



Friends News and Notes

Friends of Libraries Section — A Network of Library Advocates in New York State

Volume 1, #1, December 2014

2014 Dan Casey Award Presented

The tiered seating at the rear of the Morgan Opera House in Aurora, NY was nearly full. A bounty of sweets and treats filled a nearby table, and a lovely floral arrangement graced the front of the podium. Elaine Meyers, President of the Board of Directors of the Aurora Free Library, welcomed the crowd of 25 or so that had gathered for the presentation of the Empire Friends Roundtable Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award. The 2014 recipient is the Building Preservation Committee of the Aurora Free Library.

In her remarks Elaine recounted the nearly 30 year history of this committee and recognized the many members who have served on it through the years. Several past and present committee members were in attendance. In short, this group of dedicated volunteers has saved a historical treasure in their village and found a way to preserve and maintain the structural integrity of the library building which was constructed in 1899.



Key components of their work include the restoration of the second floor Morgan Opera House to its original condition, the "Raise the Roof" campaign begun in 2006 which ultimately raised \$343,129, multiple building upgrades, and replacing the front steps to the library. To view

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NYLA's Newest Section

by Terry Mulee

There's a new section in NYLA. It's the Friends of Libraries Section (FLS).

During the NYLA Annual Membership meeting in Saratoga Springs, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, NYLA Council liaison to EFR, came to the micro-



Lisa Wemett, Sarah Sachs, Chrissie Morrison, and Randy Enos hold up FLS signs right after the vote.

phone and made a motion to allow the Empire Friends Roundtable to have a change in status from a roundtable of NYLA to a section of NYLA and to be named the Friends of Libraries Section. The motion was seconded by EFR Vice President Lisa C. Wemett. NYLA President Sara Kelly Johns called for a vote and the motion passed unanimously.

Members of the newly formed section jumped to their feet raising signs that sported the new section logo and name. It was the culmination of more than a year's work to move from roundtable to section.

If you were a member of the Empire Friends Roundtable on November 6, 2014, then you became a member of NYLA's newest section, FLS. So exactly what does this change in status mean?

One significant aspect is that the Friends of Libraries Section has a *seat* on NYLA Council instead of a NYLA Councilor At Large who serves as a liaison between a roundtable and the council. Lisa C. Wemett, FLS President will represent the section on NYLA Council.

Another important difference between a roundtable and a section is a larger dues apportionment for a primary section member. This increase in membership revenue for the section treasury will allow FLS to expand and improve services and opportunities for its members. When you renew your

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The mission of the Friends of Libraries Section is to promote and inspire local Friends groups in libraries of all types for the betterment of New York State's library community.

Making Our Voices Heard A Message from FLS President Lisa C. Wemett



Do you volunteer one hour each week on activities for your Friends group: sorting materials for the book sale, preparing a financial report for the next Board meeting, or coordinating a book discussion? Could I ask you to give an additional 30 minutes, to tell the story of how crucial your library is to your community? That is, of course, why you volunteer!

To quote the President of the American Library Association (ALA) Courtney L. Young: "I know your commitment is total and your dedication sincere, but to truly effect the change that we want to see, every single one of us must also act. That action is advocacy—and it cannot succeed without you."

The importance of talking to your neighbors and family about the library and all its resources, its successes in programming, the threats of budget cuts, and reduced hours: all of these points convey a story that can be repeated to THEIR friends and family. Member At Large, Judi Campbell, is the FLS representative to NYLA's Legislative Committee. She said, "I think we underestimate the degree to which the public library is the place in our communities which really can make everyone feel welcome."

Tell your family and friends about the diversity of our users, children to seniors, and how the library is a vibrant center for community engagement. Let them know why the library matters. Your personal network gets the message out. Once you've mastered the step of sharing that story with folks you know, it only takes one more small step to spread that message to a member of your town board, a county supervisor, or state representative.

In November, NYLA voted to change its mission statement to "NYLA leads, educates, and advocates for the advancement of the New York library community." NYLA works to introduce and influence legislation and those policies that have an impact on libraries and library funding. As an organization, we assert the position that libraries are an essential part of New York's education infrastructure at all

levels.

NYLA is the voice of the library community and its voice can only become stronger with more members speaking up, both library staff and volunteers alike. Join NYLA's advocacy team. NYLA's Online Advocacy Center helps you send e-mails to your state and local legislators on specific library issues. You can enroll as a "Library Advocate" to receive advocacy alerts with information on what action you should take to support these time-sensitive issues. On www.NYLA.org, follow the Advocacy tab. When the e-mail comes asking you to act, please do so. You'll be surprised how easy it is. If you want to make an impact on the national level, ALA also sponsors Virtual Library Legislative Day which allows you to contact Congress from your home computer.

A step beyond is NYLA's annual "Library Advocacy Day" which brings almost 1,000 supporters to the state Capitol each year to meet with legislators and their staff to discuss library funding and other initiatives that promote the positive impact libraries make on their communities and state. Friends are staunch and articulate advocates. Your stature in the community makes the state legislature and Governor pay attention to your message. The 2015 Library Advocacy Day is Wednesday, February 25. Check with your local library system to see how you may travel with a contingent to bring the issues of your local libraries to our state decision makers.

Every FLS member needs to pitch in to carry out the advocacy part of our association's mission. Every voice makes a difference. You can do it! Join with other FLS members in at least one of these arenas and speak out for libraries. I hope to see you in Albany in February. Thank you!

A Letter *From* the Editor:

November 10, 2014

Dear EFR, now FLS, members,

It was an honor to succeed Phyllis Pittman Kitt as editor of the Empire Friends Newsletter in 2003 when I retired as Gates Public Library Director. Phyllis had managed EFR's newsletter from the mid-1990s until 2003 when she recruited me to take

over as editor.

After ten years and 30 issues, as Empire Friends makes the transition to a Section of NYLA, the timing is right for me to pass the baton to the very capable editorship of Terry Mulee with this issue of the newsletter.

I will continue as a regional reporter for FLS. I urge all Friends groups with successful, replicable ideas to

share their stories and pictures via the FLS newsletter. What helps one Friends group helps us all!

Gratefully,
Susan Swanton

Editor's Note: As the new editor for this newsletter, I would like to thank Sue for her dedication to the library community, especially commending her for her work as EFR's newsletter editor for better than half its history. "Thank you" hardly seems adequate.

FLS Programs Open Minds at Fall Conference

The 2014 New York Library Association Annual Conference *Open Libraries, Open Minds* was held in Saratoga Springs. Sessions sponsored by the new Friends of Libraries Section (FLS) were held on Friday, November 7, and Saturday, November 8. Accolades on the evaluations stated the programs were "extremely worthwhile" and had "highly informative" content.

The FLS sessions were attended by 150 people. We were pleased to average a 58% return rate of our evaluations which provided significant information about our audience members. Because of our location in Saratoga Springs, the participants strongly represented the Capital region (15%). We were very gratified to also have participation from Long Island (15%), the Rochester region (14%), Syracuse (10%), and Westchester County (9%).

Nearly 13% of our participants identified themselves as members of Friends of the Library groups; in the *Friends-Operated Bookstores* session, that number rose to 67% of the audience! Another 12% of our attendees stated they were library trustees. The primary responsibility of 35% of the attendees was library director or administration; others were public service personnel providing reference, adult, or youth services. It is very satisfying to know the FLS programs met the needs of many staff members from such diverse areas of librarianship.



Courtney Darts and Judy Siegel

What does it mean to be a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization? In ***Get By With a Little Legal Help for Your Friends***, our speakers were Courtney Darts, Senior Staff Attorney, and Judy Siegel, Staff Attorney from the Pro Bono

Partnership which provides free business legal services for nonprofit groups including libraries in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. [www.probonopartner.org. To apply for their services, click on "Request Legal Assistance" on their Web page.] One participant praised our speakers: "they did a great job explaining the large amount of complicated information in a clear, concise manner." Another declared the session "best program of the conference."

Courtney and Judy provided definitions (nomenclature) of NYS law for not-for-profit groups and tax exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code. Discussion points included forming a not-for-profit corporation, qualifying for tax exemptions, fiduciary duties, and the governance and accountability of the Board of Directors of nonprofit groups regardless of their size. The New York Nonprofit Revitalization Act of 2013 was covered along with charitable registration, fund-raising, documentation of contribu-

tions, managing volunteers, and insurance needs. For example, does the group have job descriptions for volunteers? Does the group carry insurance to cover volunteers who deliver materials to shut-ins? The speakers encouraged the audience to consult an insurance professional. Each Friends group needs to analyze how it sells materials (e.g., online, a bookcase within the library, several large scale multi-day booksales annually) to determine whether it needs to collect sales tax. An opinion can be requested from the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance.

Pro Bono stressed the need for transparency and accountability for all volunteer boards. They also stated that Board members must be present to vote. Proxy votes are not permitted. Friends' board meeting minutes should be retained as corporate records. If Friends raise less than \$25,000 a year and do not use the services of a professional fund-raiser, they are not required to have an annual independent audit of their financial records. But all Board members should be knowledgeable of audit principles and adhere to good prudent financial practices.



Bonnie Shannon

Friends-Operated Bookstores focused on two "brick and mortar" bookstores run completely by volunteers to raise funds to support their libraries' extra needs. Bonnie Shannon, Book Sales Chair for The Friends of the Kinderhook Memorial Library, discussed the Friends decision in 2013 to open a storefront operation separate from the library after many years of successful booksales. The store is open seasonally and benefits from extra foot traffic on the day the farmers' market is open. Bonnie praised her dedicated crew of volunteers (her "crazies") and reviewed the Friends considerations in starting this type of venture and their planning process. She also provided cautionary tips for a store including merchandising, lighting, taxes, safety for volunteers, working with book dealers, and handling donations ("recycle ruthlessly").

The Friends of Middletown Thrall Library support the public library situated in the renovated Erie Railroad Station in the heart of downtown. Their used bookstore, started in 1989, is now located in the former freight house just steps from the library's entrance. Bruce Swenson, Bookstore Manager and Vice President of The Friends of Middletown Thrall Library, shared details of the



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store's operation. It offers donated materials for sale three days a week, earning more than \$60,000 annually to support the library's collections, programs, and equipment needs. Funds raised also cover maintenance and capital improvements to the building. Bruce advised to let the public know you are volunteers, not employees, and keep set hours of operation.

This year FLS co-sponsored sessions on nonprofit law and library finances with the Library Trustees Association (www.librarytrustees.org). Volunteers for Friends of the Library groups and community members who serve on a library's Board of Trustees have much in common in helping libraries survive and thrive. Together Friends and trustees can become strong allies and advocates for our libraries as they work toward the common goals of financial stability and sustainability. The following two programs highlighted the importance of assisting libraries in reaching their long-term goals and objectives with a constant funding stream over time.



Fund-raising with Annual Appeals discussed yearly campaigns that directly solicit funds from the community to supplement public funding. Leah LaFera, former Library Director, talked about the ongoing need to finance the Canajoharie Library and Arkell Museum, an association library that is one

of the least funded libraries in the state. Kathy Naftaly, Director, and Lynn Shanks, Development Director, at the Crandall Public Library in Glens Falls raised \$32,000 in their 2013 annual appeal. Using a slide presentation combining the best practices and decision-making tips from both libraries, the panel covered the "nitty-gritty" of annual appeals with examples of their mailings (both appeal letters and return envelopes), raising funds online, tracking donors, and saying "thank you" in a variety of ways.

Separate organizations with their own boards of trustees, foundations establish endowments and manage large contributions and bequests. Growing funds, managing investments, and marketing the endowment to donors are all crucial for long-term success. In **Library Foundations and Endowments**, Suzanne Stockman spoke about the Fairport Library Foundation which was established in 2007. It is a 501(c)(3) that manages its own funds and has faced several challenges in its efforts to raise money to help renovate the library. The foundation will have a capital campaign over the next year as renovations begin on the library in 2015. Suzanne advised keeping current with charity and not-for-profit regulations, get legal advice as needed, and recruit board members who will be willing to ask for money from donors—not everyone is comfortable in that role.



Suzanne Stockman and Mary Muller

Trustee Mary Muller described the Troy Public Library Foundation as a "middle-aged foundation," incorporated as a nonprofit in 1991 to solicit bequests and gifts to support the library. The foundation has been particularly successful

in providing the funding required in order for the library to qualify for state grants. Mary shared how Troy has recently begun using the services of a regional Community Foundation to manage and grow the foundation's endowment. (For further information, visit www.cof.org, the Council on Foundations which supports foundations by promoting knowledge, growth, and action in philanthropy. The association's Web page includes a "Community Foundation Locator," an interactive map of the USA to find a listing of all accredited community foundations in your area.)

EFR co-sponsored the Public Library Section's program, *Walk Your Precinct and Activate Your Library Advocates*, with John Chrastka, Executive Director of EveryLibrary (www.everylibrary.org), a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization and the only national company to act as a super PAC for libraries. John himself is a library trustee in Illinois and a former ALA membership chair who works pro bono to help library campaigns. A new organization, EveryLibrary won five of the seven ballot items they supported last year. This year they have 20 ballot items across the USA.

John urged the audience to know who their prime voters are; the ones who vote every year! Librarians need to talk more about the good work that libraries do in the community. The Library Director is the candidate and it is always campaign season for libraries! Learn what motivates voters; what activates activists; what causes libraries to lose; why we need to inventory our allies; why we seek endorsements; what "Get Out The Vote" [GOTV] entails and why it matters; how to frame budget messages (please use that thermometer on the front lawn!); and how to tell the library story.

Thank you to our fellow Friends, library trustees, and legal professionals who volunteered to share their ideas and best practices, ones that we know you will want to implement back home. To see our speakers' slide presentations and additional handouts from their sessions, visit www.NYLA.org/Friends and select the "Events" tab. If you were not able to join FLS in Saratoga Springs, do not miss out on NYLA's 125th Anniversary Conference in Lake Placid from October 21 through October 24, 2015. We will continue to offer "Friends Day" on Friday, October 23 at a greatly reduced rate for NYLA Friends members. See you in the Adirondacks!

Unique Annual Meeting for Empire Friends Roundtable and Friends of Libraries Section

Finishing the Business of EFR:

President Randy Enos opened the meeting on November 7 with distributions of the 2013 meeting minutes and his year-end report. This year, EFR started the transition from Roundtable to Section status, working on increasing membership, updating the by-laws, and increasing the size and geographic diversity of the Executive Board. The threshold of 100 members was crossed, the newsletter expanded its content, and the group's web pages were updated all under the guidance of Terry Mulee in the newly created position of 2nd Vice President. Treasurer Marcia Elwitt distributed the report for FY 2013 - 2014, with an ending balance on June 30 of \$2,986.10. Most expenses for the year were associated with offering three Friends-related programs at the 2013 NYLA Annual Conference in Niagara Falls and costs associated with newsletter printing and distribution.

Beginning the Business of FLS:

Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, a member of the nominating committee, introduced the slate of officers for 2014-2015

which included three new Members At Large (term: 2014 - 2016) and Sarah Sachs as Vice President/President Elect. The incumbent board members who would continue in their positions for another year were also included in the first slate for the Friends of Libraries Section. There being no other nominations heard, acting secretary Sue Swanton cast one vote to elect the new FLS Executive Board.



Randy passes the gavel to Lisa

Randy concluded that EFR has "remained a class act" for its 22 years and passed the gavel to incoming FLS President Lisa C. Wemett who adjourned the meeting.

For a full list of FLS Board members please visit www.NYLA.org/Friends and select "Board & Officers" on the left sidebar. Read more about our board volunteers in future newsletters.

Newest Section from page 1

NYLA membership, if FLS is not your primary section, please consider that change. It will have a major impact on what FLS can do in the future. NYLA members who add FLS to their membership are also helping to further the efforts of the section.

There will definitely be a period of transition as EFR becomes FLS, but we are making good progress. EFR web pages have been updated to FLS web pages and are located at NYLA.org/Friends. FLS will continue EFR's long standing tradition of an annual award and that recognition will still be called the Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award. FLS Vice President and Conference Programmer Sarah Sachs is already working on quality offerings for Friends and Friends Groups at the 2015 NYLA Annual Conference in Lake Placid. And of course, the newsletter, Empire Friends (with a run of 57 issues), will become Friends News and Notes with this first issue.

It is an exciting time to be a part of the Friends of Libraries Section of NYLA. Since the inception of EFR, the role that Friends and Friends Groups play in helping libraries survive and thrive has only grown. Now more than ever FLS is dedicated to this network of library advocates across New York State.

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Casey Award from page 1

the incredible accomplishments of this committee, please visit our website for more photos and full details of their work (NYLA.org/Friends and click on "Awards and Scholarships").



Lisa Wemett present plaque to Marnie Fesseden along with Janet Heslop, Scott Heinekamp, and Ellen Wikstrom

Lisa Wemett, EFR Vice President, offered congratulatory remarks and presented Marnie Fesseden and members of the Building Preservation Committee with the Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award Plaque.

Assemblyman Gary Finch presented a New York State Legislative Resolution to commemorate the event and the fine work of the committee and the library.

This is the 22nd and final EFR Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award. EFR applauds and commends the Building Preservation Committee of the Aurora Free Library, as well as all of the previous recipients for their exceptional contributions to the libraries of New York State.

If you would like more information on the FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award, see a list of those who have received the award, or to find the nomination form, please visit NYLA.org/Friends and click on "Awards and Scholarships." Nominations are due by July 1, 2015.

Historic EFR Board Meeting in Delmar



Attendees at last EFR Board meeting: seated left to right; Terry Mulee, Geoff Kirkpatrick, Randy Enos, Leslie Riley, and Judi Campbell. Standing, left to right; Marcia Elwitt, Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Marie Orlando, Jeremy Johannesen, Lisa Wemett, Betsy Sywetz, and Frank Van Zanten. (Sue Swanton was not in attendance.)

In August the EFR Board gathered for its annual face-to-face meeting held this year at the Bethlehem Public Library in Delmar. We were warmly welcomed by Geoff Kirkpatrick, Library Director and NYLA President Elect.

Eight of the nine EFR Board members attended and were joined by our guests: Jeremy Johannesen, NYLA Executive Director; Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, NYLA Councilor at Large and EFR Liaison; Judi Campbell, now an FLS Member at Large; Geoff Kirkpatrick.

Randall Enos, EFR President, called the meeting to order and immediately made note of the historic nature of this gathering, the final board meeting of the Empire Friends Roundtable. In just a few months from that meeting the NYLA membership would vote for a change in status, thus creating the Friends of Libraries Section.

The meeting focused on wrapping up the business of the roundtable, preparing for the NYLA Annual Conference, and reviewing the roundtable-to-section transition plan. With the long agenda completed and the meeting adjourned, Geoff took us on a tour of the wonderful facilities at the Bethlehem Public Library. The day was a great success!

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Call or write to us anytime. To visit the Friends of Libraries Section website, go to www.NYLA.org/friends

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