

Minutes from the FLS Connections meeting on Thursday, 7/15/21, 2 p.m. via Zoom

Lisa Wemett, FLS Past President and Coordinator for Professional Development, opened the session and welcomed the participants to **FLS Connections: Fundraising**. To start us off, members of the Friends of the Onondaga Free Library in Syracuse and the Friends of the Hastings Public Library in Westchester County gave brief presentations on their membership appeals and other fundraising activities.

Lisa introduced the first speaker, **Kathy DeSanctis, Ambassador for the Friends of the Onondaga Free Library (FOPL)**, which serves a population of 25,000 in Syracuse. Kathy explained that "Ambassador" was a position with the FOPL which allows for another level of involvement in the group that is not an officer position. (As a snowbird, Kathy is primarily active in the group from April through December.) She described the fourth **membership drive** of the FOPL in 2020. They now have 147 members and raised \$8500; approx. \$58 per donation. It was important during this campaign to stress that the group needed donations because their book sales had been cancelled. Telling your donors why you need funds is vital. The "Giving Levels" are designated "Authors' Clubs," ranging from \$10 (Mark Twain) to \$500 (William Shakespeare). Donations of \$30 or more can pay by credit card or PayPal. They posted an honor roll of their donors in the library which was repeated in the Friends newsletter (only one donor requested to remain anonymous). A second reminder mailing was sent in December, which was very productive. The original mailing was 300 pieces in October. The newly designed membership brochures cost approx. 20 cents each.

Mary Beth Roach, President of the Friends of the Onondaga Free Library, discussed the group's cookbook project in 2020. Recipes were solicited from the Friends, library staff, and relatives, asking that they be submitted by e-mail; a staff member designed the cover of the book. They received 180 recipes which also included memories of these family favorites—there were many submissions of "comfort food," which was the tenor of these pandemic times! 100 copies of the book were printed; only about 25 copies are left after 8 months. They utilized a local printer. Marketing was primarily via social media.

Mary Beth also detailed one of their annual fundraisers, the **Festival of Trees raffle**. This long-time project had many adaptations in 2020. The group buys twenty 12-inch trees and gives them to organizations who will decorate them for the holidays (e.g., schools, youth groups, creative individuals). The Friends group sells tickets and people put the ticket in the bag for the tree they want. At the end of the night, they pull a ticket to see who won the tree. During 2020 an in-person raffle was not possible, so they made it a digital or online auction. They posted photos of each tree with a description. Not all trees are tied to a holiday; there was a tree decorated with lottery tickets; another with flowers. Each designer/group is recognized with a sign by the tree to thank them. People bought raffle tickets, mailed them in, and indicated what tree they wanted to try to win. It was mentioned that the staff were incredibly cooperative in this venture and appreciated the "normalcy" of this annual event. In 2021, they hope to do a hybrid raffle with both in-person and online raffle ticket sales. *Mary Beth reported after the meeting that their average profit is \$1100; they made slightly less in 2020, but their expenses were higher than in 2019.*

Kathy DeSanctis added that they got donations from merchants and local authors for prizes. The Friends group is lucky to have great relationship with merchants because they are a small community. She praised the staff for the support of the Friends and the community, especially during the pandemic with curbside pick-up. Quarantining books was difficult and time-consuming work for the staff.

Judy Kaiser, Treasurer of the Friends of the Hastings-on-Hudson Public Library, described her community as “the small New England town that got lost” (ending up in NYS!). Their population is 7,000; a community-wide mailing in 2020 reached 2300 people in place of their regular membership mailing. The letter was written by a library trustee who is well known in the community and has “incredible writing skills.” They got an excellent response, with 285 members and \$30K+ in dues. Their base membership is \$30; senior adults are \$15. The membership year runs September 1 through August 31. They also sent a follow-up reminder in March; there was a 60% return rate with additional renewals and several extra donations. The library just re-opened fully three weeks ago.

Judy outlined many of the group’s successful activities and programs:

- They moved their lecture series online using Zoom.
- Some locals who are on Broadway did “Over the Rainbow” presentation
- For their middle school patrons, they had a “Stories That Speak.” Stories were read online by people from the community, like police officers, civic leaders, and other officials. Then they had discussion about diversity issues after the reading.
- They held their first used book sale in the fall of 2020 (with mask wearing) in the parking lot. (\$2500 profit) They held another parking lot sale in June 2021 and are planning another one in September.
- They made T-shirts that said “Don’t Bother Me, I’m Reading” which sold for \$20. A second edition added characters from 10 local artists. They are “selling like hot cakes,” Judy said.
- The library did offer pickup service before they were able to reopen. The also provided printing pickup service for people who needed printing help while the library was closed to inside patrons.
- A group of volunteers have met for 6 years+ to make blankets under the auspices of the Linus Project to give to children in the hospital.
- They also have knitters who make blankets and sell raffle tickets where they make \$100-200.
- They also offer “Giftique” (last one in 2019) with silent auctions with donations from Board members, local merchants, local authors, and others. If they get a very valuable donation, they will sell the item on eBay.
- In Judy’s area, a grocery store (Foodtown) has shoppers sign up for eScript, where 1% of their purchase can be designated to a charity. Patrons can register their card listing the Friends Group or Library to receive the company’s donation, similar to the Amazon Smile charity program.
- At Judy’s library, the staff donate their notary fees to the library. The fee is consistent with normal charges for this service; revenue can be as much as \$175 per month.
- They also hold a musical show put on by local talent. Tickets are \$50. Snacks are donated from local restaurants and the library staff and Friends volunteers work the event.

Judy said that their big annual fundraiser is a gala honoring local civic leaders, but they could not hold one in 2020. See more about the Friends at <https://hastingslibrary.org/about-the-friends>. For questions on any of these projects, reach out to the Friends at FriendsHastingsLibrary@gmail.com.

Lisa opened the meeting to other participants to share what type of fundraising their Friends group did during the last year.

Meg Sgombick, director of the Florida Public Library, said they are working to get their book sales restarted. They did not do much during the last year but are seeing an increase in donations during the pandemic. Trustee Diane Arcieri said they are considering drafting a letter to ask for donations. They are also looking into becoming a 501(c)(3) organization. They also mentioned Wood Library's Pursapalooza event that was so successful. *To watch a free webinar that outlines Pursapalooza, find the link to "Fundraising Beyond the Book Sale" on the CRLC webinar archive page: <https://clrc.org/events-education/webinars/> This webinar was sponsored by the Central New York Library Resources Council on April 22.*

Jessica Pritchard, Development Specialist for the Victor Farmington Library, reported that the Friends group is having problems getting a leader. It was suggested they investigate having co-presidents. Several participants made suggestions for Jessica in the chat on how to locate Friends leaders. Ann Poelma with the Friends of the Fairport Public Library said "As someone who was recently recruited to be Friends President, I was assured that I could delegate responsibilities to others and that I would receive ample support from prior presidents (we have a 3-year term limit). So far, that has been true and extremely helpful to me." Judy Kaiser stated "We have recruited many board members as a result of meeting patrons across the front desk. Our board currently has 18 active members." She added, "Our board meetings are held in the evening to ensure working members can attend." Joy Gardiner, Friends of the Naples Library, shared that they have had success recruiting retired teachers for their library board.

Mary Zingerella, a retired library director, said she became president of the Friends of the Red Jacket Library in Shortsville due to an unexpected vacancy. Their Friends group has a successful chicken dinner sale which is tied to the date of the school board vote. They sold 175 dinners in 53 minutes! *(To read more about this fundraiser, see "Grab 'Em As They Drive By!" in the "Friends News and Notes" newsletter, March 2017, page 6. www.nyla.org/friends > Publications.)*

Joy Gardiner from Naples wrote a letter requesting funds for a special project, an elevator for the library. It was an end of the year campaign, and they received many generous donations.

Mickey Cherry, President of the Friends of the East Rochester Public Library, said that their Friends group is trying to get going again. They are planning pop-up book sales in the parking lot.

JoAnne Brady, from the Berne Public Library, a small library in upstate NY, explained their "Bowls for Books" event. They sell pottery bowls for \$10 and then patrons can fill the bowl

with homemade soup. Their pandemic pivot was to change up the event to an outdoor setting and have an ice cream social. Stewarts donated the ice cream and toppings. They sold paper bowls for \$2 for kids so that it can easily be a family event. Another idea for a book sale is to not price the books, but to ask the patrons to pay what they want for a book (signs say, "donate what you like.") People often pay more than the 50 cents or \$1 charged at normal book sales.

President Joan Handfield of the Friends of the Macedon Public Library said that Lowe's donated a gas grill that they raffled off, making about \$600. They also have partnered with Doug's Fish Fry food truck out of Skaneateles that will give their tips to the library. They have held several successful chicken barbeque sales.

Ann Poelma, the new President of the Friends of the Fairport Public Library, said they have both a retail store separate from the library building and they have the "Book Bin" inside the library for selling used books. They also had a sidewalk sale during Fairport Canal Days. They are sponsoring a concert in the Gazebo outside the library. Their Friends group has several different levels of membership. Perks include a \$3 coupon for the bookstore (they have discontinued preview sales for members at book sales), a newsletter, a volunteer appreciation event, and volunteer opportunities (i.e., volunteers must be Friends members to work in the bookstore or provide home delivery service to residents).

Jennifer Groth, President of the Friends of Maxwell Memorial Library in Camillus, said her Friends group did a flower bulb sale at someone's house. People pre-ordered their bulbs and were able to pick them up outside. They also had a large geranium sale with the help of a local garden center. (For more on bulb sales, see page 5 of the August/September 2021 issue of "Friends News and Notes.")

Leslie Riley, Friends of the Cornwall Public Library and Member At Large of the FLS Executive Board, said she was impressed with the work Friends groups do in the community. They just got a large donation of leather-bound books and may participate in a local book fair. They have been having successful book sales. Patrons have been very generous.

Lisa said that the Friends of Library Section (FLS) will be celebrating its 30 anniversary in 2022. Thank you to everyone who is a member of FLS. If you are not a member, please think of joining. One benefit is attending FLS-sponsored webinars for free.

Lisa made some announcements at the end of the meeting. For more information on fundraising ideas, look at the June 2020 and March 2021 issues of the FLS newsletter.

NYLA will hold their virtual Conference 2021 on Thursday, October 28th and Friday, October 29th. There will be a "live, virtual" presentation of **ABC Best Practices of Friends Groups** and an On Demand program on **Fundraising without Book Sales**.

The NYLA in-person conference is in Syracuse November 3-6. The theme is "We're All In!" There will be an FLS-sponsored CE workshop on Wednesday, November 3rd titled **Financial FAQs for Nonprofits**. On Friday, November 5th there will be a presentation titled **Friendly Relationships, Working Together for the Library**. *[Please see the FLS webpage and the*

August/September issue of the "Friends News and Notes" newsletter for complete details on the conference registration and program offerings. www.nyla.org/friends]

Lisa stated that the next FLS Connections meeting will be **Monday, September 13, at 4 p.m.** The topic will be Membership Recruitment, Engagement and Retention. Register at FLSregister@yahoo.com after August 13.

At 3:30 p.m., Lisa closed the meeting.

Many thanks to Christine Beck, Member At Large, FLS/NYLA Executive Board, for taking minutes for this gathering!

Attachments:

Membership brochure, Friends of the Onondaga Free Library (front and back)

Annual appeal letter, Friends of Hastings-on-Hudson Library

Some resources on leadership recruitment, volunteer engagement, and succession planning. The newsletter archive is at www.nyla.org/friends > Publications.

March 2021: **Analyzing Volunteer Jobs** (p.4) – doing a task analysis of current/past Friends positions is vital.

August/September 2020: **Recruiting Our Leaders** (p.7.)

March 2020: **Tri-presidential Team of the Friends of the Community Library of DeWitt and Jamesville** (p.5)

June 2020: **Ready to Engage Millennials as Volunteers?** (p.5) Kaleb Wilson, now President of the library's Board of Trustees, explains the co-presidents' approach of the Friends of the Cazenovia Public Library and how they use a "Lead" for each team in charge of their major projects, like their new bookstore run by the Friends. (Terminology borrowed from the corporate world, with a more appealing "ring" than "committee chair.")

Webinar with the Presidential Team of the Friends of Clifton Park – Halfmoon Public Library, **"Administrative Teams: A New Approach to Friends Leadership."** March 19, 2019 – original broadcast date; available on NYLA's YouTube Channel. CPHL Friends devised a team of four individuals to divide up the presidential duties and dubbed them "The Quads." All webinar sessions are recorded and posted on the FLS webpage to watch any time, free of charge. Go to www.nyla.org/friends > Events > FLS Webinars.