotion of summer learning program), spotlighting the Friends fundraising efforts, engaging the community, and interacting with the Friends group steering committee with a private Facebook page (which they have dubbed "secret library Friends") for Friends business discussions and announcements. Some examples of their activities are giving away free craft kits, raffling jigsaw puzzles (making \$700 from new donated puzzles, less small service fees for Venmo and PayPal), posting questions and requesting answers ("What are you reading?"), holding book sales and bake sales (often in conjunction with the farmers market and classic car cruise-ins), and advertising the budget vote. A current promotion is encouraging patrons to take a selfie at the book sale and post it to their social media account, to earn a chance in a drawing for a gift card. Other events they have held: "Storybook Christmas" with stories for children, a photo booth, etc., and "Reading Glasses," a members-only book sale preview event with wine and nibbles.

Lisa introduced the second speaker, Mary Ann Marrero, President of the Friends of the Moffat Library in Washingtonville (Ramapo Catskill Library System). Mary Ann shared two of their recent activities. Her group sponsored three adult cultural lectures via Zoom. They went one

step further and videotaped them for the library's YouTube channel. (At <https://moffatlibrary.org>, on the left sidebar, click on their YouTube link to watch the programs.) The lectures were promoted on social media and have been viewed hundreds of times. Subjects were artists Edward Hopper and Jacob Lawrence and Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad. Mary Ann stressed the series was a team approach, collaborating with community speakers, library staff members, and the Friends volunteers.

The Friends of the Moffat also restarted a home delivery service for library patrons which was expanded during COVID through the assistance of the library director. Mary Ann shared the sign-up form patrons complete, indicating the types of materials they would like to receive. Fourteen Friends members deliver the books to the patron in cloth tote bags.

Lisa then invited the attendees to share what their Friends groups have been doing the last year during this unusual time.

Emily Cullings, President of the Friends of the Hampton Bays Library on Long Island, and Secretary Kathy Rhodes said they went to accepting book sale donations on only one day, they had a bag of books sale, and they sold books on the lawn last summer. They took pre-orders online for fancy Valentine and Easter baskets (\$20/\$25/\$30 sizes) and calendars as fundraisers. They also sold a book about mermaids autographed by a local author. They will be publishing another calendar for 2022, since their first community calendar venture was so successful for 2021.

President Mary Ann Penzero and Kathleen Walsh from the Friends of Crestwood Library (one of the smaller branch libraries serving the city of Yonkers in Westchester County, bordering NYC) said they have been instrumental in keeping the library community engaged. They helped the library clean out books and re-arrange the collections (Branch Manager Zee Baird "is a wizard!"), ran programs like organization tips, yoga and book chats, and wrote grants, collaborating with the local schools. They plan to hold a book sale and restart their symphony program with Sarah Lawrence College.

Jerrie Grantham, Community Affairs Manager from Queens Public Library said they were challenged during COVID. They have many Friends groups who supported online programs, helped bring books to people with distributions of free books purchased by the Friends, and held two virtual conferences. They also chartered a new Friends group in August 2020, bringing them to 28 chapters throughout the library system that serves the borough of Queens in New York City.

Mickey Cherry, President of the Friends of the East Rochester Public Library, said they have not been busy during the pandemic. They have six members. They did have a pop-up book sale in the parking lot last fall and sold weeded materials for the library. The local Rotary Club took the remainders for their international literacy work. The Friends will hold their first meeting next week in the community center.

Chris Beck from the Friends of the Fairport Public Library (east side of Rochester) said they were lucky to reopen their bookstore once the library reopened with book pickup service. With safety precautions in place, they have had steady customers. They borrowed an idea from another library and had a mystery bag of books sale. They switched to only accepting donations one day a week (Monday).

Lee Krist from the Friends of the Gates Public Library (a western suburb of Rochester) said they called the Friends members to keep folks interested in the library. They plan to set up a membership table next week in the library to advertise what the Friends do for the library (e.g., craft kits, laptops). They are getting a lot of book donations, too.

Kathleen Gaskin and Ron Schachter, staff members from the Westbury Memorial Public Library on Long Island, are trying to get a Friends group started.

FLS President Karen Sperrazza said that the volunteers at her library don't want to organize into an official Friends group. But they do support the Clayville Library where she serves as a trustee (Mid-York Library System, near Utica).

Lisa Wemett made some FLS announcements before the close of the meeting. FLS will be celebrating 30 years in 2022 (first as a Roundtable and then a Section of NYLA). Lisa spoke about the FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award and spotlighted the two 2020 recipients. She encouraged nominations by June 1st. Lisa also thanked all the FLS members on the call for their support and encouraged others to join. There are many benefits to membership including qualifying for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship.

The NYLA Virtual Conference is set for October 28 and 29. Lisa is presenting the session "ABCs of Best Practices for Friends Groups." The in-person NYLA Annual Conference will be in Syracuse NY, November 3-6. FLS is sponsoring several sessions. Details will be included in the August issue of the FLS newsletter.

The next FLS Connections programs are **Thursday, July 15 at 2 p.m. on Fundraising** and **Monday, September 13 at 4 p.m. Membership Recruitment, Engagement and Retention**. Notices will be sent to register 30 days prior to each program to FLS members. (See also the FLS Connections article in the May/June 2021 issue of the FLS "Friends News and Notes" newsletter, pages 2 and 7, for details.) Terry Mulee encouraged members to register at FLSregister@yahoo.com.

At 11:50 a.m., Lisa closed the meeting by thanking the speakers and participants.

Many, many thanks to Christine Beck of the FLS Board for taking these minutes and for Marie Bindeman for monitoring the chat for us. And we couldn't do it with Terry Mulee as our Zoom hostess and technical advisor! It takes a village, as they say!!