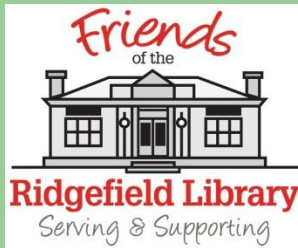**Friends of the Ridgefield Library**

Defining and Reaching Our Goals

Ann Jepson, President

FOCL
(Friends of the Connecticut Libraries)

Annual Conference

November 5th, 2011

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FINAL REPORT

In April 2009 the Friends implemented a recommendation from the Nominating Committee to engage in a process of Self Study

The impetus behind this recommendation grew from the nomination process itself:

- Despite the Committee's best efforts, they found a limited pool of candidates willing to commit to key leadership posts. Some of those polled expressed confusion regarding the role of the Friends and their relationship to the Library. Other general comments included concern over the future direction of the Friends in view of the curtailed library expansion.

- The Committee recommended that the Friends engage in a process of self study in order to explore the future direction of the organization and its relationship to the Library Board, staff and patrons.

Committee members were drawn from the Friends Board, Library Board, library personnel and the community. Ann Jepson was selected as Chair

- **Friends Officers**:
  - Bob Leavitt-President
  - **Ann Jepson-Vice President and Self Study Committee Chair**
  - Thea Devine, Recording Secretary
  - Ellen Darvick, Corresponding Secretary
  - Jerry Kiernan, Treasurer
  - Jo Fainer, Allocation

- **Friends Board:**
  - Joan Laspia
  - Gretchen Bishop
  - Fay Knapp
  - Lee Dickinson
  - Brenda Kane
  - Melissa Brady
  - Camden Percival
  - Barbara Wyman
  - Valerie Grayson

Committee Members

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A professional consultant facilitated the SSC sessions and documented the outputs from the meetings

- Library Board of Directors:
  - Bill Wyman
  - Mark Meachem

- Community
  - Dr. Judy Di Mattia, Executive Consultant and former member of Library Board

- Library Administration
  - Chris Nolan, Library Director
  - Mary Rindfleisch, Assistant Director

Committee Members

The Friends developed their Mission Statement after capturing the foundation (Core Values) of their reason for being

- These core values capture the essence of the Friends organization:
  - Love of Learning
  - Service to the Community
  - Supporting the Idea of an Educated Society
  - Connecting to Other People

- The Friends Mission Statement embodies these core values and is summarized below:

"*to provide support for the Ridgefield Library and promote the library to the public*".

The Committee Members reviewed what constitutes a Vision ("what the Friends aspire to be") and described what it would look like to fully actualize their vision

- The Friends bold Vision is: "*to be the model Friends in Connecticut*" and created a vivid description of what that would look like:

  – A more expansive membership (more people)
  – More active participation of its members
  – Attracting community leaders
  – Making a more significant contribution to the library expansion effort
  –   (A wing or room named after the Friends)
  – More creative problem-solving
  – Creating a more efficient use of resources/books
  – Being recognized as a true partner of the Library (staff, Board, users)
  – Being recognized by the Library users and community as worthwhile and worthwhile participating in
  – Keeping up with technology
  – Being successful with our fund raising efforts for the library
    - Supporting and nourishing our town library as well as libraries across the state
    - Being recognized for achieving our goals which are definable and made public
  – Networking with other organizations, attending conferences, continuing to grow and learn
  – Demonstrating leadership internally and externally (e.g. host conference)

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The Committee also assessed their current operations and listed what they need to CONTINUE doing and….

- Raise money
- Acknowledge and recruit volunteers
- Maintain communication with Library personnel
- Support library programs
- Continue support of library programs (most mentioned)
- Continue support of library materials and facilities
- Maintain communications with Library Board
- Advocate for Library
- Report to membership and community

STOP doing

- Stop/Change organizational self-perception
  - Seeing ourselves as second tier
  - Being an unseen organization
  - Allowing perceived limitations getting in the way from moving forward

- Blaming the Library for things that go wrong

- Failing to document organizational processes/instructions as part of sound business practices

- Lodging complaints and not assigning owners to resolve

What should the Friends stop doing?

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STOP doing and…

- Failing to address important organizational issues concerning the structure and processes of the Board (e.g. Committee structure, Board Meetings, relationship to membership)
  - Stop/change the way we are organized (Committee Structure)
  - Stop/change the way we conduct Board Meetings
  - Depending on Board Meetings to discuss items that could be addressed in a committee
  - Discussing minutia at Board Meetings
  - Change Board organization, better define jobs
    Stop discussions that should be held in committee
  - Stop/Change the way we conduct Board Meetings

START doing

I Document Friends Mission and Goals

- A. Clarify our mission and goals
- B. Have a goal-setting retreat for the August 2010 meeting
- C. Do something other than fund raising
- D. Periodically examine how we operate
- E. Make the friends feel more like a group you join for membership (not a donation you make to support the work of the Friends)

START doing (continued)

II Address Internal Organization

A. Reorganize existing committees and purposes of committees
B. Redefine what Committees we need
C. Ask question: "Why do we do things this way?"
D. Consolidate some committees into one
E. Recruit non-Board members to support Committee Chairs
F. Actually form committees, reduce or change Board size
G. Have a Board Book for all Board members
H. Redefine our committee structure
I. Spread responsibility to a greater number of members (involve more than core group)
J. Have written Committee reports
K. Provide support to new Committee Chairs with information/mentors

What should the Friends start doing?

FINAL REPORT

START doing (continued)

lll Develop Public Relations and Communications

A. Start weekly/monthly article in Ridgefield Press
B. Have a more recognizable logo that's cool
C. Make a new Friends logo
D. Become more visible in the community
E. Increase publicity and public awareness of Friends
F. Increase communications to the public
G. Make better use of technology
H. Find ways to publicize Friends activities in order to attract more participation
I. Promote Friends more visibly
J. Increase public relations re: The Friends Organization, our Mission and Purpose
K. Better publicize Who we are, What we do, How/Why people should join us

START doing (continued)

IV Improve Board Efficiency and Effectiveness

A. Use Technology more efficiently

B. Institute Board training for new Board members (present Board may need this too

C. Ascertain if Friends USA has data which could be of use to us

D. Incorporate opportunities to learn new skills

V Money

A. Have a budget for this year

B. Seek grant monies

START doing (continued)

VI Membership

A. Give membership cards
B. Give discounts at book sales and on Internet
C. Encourage people to join
D. Sponsor community-wide activities to give Friends more visibility-activities that involve more than Friends members
E. Seek community input for ideas on desired programs
F. Actively engage the school community
G. Develop new activities and/or programs to attract a larger audience e.g. membership
H. Hold meetings/receptions with members
I. Send membership dues invoices and follow-ups
J. Welcome new members/renewal members
K. Evaluate the meaning of membership-purpose, cost, benefits
L. Have more activities that involve membership

What should the Friends start doing?

FINAL REPORT

START doing (continued)

VII Library and Community Partnership

A. Do something for the town (programs, scholarships, etc.)
B. Be represented on library's decision-making task forces
C. Collaborate with other organizations in town
D. Study the relationship with library staff-particularly book collections for sale
E. Push for more/better quality of library programming
F. Increase interaction with Library Board (we are all working toward same goals**)**

The Self Study Committee concentrated on three top priorities

- Define Mission
- Define Vision

- **Improve/Enhance Internal Structure (also known as Governance)**

- **Enhance and Develop Relationship with Library and Library Board**

They Friends immediately began addressing these priorities thereby paving the way for future progress

- **Clarify Mission and Goals**
  - Completed, documented, and agreed upon by the SSC

- **Enhance and Develop Relationship with Library and Library Board**
  - Friends Officers included in 2010 Library Board of Director's Retreat
  - New Library Board Chair requested participation at FORL Board Meetings
  - Friends invitation to Library Board Chair to Friends Retreat
  - Friends involved in expansion campaign and contingency planning

- **Improve/Enhance Internal Structure (Governance)**
  - Team Room (BaseCamp) established to improve communication, store documents for Friends Board, Library staff, and selected Library Board Directors
  - Library initiated training to Friends Board on the uses and benefits of BaseCamp
  - By Laws have been revised to clarify succession and establish committee structure to facilitate the Friends work
  - Friends culture is slowly changing and using technology to be more efficient in their work, expanding dialogue amongst themselves, and reaching potential members
  - Board Meetings more efficient using new Committee structure
  - Written Committee reports now requested and filed by President
  - Minutes for all meetings have been standardized and filed In Team Room
  - Board actively participating in professional Friends organization (FOCL) and attending seminars in Finance, Book Sale, By Laws

Progress and Accomplishments

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The Friends continued success will depend on the members' ability to tackle the necessary changes in culture, attitudes, and processes to move the organization forward

- No Clear Public Perception
- We need to publicize our organization so that we can increase our membership (e.g. visibility)
- Lack of visibility in community
- What membership is, clarification/define for general public
- Need to Clarify our Mission and Goals
- Internal Obstacles Within the Organization
- Not thinking outside the box
- Lack of focus
- Allowing our perceptions of our obstacles to keep us from moving ahead with our goals
- Internal conflicts on direction and book sales
- Passivity
- Acceptance with any countervailing presentation
- General attitude of "no" without analysis-how could "we" make this work
- Inertia-resisting change
- Lack of focus
- Apathy
- Overcoming individual resistance to change in organization, roles, and functionality
- Not channeling all who shows interest in FORL
- Apathy
- Getting too many distractions (e.g. operational, library expansion)
- Lack of leadership energy
- Not recruiting active members
- Not having enough volunteers
- Lack of growth in terms of recruiting new people to run the Friends
- Becoming frustrated with the process (e.g. time requirement, lack of understanding-lack of commitment)
- Creating lack of interest
- Making no progress , Not Having a Heart-to-Heart with Library Administration and Board

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Challenges

At our first retreat in 2010, the Friends Board set three goals

- Increase visibility of The Friends
- Increase membership and membership participation
- Improve Board communication and teamwork

What's Next? 2010 Goals and Beyond

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The success of the Self Study Process!

Let me take you back to our initial work and review with you what we have accomplished

(Review pages 9-17)

Know thyself.
And because of the Self Study…
WE DO!

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