

FOCL POINT

Fall Conference Draws Dozens of Friends to CCSU

Almost 80 people flocked to Central Connecticut State University in New Britain on Nov. 5, for the second Friends of Connecticut Libraries Annual Conference. They represented Friends groups at libraries throughout the state.

The four presentations and presenters were:

- Do Friends Groups Need Insurance? – Kate Houlihan, an insurance consultant for Bearingstar Insurance.....Page 1

- Defining and Achieving Our Goals – Ann Jepson, president of the Friends of the Ridgefield Library.....Page 1
- Trends in Friends Fundraising – Sally Neale, who recently received her master’s of library and information science degreePage 2
- Friends Fundraising in Connecticut – Carl Nawrocki, president of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries.....Page 3

How Friends of the Ridgefield Library Recreated Themselves

Friends groups often find that they do the same things year after year. As a result, members lose enthusiasm. It becomes difficult to find people to serve on the Friends boards.

In 2009 the nominating committee of the Ridgefield Friends had trouble finding people for key leadership posts. The committee realized that something was not working and recommended that the Friends do a self-study to explore the future of the organization and its relationship to the library board, staff and patrons.



Ann Jepson, president of the Friends of the Ridgefield Library, explains how her group took a close look at its problems.

(Continued on page 11)

Inside this issue:

Friends	4
Sharon Brettschneider	7
Boot Camp	7
ACLB	9

Do Friends Groups Need Insurance?

Kate Houlihan, a business insurance consultant for Bearingstar Insurance, provided a comprehensive talk on insurance issues for

Friends at the FOCL Fall Workshop Nov. 5.

She presented an overview of her talk as follows:

1. Different polices and coverage

2. Different types of coverage, laws and statutes

3. What might happen and why your group needs insurance

(Continued on page 5)

Research Shows Trends in Friends Fundraising

Used book sales are still the main way that Friends groups in Connecticut raise money, according to research by Sally Neale, who recently received her master of library science degree from Southern Connecticut State University. She presented her results at the Friends fall conference.

Neale began the project with the focus on the decrease in book donations to Friends groups. What causes book donations to decline? Since the Friends groups' main fundraisers are book sales, how can they support their libraries? Are there other fundraising methods to pursue?

In recent years, library budgets have been decreasing so the income from Friends is needed. Neale gathered data in a few key areas:

- The impact of technology and e-books
- The effectiveness of used book sales
- Other fundraising ideas

She surveyed Friends groups, library director/library fundraiser and library patrons.

Many of the Friends groups use technology. Email is the favorite method of communicating to the public. Regular mail, newspaper, poster/flyers, and other websites were used less often.

Do patrons donate online? According to this survey, the majority said no. When Neale asked



Sally Neale, who recently earned her master's in library science, explains the results of her research into Friends fundraisers.

why, one Friend said it was for security reasons, while others said they prefer to write a check.

The majority of Friends surveyed used online fundraising tools. Friends use the Internet to advertise events and programs, communicate with members, handle membership, sell books, publish newsletters and solicit donations. Many Friends viewed websites or blog pages as somewhat successful.

Patrons did not prefer e-books. Only 39% of library patrons said that they bought e-books in the past two years, although some said they love the convenience of e-books when

traveling. Used books are still being donated to Friends with only 3 out of 44 Friends groups reporting that donations have decreased.

Used book sales are still an effective fundraising idea and the main fundraiser for Friends groups. More than 80% of Friends income comes from these sales. Close to half the patrons said they attend the used book sale annually.

Other fundraising initiatives are: online book sales, gift sales/stores, author events, bake sales, auctions, recycling, tours/trips, antique shows, coffee shops, theme parties and family game events. Membership dues were very important to 40% and some-

Used book sales are still an effective fundraising idea and the main fundraiser for Friends groups.

what important to 49%; the rest said they weren't important.

Friends also use joint fundraising initiatives to increase advocacy for the library. Joining with the local clubs, authors, publishing companies, commercial businesses or other non-profit groups can make for very successful fundraisers.

Which Fundraisers Worked And Which Didn't?

In fall 2011, FOCL surveyed members on their successful fundraising. What resources were required, and how much profit did they make? Groups were also asked what fundraisers *didn't* work.

Forty Friends groups responded, and the results were compiled and presented by Carl Nawrocki at the Fall Conference. The data was separated into three categories based on population -- 10,000 or less, 10,000 to 50,000, and greater than 50,000 -- and again into three categories based on the following:

- Fundraisers that featured used books
- Fundraisers that were donation-based. These efforts used items other than books that the Friends got for free or for a minor up-front cost
- Other successful fundraisers. Fundraisers in this category usually require up-front costs, lots of volunteers, substantial publicity and engage the community beyond the library.

Nawrocki observed that nearly all groups that conducted a tradi-

tional used book sale do additional fundraising. Most Friends groups sell used books throughout the year using various methods. Smaller groups sell surplus used books on book carts or shelves and make \$300 to \$3,500 in profit. Some groups tie additional book sales to holidays or community events yielding profits of \$600 to \$2,500.

Larger groups with more volunteers and inventory have book walls and rooms and net profits of \$1,700 to \$39,000. One large community conducts full-time Internet sales using a great many resources and makes \$50,000. Another runs two used book stores with a full-time manager and nets more than \$120,000 a year.

The second type of fundraising -- donation-based -- usually involves items other than books, often cookie sales, silent auctions and basket raffles. Cookies sales are popular and yield \$50 to \$800. Silent auctions and raffles can bring \$1,200 to \$3,000. Both methods require a great deal of personal sollicita-

Nearly all the groups that conducted a traditional used book sale do additional fundraising.

tion to obtain the items and time setting up or creating baskets for sale.

Some of the most successful fundraising efforts have established themselves as community events, with the community looking forward to them each year. Examples of these events include: a holiday tree and wreath auction (\$8,000 net), kitchen and garden tours (\$800), an artful cooking series with a well-known chef (\$5,500), and a Bookworm Ball and Auction (\$28,000). These require up-front costs (often substantial), obtaining insurance, a huge number of volunteer hours (including a responsible chairperson or leadership) and plenty of publicity. It often takes more than one year (or occurrence) to establish them as community events.

Other groups conduct events that combine fundraising with community awareness.

Examples are: the Parade of Pooches Dog Show (\$1,000), a Scrabble challenge (\$2,500), an author luncheon (\$1,000), a 50th Anniversary Wine and Cheese Party (\$400) and the popular American Girl Tea Party (\$500).

Several Friends groups said that sales of clothing, bags and other merchandise with a library logo required up-front costs, with the return on investment taking a long time and usually producing minimal profit. Many groups reported that they would not repeat this type of fundraiser as it ties up their money for only a small return.

Used book sales and smaller, specialized book sales continue to be the major fundraisers for Friends groups. They offer a community a unique way to support the library. The fundraisers that hope to raise monies equal to the profits generated by book sales will need to have lots of volunteers and publicity, cash for up-front costs and, most importantly, the event needs to become an annual community activity.

Friends Around the State

We encourage all Newsletters editors to put us on their mailing lists so we can have a rich exchange of information to pass on to fellow Friends organizations. If you'd like to see your news here please put Friends of Connecticut Libraries, Middletown Library Service Center, 786 South Main St., Middletown, CT 06457 on your newsletter mailing list, or send by email to friendsctlibraries@gmail.com. Note: We only include events run, sponsored, or funded by Friends Groups. To make our job easier, in your newsletters, please include that information when describing events.

The Friends of the New Britain Public Library participated in their first Read-a-thon. The library hosted this event, partnering with the New Britain Reads Campaign in July. Board members and residents of New Britain also participated.

The Friends of the Meriden Public Library had the grand opening in September of their new bookstore and hosted its first book signing. Roger Kemp and Carl Stephani co-edited "Cities Going Green: A Handbook of Best Practices". Kemp is Meriden's past city manager, a trustee of the library Friends, a college professor and a prolific author of books on government and city planning. This book discusses more than 40 case studies of city planning movements designed to promote ways to create, protect, preserve, enhance and restore life in cities, towns and suburbs, especially in regard to the natural environment.

The Friends of the Watertown Library hosted a presentation by Mary-Ann Tirone Smith, a novelist and Connecticut resident. Author of 10 books, Smith is best known for her memoir "Girls of Tender Age" and "Masters of Illusion: A Novel of the Hartford Circus Fire". She also writes the Poppy Rice mysteries.

The Friends of the Mystic and Noank Library and the children's librarian had a Fall Party in October. Besides a costume parade, there was a decorated pumpkin contest. They had pumpkin pies, cookies and cupcakes, as well as raffle baskets, stories, games and a magic show!

The Friends of the Silas Bronson Library in Waterbury sponsored "Talk to the Animals", a children's program by Animal Embassy. This entertaining program takes children around the world with a unique group of rescued animals, representing diverse habitats. Animals have many ways to communicate, and naturalist Chris Evers is a master at interpreting and even mimicking many of them. Participants learn to grunt like a hippo, roar like a lion, trumpet like an elephant and more. They met live animal ambassadors such as frogs, a Cayuga duck, chinchillas, a milk snake and an iguana! Evers unraveled some of the mysteries of animal communication.

The Friends of the Killingly Public Library supported two new types of programs for adults. In the first, "Quiet Corner Reads", Killingly joined with libraries throughout the region that sponsored events based on the book "In Defense of Food".

The other was the Killingly Crafters, an informal group meeting twice a month for crafters to work on their projects.

The Friends of the Guilford Free Library sponsored "A Planet of Viruses" by Carl Zimmer. Zimmer is the author of 10 books, and hundreds of articles on science, and writes the award-winning blog "The Loom".

In July, the Friends and the Guilford Library celebrated the birthday of the town's first librarian. A party was thrown for Edith Nettleton, who turned 103! Many townspeople, including First Selectman Joe Mazza, attended and had her favorite coffee ice cream and cake.

At the Guilford Library Association's annual meeting, the Guilford Friends sponsored "Vampires in New England" with Dr. Nicholas Bellantoni. The Connecticut state archaeologist, Bellantoni, brought back the dead in a fascinating look at vampire beliefs once held by 18th century New Englanders.

The Friends of the Bethel Public Library have contributed nearly \$60,000 to the capital campaign! The unfinished new Bethel Public Library opened in July 2005. They have been work-

(Continued on page 5)

Insurance, continued

(Continued from page 1)

(Slides from her talk can be seen on the Friends of Connecticut Libraries website at foclib.org or at <http://foclib.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Do-Friends-Groups-Need-Insurance.pdf>)

It was interesting to note that personal liability insurance, which covers injury and property damage for which the insured is liable, excludes business endeavors. Volunteer activities are covered, but only for bodily injury or property damage.

Liability coverage for directors and officers provides financial protection for them if they are sued related to the performance of their company duties.

Personal or commercial liability coverage is broadly written for all operations and respects liability to third parties subject to standard exclusions.

Houlihan said volunteer service is not a defense for improper



Kate Houlihan of Bearingstar Insurance, explains insurance Friends groups might need.

acts. Many states provide immunity from prosecution if actions arise out of voluntary services in a non-profit. But state law can't provide immunity from federal statutes such as the Employee Retirement Income Security Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act or Civil Rights laws.

Her next review included duties of care, loyalty and obedience that clearly state the responsibilities and scope for officers and directors. Duties of care include the establishment and oversight of the organization's policies; approving the annual budget, ensuring that resources are expended only to further the organization's activities; securing the resources necessary to enable the organization to fulfill its mission, recruiting and evaluating board members, and establish procedures that each board member complies with duties as a board member.

The duty of loyalty includes undivided allegiance to the organization's mission and to further the best interest and mission of the organization without regard for personal gain. An example of conflict of interest is if a director has a personal interest in a transaction or would further his or her own personal investments by a specific transaction. Confidentiality is also a duty of loyalty.

The duty of obedience requires directors and officers to be responsible for carrying out the purposes of the organization as defined in the mission statement. It also requires that directors comply with the laws.

If a lawsuit occurs, the directors and officers could be sued under a few situations. It could be alleged that they breached one of the three duties of obedience. Those dealing with the organization may suffer some personal or financial injury and, in addition to seeking relief from the organization, may seek to hold directors responsible as individuals.

Lastly, directors may be personally subject to the requirements of particular statutes. If a statute is violated, directors are subject to liability in actions brought by governmental authorities.

Houlihan gave an example about liability in a public space: If you tripped on the stairs at this conference, CCSU could be liable. If you tripped on the electrical wire that Carl Nawrocki ran to the lectern, FOCL could be liable.

Houlihan presented a review of federal and state law. First, the

(Continued on page 6)

Friends, continued

(Continued from page 4)

ing nonstop to raise the remaining amount needed to finish it. Congratulations to Bethel Friends!

Friends of the Voluntown Library and the community helped support the 13th Annual Roast Beef Dinner. More than \$1,200 was raised to support the library.

Insurance, continued

(Continued from page 5)

federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997 provides that an individual who harms another by conduct engaged in as a volunteer for a nonprofit organization is not liable for and cannot be successfully sued for the harm incurred. The organization or entity can be sued, but not the volunteer. The act does not provide immunity for: 1) conduct engaged in without a license when a license was required; 2) willful criminal or reckless misconduct, which includes hate crimes, sexual offenses or civil rights violations; 3) gross negligence; 4) negligence in the operation of a motor vehicle or any other vehicle requiring insurance coverage or a license to operate, and 5) acts committed under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Under Connecticut General Statutes, officers, directors, and trustees of nonprofit organizations exempt under section 501 (c) of the Internal Revenue Code, acting in such capacity, are immune from suits brought by third parties. There is no immunity under this statute if the individual engages in reckless, willful, or wanton misconduct, or violates certain Connecticut statutes. An example would be failing to pay sales tax collected or distributing assets in violation of the certificate of incorporation.

In the final part of her talk, Houlihan turned to what coverage is available and what is needed. A commercial general

Insurance Survey

Out of 40 Friends groups:

- **85% are 501c3 non-profits**
- **The remainder obtain their non-profit status through another group (e.g. library association)**
- **76% are incorporated with the State of Connecticut**
- **14% are not registered as a charitable organization with the state**
- **56% carry general liability insurance (13 groups did not know or did not report)**
- **20% buy specific liability insurance**
- **18% buy directors and officers liability insurance – in one group the officers purchase their own**
- **Only 20% are aware of the revised Non-Stock Corporation Act**

liability policy responds only to bodily injury, personal injury, advertising injury and damage or destruction of property owned by others. It will not cover employment-related claims or claims for emotional or mental anguish.

Special events such as book sales or auctions are different than a group's usual operations. If an event is held off site, the venue may require evidence of general liability coverage.

If liquor is being served or sold you may need liquor liability coverage as well.

Also, immunity does not protect against the costs to defend;

therefore, defense coverage is critical.

In closing Houlihan suggested that coverage can be obtained from the Tenant Users Liability Insurance Program, your local insurance offices and her company's local offices.

Appropriate insurance coverage is an important issue that has many complexities for Friends groups.

We are better informed and know where and how to get assistance when needed. Her slides can serve as an excellent resource and training device for board leadership.

Sharon Brettschneider Helps Keep Your Libraries Strong

Sharon Brettschneider has been a key advocate for libraries and a strong supporter of library trustees and Friends groups in her position as director of library development for the Connecticut State Library.

She will retire Feb. 1 with 15 years' service. Sharon graciously took time out of her busy schedule to talk with FOCL Point about the many programs she oversees and her thoughts on the future of Connecticut libraries.

Most of us are probably well acquainted with several of the statewide library services under Sharon's purview. Connecticutcard allows residents to use their local library cards to borrow items from almost any public library in the state.

The Connecticut statewide delivery service transports materials that patrons request from other libraries, then pick up and return at their local libraries.

Sharon is particularly proud of the development of iCONN (www.iconn.org), a service that provides online access to library



Sharon Brettschneider, at left, director of library development for the Connecticut State Library, appeared at a fundraiser for the Connecticut Book Festival in 2010. She helped organize the festival with, from left, Dr. David W. William of the University of Connecticut; author Wally Lamb, and Kat Lyons, formerly of the Connecticut Center for the Book.

and information resources for all Connecticut residents. It equalizes access to information for small public and college libraries, she said.

Sharon's department also oversees the Library Service

Centers in Middletown and Willimantic, which provide collection support and materials for libraries as well as training facilities. Her department also administers federal funds, such as from the

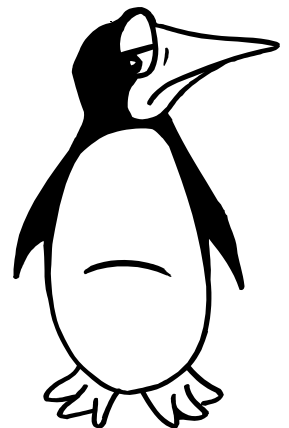
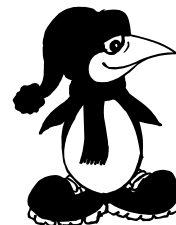
(Continued on page 8)

Save the Date for Boot Camp

FOCL is planning a morning "Boot Camp" again at the University of Hartford on Saturday, April 21, 2012. The proposed theme is "Communicating with Your Community". Some topics under consideration are:

- Small-town communications
- Marketing your Friends group
- Revving up your Facebook page

There will be nominal registration fee for FOCL group members.



Sharon, continued

(Continued from page 7)

Library Services and Technology Act, which provides services to priority populations. It also prepares statewide statistics and annual reports and gives grants through a library construction program.

Sharon views her mission as supporting libraries in all ways possible, including her work with the Association of Connecticut Library Boards. Healthy boards of trustees help set policy and budgets for libraries, and they, along with Friends, have a great potential to improve library service, she said.

The Connecticut State Library is committed to working closely with Friends groups and trustees, for example, funding a workshop on relevant topics each year.

As a member of the Connecticut Digital Library Advisory Board, Sharon sees exciting possibilities for libraries. There is already a great demand for digital books as evidenced by the large

Sharon is particularly proud of the development of iCONN, (www.iconn.org), a service that provides online access to library and information resources for all Connecticut residents.

hold lists for electronic books in the collection.

The Connecticut State Library will also continue partnering with the Library Connection consortium to help local libraries digitize their collections and offer online access through Treasure of Connecticut Libraries -- <http://cslib.cdmhost.com/ctlibs/home.php>. The state library also continues to explore the possibility of a statewide integrated library system.

While each year is a difficult funding year, Sharon said the current legislative committee of the Connecticut Library Association, (she is a past chair), has done a wonderful job of advocating for libraries. Since libraries are a small part of the overall state budget, they are always in danger of getting cut.

However, this year when Connecticut and Connecticut funding was in danger of being cut, library supporters rallied and inundated their representatives with emails and calls. Legislators are now more aware of how valuable library programs are and have had their personal connections with libraries strengthened.

Sharon doesn't have specific plans for her retirement although she is looking forward to being able to focus more on a house she and her husband are building in Maine.

She will miss her job but says it will be fun volunteering for library programs and not being the one in charge.

The Friends of Connecticut Libraries congratulate Sharon on her retirement and thank her for all she has done to support libraries in Connecticut.

Let's Honor Our Talented, Hardworking Members

The FOCL awards letter will be mailed in January, with the nomination forms listing the April deadline included.

Nominating the talented people in your organization for FOCL awards is a wonderful opportunity to recognize them and all they do for you.

Awards are presented at the Annual Meeting in June.



Library Boards, Friends Groups Succeed By Cooperating

An excellent and lively FOCL session titled “Trustees and Friends Working Together” was presented at the Association of Connecticut Library Boards meeting Nov. 10 in Hartford.

The first panelist pair was from the Lucy Robbins Wells Library in Newington -- Natalie Harbeson, president of the Friends, and Eric Rothhauser, president of board of trustees.

The second panelist pair was from the Avon Library -- Barbara Leonard, president of the Friends, and Mary Suter, president of the board. The moderator was Shani Burke Specht, vice president, ACLB.

The presentations were in two categories; 1) how boards and trustees define roles and relationships, and 2) fundraising organization and collaborations.

The Avon Free Public Library panelists described their working relationship as harmonious, with clear and defined responsibilities and cooperative leaders.

The trustees have the management oversight of the library, define operating policies, conduct financial planning and management, manage the assets of the library and allocation from the town and manage strategic and long-range planning and the library organization. One voting position on the trustees is reserved for the Friends president.

The Avon Friends provide the fundraising arm for the library, but are not responsible for capital campaigns. They raise money in various ways including author



programs are supported by the Friends. Both sets of panelists re-emphasized the important role of the library director in communication between groups. They also

luncheons. All department heads identify what they need beyond the budget, and the Friends provide that assistance. The library does not have a development office, but the library staff handles all grants.

The Newington library panelists described their board of trustees as a hybrid of town-appointed members and a non-profit corporation. They work with the town budget and manage investing and investments, development and gifts.

They both described their work together as effective. One person from the trustees attends Friends board meetings and one person from the Friends board attends the trustee's meeting, resulting in good communication. Both are non-voting positions.

Trustees also volunteer for Friends activities, such as book sales. The Friends help the trustees with fundraising.

The vice president of the Friends and the library director are key links in the communication process. Almost all library

stressed the importance of respect for boundaries between the groups. Panelists also said that if disharmony exists, both boards must agree that it is not good for library; it is vital to work on the relationship.

Two audience members talked about disharmony, and one described a joint meeting scheduled to work on the issue.

(Note: The ACLB is revising its manual in the role-definition section. The FOCL web site has some examples of memoranda of agreement between trustees and friends groups.)

The section on fundraising was mainly questions and answers.

Q: We have a problem with the annual appeal and the Friends fundraising taking place at the same time. Community members get confused. How do you deal with this?

Harbeson described a joint meeting that their Friends and trustees had at the beginning of their capital campaign. The purpose was to define roles and re-

Boards, continued

(Continued from page 9)

sponsibilities. She said membership renewal fees are the main way the Friends raise money.

“An annual appeal can make for confusion,” Rothhauser said. He believes their Friends group has a closer relationship with the town so the trustees focus mainly on planned giving and development.

Leonard indicated that the Avon Library differentiated the roles for the public regarding its capital campaign. The public knew the trustees were in charge of the capital campaign. An important result was that people gave to the capital campaign, and the number of Friends increased.

Q: It seems clearer about mission sharing, but what about vision sharing?

Harbeson said she would emphasize the library director’s role in keeping the vision sharing “front and center”. Vision-sharing

and the definition of roles took place at the beginning of capital campaigns in both Avon and Newington.

In the Newington library they have a Legacy Society that includes defined levels of giving. There is a ceremony, with people being formally inducted. Their trustees focus on planned giving.

(Important to note: Each group sees the financial records of the other group.)

Q: What percentage of Friends money do you spend each year?

Avon Friends give 75% of their budget to the library and use 25% for operating expenses. Any excess is kept in reserve for the next year.

In the beginning of their fiscal year the Newington Friends separate their funds into three categories: 1) what is given to the library; 2) what will be held for the capital campaign; and 3) excess funds.

Their operating expenses are approximately 25%.

Q: What levels of membership exist, and how did you get there?

Lucy Wells Robbins Friends have levels from \$7 (senior) to \$200 (Best Friend).

Avon Friends found levels they had been using did not work so they added a \$50-\$100 level, which increased total membership and dollars. Avon has benefits for being a member; one is a free pass to preview night for the annual book sale.

Specht asked each panelist for one point that each considers a vital contribution to advocacy and building for the future.

Rothhauser: “Advocacy is not just a Friends or trustees job, but a job for both. Knowing your story and telling your story are vital.”

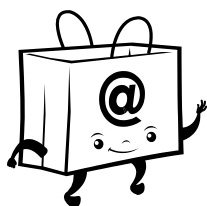
Harbeson: “Knowing your cost and numbers is vital.”

Suter: “It is vital to have defined roles for both in communication and advocacy.”

Leonard: “Capital campaigns thrust you into the role of the super advocate.”

Renew Your Membership and Be Part of New Online Directory

The new FOCL membership directory will be shifted from print to online, making it up-to-date and right at your fingertips.



This online directory will include a link from your group’s name to your library’s web site, with directions to your library.

The 2012 membership drive began in September.

We thank all who have renewed memberships. If your group has misplaced its membership form,

just download one from the web site and send with your check for \$35 to:

Friends of Connecticut Libraries, Middletown Library Service Center, 786 S. Main St., Middletown, CT 06457.

We would like to have all forms by Dec. 30 so that we can keep the online membership directory timely.

We know you do not want to miss out on any of the exciting FOCL activities planned so please take a moment and join today.

Jepsen, continued

(Continued from page 1)

The Friends board formed a self-study committee comprised of members of the Friends board, the library board, library personnel and a representative from the community. Ann Jepsen, the current president of the Friends board, was selected committee chair.

Over the next year, the committee met regularly and worked hard to “know thyself.” Members brainstormed on what they did, what they should continue to do, and what they should change or no longer do.

They determined they wanted to continue fundraising; supporting library programs, materials, and facilities; communicating with library personnel, the library board, members and the community; recruiting volunteers, and advocating for the library. They wanted to stop: seeing the organization negatively; coming up with ideas and not following through; complaining; blaming, and ignoring important issues concerning the Friends board.

Then the committee identified what they wanted to start doing. They decided that if they concentrated on the “start doing,” the “stop doing” would automatically stop. The list was divided into seven categories.

1. Document Friends mission and goals. Do something other than fundraising; Make the Friends feel more like a group you join rather than an

organization you just support with a donation. Periodically examine how they operate, and clarify their mission and goals. This category also included having a goal-setting meeting.

2. Address internal organization, included reevaluating, reorganizing and redefining committees; providing a board book for board members; spreading responsibility to more members; having written committee reports; in other words, improving/enhancing the structure of the board and board meetings.

3. Develop public relations and communications. This focused on increasing awareness and visibility of the Friends through publicity, use of technology and a redesigned Friends logo. The Friends wanted to better publicize who they are, what they do and how and why people should join.

4. Improve board efficiency and effectiveness. Use technology more efficiently, train new, and possibly current, board members, and incorporate opportunities to learn new skills.

5. Money. Have a budget and seek grants.

6. Membership. In addition to the standard “encourage people to join” and “welcome new members/renewal members” were suggestions to “evaluate the meaning of membership – purpose, cost, benefits,” to distribute membership cards, to have more activities involving members, and to increase the Friends’ visibility and involvement with the community.

7. Library and community partnership. This included increased interaction with the library board and staff, representation on the library’s decision-making task forces, and having more/better quality library programming. Also on the list were collaborating with other groups in town and possibly doing something for the town.

The self-study committee decided to concentrate on three priorities: clarify mission and goals, enhance and develop relationship with library and board, and improve/enhance internal structure (which combined categories two and three). They began by determining their reason for being, from which they developed an easily remembered mission statement: “to provide support for the Ridgefield Library and promote the library to the public.”

The committee then discussed “what the Friends aspire to be” and what that would really look like. Though they still don’t all agree, they decided they wanted “to be the model Friends in Connecticut.” This would require that they: have more members and more actively participating members; attract community leaders; make a more significant contribution to the library expansion effort, and continue to grow and learn.

Their relationship with the library and the library board has improved. Friends officers were included in a 2010 library board of directors retreat. The library

(Continued on page 12)



Friends of
Connecticut
Libraries

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and designed by
Marjorie Ruschau

Jepsen, continued

(Continued from page 11)

board chair requested to be included at the Friends board meetings and was invited to join the Friends retreat. The Friends are involved in the expansion campaign, and are working with the library to raise funds and develop contingency plans for the library.

To improve/enhance internal structure, a team room was established as a place to improve communication and store documents. Friends bylaws were updated. With the help of the new committee structure, which has fewer committees and chairs, Friends board meetings are more efficiently run. Written committee reports and standardized minutes are now filed. In addition board members have begun participating in FOCL events and attending seminars on board activities.

In August 2010, the Friends board held a 4½-hour retreat, away from the library, to set goals for the year. Using the self-study, they identified three goals: increased visibility of the Friends, increased

membership and membership participation, and improved board communication and teamwork.

Visibility in the community is being increased with articles in local e-newsletters publicizing the Friends and their events, a poster to let the community know who the Friends are and what they do and a new logo. Board communication and teamwork is improving. Membership represents a continuing challenge, though Jepsen's personal goal to get younger people on the board has succeeded in recruiting a vice president who is young, enthusiastic and technically knowledgeable.

Many challenges still exist, and the Friends continued success will depend on how they are met. Through the self-study and its follow-up, they set goals, revised and updated their bylaws, reorganized and consolidated committees, improved how they function and run meetings and redesigned their logo. By learning from the self-study and making appropriate changes, the Friends of the Ridgefield Library have made progress toward keeping their group viable, active and in a position to support their library.