Friends of libraries from numerous towns gathered at Middlesex Community College in Middletown in June to honor individuals and groups who defined what the spirit of volunteerism is all about.

Six individuals and three groups were honored for their efforts in doing everything from reviving a dormant Friends group to raising thousands of dollars in one fundraiser.

Individual Achievement
Municipalities less than 15,000
Victoria Fielding,
East Hampton Public Library
The Friends of the East Hampton Public Library became mostly dormant about 10 years ago. In January 2018, Victoria Fielding decided that the East Hampton Public Library deserved a

(Continued on page 2)

Couple Deb and Tom Morck, of the Cheshire Public Library, both received Individual Achievement Awards.
more active and robust Friends organization.

With longtime treasurer Alan Hurst, she called an organizational meeting and rallied the troops.

From that first meeting with about 10 people, she has worked tirelessly to grow this organization. Just over the past year she:

- Recruited more than 25 new members
- Organized and ran a ‘Friend-raiser’ craft swap in May
- Recruited a local attorney to rewrite the by-laws and help Friends navigate becoming a 501(c)3 organization
- Held elections for an executive board.
- Called for donations, organized volunteers and held another book sale in January, raising more than $1,000
- Fielding’s efforts on behalf of the East Hampton Public Library have been tireless.

The Friends of the East Hampton Public Library, in its robust new form, would not exist if not for her work and energies over the past year.

In receiving the award, Fields said it was nice to have the support of FOCL.

“This is very motivating,” she said. ‘Sometimes it feels as if we’re walking into the wind.”

Individual Achievement Municipalities less than 15,000

Lucia Bloom
Case Memorial Library, Orange

Lucia Bloom is one of Case Memorial’s beloved Friends members who takes her dedication to the library to a new level. She is a team player, who thinks outside the box.

Victoria Fielding was honored for reviving the East Hampton Friends.

Awards, continued

(Continued from page 1)

Lucia Bloom, of the Friends of the Case Memorial Library in Orange, has brought a creative touch to the library. Her most recent project was a Thousand Cranes, which had origami birds flying in the library rotunda.

Bloom served as president of the Case Memorial Friends of the Library from 2014-2016. During that time she:

- Created all Friends brochures and continues to improve them
- Created the annual newsletter, which she co-produces

(Continued on page 3)
Awards, continued

(Continued from page 2)

- Was the first to set up a booth at the Orange Country Fair to promote the library and the Friends

She has found new and exciting ways to get people excited about the library.

Her creative Yarn Storming project integrated storybook telling in 3D and attracted residents to the library to see the great creations. She also recruited creative members of the community to help in this project, which won a 2018 FOCL award.

Bloom’s most recent project has been the Thousand Cranes. What was an idea from the Friends evolved into an artistic installation of cranes flying in the center of the library rotunda. By bringing people together to work as a team, she made the installation work.

For the past year, the library provided Friends with a glass case for which Bloom creates eye-catching displays to promote their events.

As co-chair of the book sale, Bloom also works overtime on sorting. This past year she was able to develop displays to make books more appealing.

This March the Friends went from making more than $3,000 to making more than $7,000.

“My mom grew up in Orange when there was no library,” Bloom said. “Now it feels like we’re a mecca for the community.”

Individual Achievement
Municipalities Over 25,000
Deb and Tom Morck
Cheshire Public Library

Five years ago, Cheshire residents Deb and Tom Morck retired and started looking for a meaningful volunteer opportunity. Fortunately for the Cheshire Public Library, they chose it!

Their first gig was at the spring 2014 book sale, which totally hooked them on both the Friends and the library.

They focused on increasing revenue. They started taking credit cards, improved the organization, added a fifth day (a hugely popular Sunday Book Bag Bonanza sale) improved standards for sale materials and increased online sales.

In fiscal year 2014 the total revenue for all book sales was about $21,089; in fiscal year 2017 book sales brought in about $39,155. Thanks to these improvements and the hard work of the entire Friends group, the Friends were able to give the library more than $100,000 this year, $50,000 to buy furniture for a library renovation and another $50,000 for library programs and staff development. This is in addition to establishing a scholarship for a high school student.

Deb Morck is chair of the book sale and Tom Morck is president of the Friends.

They are incredibly dedicated and organized and are at the library many times per week to go through donations, stock the ongoing book sale shelves and manage the regular volunteer sorting sessions. They also attend FOCL meetings and visit libraries around the state to stay current on new ideas and best practices.

Under Tom Morck’s tenure, by-laws were reviewed and revised, and goals and objectives were established and are reviewed on a regular basis.

The Morcks are incredibly warm and welcoming, promoting both the Friends and the library throughout town.

Individual Achievement
Municipalities over 25,000
Gertrude "Gert" Beckwith
West Haven Public Library

Gertrude Beckwith is a founding member of the Friends of the West Haven Library and has been an active member of the library for more than 30 years. Without giving her age, suffice it to say that most people would be enjoying their retirement and their grandchildren. Beckwith does both! She is more active than ever as she serves as treasurer of the Friends. She has chaired the book sale since the beginning in 2003.

(Continued on page 6)
Friends Fall Conference
Central Connecticut State University in New Britain
Saturday, Nov. 16, 9 a.m. to about noon

Topics planned include:
♦ A speaker on group management and working with volunteers.
♦ The results of a FOCL survey and a panel discussion on community relations
♦ A short presentation about record retention

State Librarian Attends Last FOCL Meeting Before His Retirement

Connecticut State Librarian Ken Wiggin (center) talks with Frank Ridley, (left) FOCL vice president, and James Smith, the guest speaker at the annual meeting. Wiggin was attending his last FOCL meeting as state librarian before retiring from the office. He has held the position since 1998, only the 10th person in that role.

Above, Peggy Brissette, (left), FOCL treasurer, from the Mystic & Noank Library, and Jennifer Hadley, from Wesleyan University, help with the FOCL signs for the meeting.

Cyndi Shirshac, of East Hampton, seems amused by a comment from another attendee at the annual meeting.
I’ve always thought libraries and newspapers were buddies,” said author and longtime journalist James Herbert Smith. He spoke at the Friends of Connecticut Libraries annual meeting in June at Middlesex Community College in Middletown.

Smith said both do the same thing — distribute information.

Smith is retired after 50 years in journalism at The Hartford Courant, the Connecticut Post, the new London Day, the News-Times of Danbury, the Record-Journal of Meriden and the New Britain Herald.

This spring Smith edited "Opinionated Women in the Land of Steady Habits,” a collection of opinion pieces written by state women over the years.

The first was by Lydia Sigourney in 1828, published in The Courant. The poet and essayist wrote a letter to the Greeks, who wanted out of the Ottoman Empire.

“All I did was write the introduction,” Smith said of the book. “The rest was written by 63 terrific women.”

The other 62 are from 1950 and later, representing every daily newspaper in Connecticut. They include:

- Jacqueline Smith from the Danbury News-Times and the Meriden Record-Journal
- Betty Barrett and Michele Jacklin from The Hartford Courant.
- Elizabeth Curren from the New Haven Register.

One writer, Donna Larcen, left The Courant to work for the Hartford Public Library.

They write about such topics as art, fashion, nature, open government, politics, health care, sports and high society.

“There are some women in here who tried to change things,” he said. “Each singular voice is a gem. Together they are a treasure trove.”

When asked which woman he disagreed with most, he diplomatically said, “I agreed with all of them.”

When his first daughter was born in 1969 — he and his wife, Jacqueline, would go on to have 3 more daughters — he said he was determined no man would stand in her way. He wanted them to have the opportunity to play school sports school if they wanted, not be prevented as his wife was.

He also talked about his connection to libraries including a great aunt who founded a library in the town where he grew up. Later he mowed the library’s lawn and said he loved to hang out in the library’s attic of books.

He cited the Intellectual Freedom Committee of the American Library Association and the Library Bill of Rights, which says: “Libraries should provide materials and information presenting all points of view on current and historical issues. Materials should not be proscribed or removed because of partisan or doctrinal disapproval.”

Smith has also published some of his columns, “A Passion for Journalism, A Newspaper Editor Writes to His Readers,” and the novel, “Wah-say-lan, a Tale of the Iroquois in the American Revolution.”
When there is a question about the past sales, Beckwith is the go-to person. In addition, Beckwith also serves as secretary of the Village Improvement Association, the library’s volunteer governing body.

Beckwith has worn many other hats. When the membership chairperson died, Beckwith added that function to her duties until someone else stepped forward. When the secretary resigned, Beckwith took the minutes for over a year until someone else stepped forward.

She also organizes an annual volunteer luncheon. Any time there is an event, Beckwith is there to help. When the Friends decided to hold a fundraising concert, Beckwith worked with her church to obtain the venue, found someone to be the security person at no cost and, of course, sold tickets.

In just the last year, revenue from the annual book sale has increased by 135 percent. As chair of the sale, Beckwith sorts the books, sets the prices, recruits volunteers and advertises. She has held a preview night and started a second sale. She arranges pickup for those books that don’t sell. She always strives to achieve the best for the library.

Beckwith said that compared with others honored at the ceremony she felt undeserving of the award.

At book sales “I generally act as what I call ‘Mary Sunshine,’” she said, making everyone feel welcome. “When I was a child my mother said my only ambition was to read all the books in the library. I thought then, as I do now — what’s wrong with that!”

Individual Achievement
Municipalities over 25,000

Julie Konopka, Wethersfield Public Library
Julie Konopka wanted to enjoy her retirement with lots of activities and has become well-known within the Friends of the Wethersfield library. Konopka didn’t want to lead but wanted to help.

Six years ago, the Friends group was dwindling and Konopka and Carolyn Vallieres became alarmed when the president resigned with no real replacement in sight. The two stepped up and co-directed the group.

Always willing to pitch in, Konopka became treasurer after the previous treasurer died suddenly.

One of the biggest concerns was the continuing downward slide of book sale proceeds. Konopka set up a media blitz of outlets never used and ordered yard signs from a printer.

She coordinated with the library to have special bookmarks given to all patrons checking out items. They soon faced an abundance of book donations and found extra space. Within two years total proceeds went from $4,000 to $9,000.
Awards, continued

(Continued from page 6)

The Friends have about 30 dedicated volunteers for the twice yearly book sales and enlisted carpenter’s union manpower to bring boxes of books from storage.

Konopka keeps things humming, inspiring volunteers with her humor and constant search for improvements. At the November sale, she took over when Vallieres got sick. The Friends also sold books at a May Market.

With an annual volunteer appreciation celebration, the Friends have begun to attract volunteers’ attention with recognition of their help. Konopka makes them feel comfortable and, as usual, helps set up for the event.

Konopka said her affinity for books began as the result of a childhood illness.

“I started loving books when I got the chicken pox in second grade,” she said.

Focused Project
Municipalities less than 15,000
Friends of the Essex Library

On Jan. 25 and 26, the Essex Library went from being a place to check out materials, do research or listen to an interesting speaker to being a mini golf course. And the Friends of the Essex Library netted $12,000, the largest fundraiser for the library in recent years!

A planning committee was formed in March 2018 headed by Susan Hosack and Suzy Baird, with a core group of 8 to 10 volunteers. The date was set to coincide with the annual Essex Ed Parade for Groundhog Day to make the entire weekend an Essex event.

An adult event was planned for Friday evening, where a $35 ticket would get a person a round of mini golf, 2 drinks and appetizers at the 19th Hole. Saturday would be family day where a ticket ($7/ person or $25/foursome) would get a round of mini golf and snacks from the snack bar.

Business sponsors of “Putt Fore the Essex Library” paid $300 to $1,000, depending on which hole they sponsored. In total Friends raised $7,650 before the event had even started.

The biggest expense was an “over-the-street” banner to advertise the event. Other promotional materials as well as tickets were printed in house. All food and beverages were donated, and a silent auction brought in an additional $2,000.

Suzy Baird, of the Essex Library, worked with Susan Hosack and a core group of eight to 10 volunteers to organize a successful mini-golf fundraiser.

The Friday event was a huge success! People who had never been inside not only had a ball but got to see what a fabulous library Essex has. The Saturday event didn’t attract as many. However, at least two children said it was, “The best day ever!”

The committee and the entire Friends board were ecstatic at the success. They not only raised significant funds, but raised awareness of the library and had a great time doing it. The Friends plan to repeat this fundraiser in 2020.

“If you haven’t done it, don’t give us any competition but it’s really great [as a fundraiser],” Baird said.

Focused Project
Municipalities 15,000 to 25,000
Friends of the Wolcott Library

The Friends of the Wolcott Public Library Inc. are honored to present the establishment of the Krasnovsky Room, made possible by a generous donation.

In a former passageway from the main library to the children’s room, Friends commissioned local artist Deborah Weik to create a 300-square-foot original mural, which she describes as a “picture window

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into the natural wonders of flora and fauna found in Wolcott.”

Weik began six weeks of painting a floor-to-ceiling mural in early 2018. She incorporated 86 birds, mammals, insects, amphibians, trees and shrubs — the cardinal, black bear, skunk, turkey and snake — with a key to them all.

A furniture company made pint-size chairs inspired by some of the animals to complement a miniature tree table. The furniture was purchased in memory of a former employee and Friend. To tie the almost 3D mural in with the outdoors, a birdhouse was placed near the front door. The artist incorporated an outside book drop into the mural. The Friends had professional photographs taken of the mural and use three in their bookmarks.

The Krasnovsky Room is used for new releases for children and young adults. Children spread blankets on the floor with a close-up view of the mural. The Friends also purchased park benches, a colorful topped table and soft seating in the shape of logs and mushrooms.

The Friends are very proud of the library, which will celebrate 50 years in 2020. The stark outside is softened by the inviting inside, including this new mural and three others.

The Friends hosted a celebration for unveiling of this project and were overwhelmed by the number who came, including some out-of-state family members related to the memorials.

The Friends hope that commissioning these murals encourages the arts in the schools.

“I was so honored to be chosen to do this for our library,” Weik said. “I saw how much the Friends do on a daily basis and I was so impressed.”

**Group Municipalities 15,000 to 25,000 Friends of the Scranton Memorial Library, Madison**

At a time when the Scranton Memorial Library needed their support most, the Scranton Library Friends stepped up, created a new program to raise money, enhanced their (and thus the library’s) visibility and brought the community together. Their
innovation and advocacy on behalf of the Scranton Memorial Library is the reason for this award.

Over the past year the Scranton Library has undergone extreme change. An expansion and renovation project finally broke ground, and the library moved out of its historic downtown building to a smaller space for an expected 1½ to 2 years.

To save money during construction, the town dramatically cut its contribution to the library, assuming a staff reduction. This resulted in much deeper cuts, and the library had to significantly reduce staff, hours, databases, book budgets and programming.

As planning moved forward, the director resigned weeks before the move. The Friends responded by nearly doubling their usual contribution. Friends helped staff clean out crawl spaces and attics that had been used for 100 years as storage. The Friends also had their own move to deal with, finding a place to store and sort books. They found temporary space in downtown Madison and continued pop-up book sales there. The Friends rebranded with new colors and a fresh logo. They work with the library to support programs.

Their new co-president also serves on the board of trustees and participated in the search for a director.

And they also embraced new fundraising: a concert series by two talented sisters from the local high school, Aimee and Claire Chang.

Their three concerts and a GoFundMe account they set up for the library helped raise more money.

Friends of the Scranton Library in Madison have had to scramble as their library closed for a massive renovation. Shown above are Interim Library Director Laura Downes, Carolyn Guenther and Betsey Piner.

It’s Time To Renew Your FOCL Membership

Your membership enables FOCL to compile and share information on all aspects of Friends groups (fundraising, programming, advocacy, membership, volunteering, organization, etc.) through newsletters, workshops, conferences, meetings, the web site and advisory visits to new Friends groups.

Members receive discounted conference registration, the newsletter and group listing in the directory and calendar. Individual donations may be tax deductible.

At the end of August, printable forms and online renewal will be available at the FOCL web site at foclib.org/join-us. to save trees, FOCL will send online renewal notices at the beginning of August. Members who renew early online will not receive a paper renewal form.

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Friends groups — $60 per year
Individual/Institutional — $25-$100, with additional donations and sponsorships welcome. For individuals or organizations, such as libraries, consortia, and businesses, who recognize and appreciate the value of libraries and want to support the Friends library network throughout Connecticut.
Auction Group Offers To Sell Friends’ Rare Books

Calling all Friends groups with antique books to sell!
Has Connecticut River Book Auction ever got a deal for you!
Founder Tom Gullotta will collect antique books from library Friends and auction them Oct. 18 in an all-library sale. Profits, after expenses, will go back to Friends.
The auction organization began as a charity fundraiser 10 years ago.
Auctions are now held every other month.
“Everything we earn after expenses we give away to charity,” Gullotta said, speaking March 23 at the Friends of Connecticut Libraries Fundraising Expo at the University of Hartford.
First Friends have to cull through donations and find ones that may be worth more than $50. To find a book’s worth, Gullotta suggests looking it up on Amazon.com or Abebooks.com.
Look for the lowest price listed. If your book doesn’t have a dust jacket, it’s worth less. Don’t look at the condition, he said.
His buyers generally fall into two categories: those looking for the cheapest and those looking for unique. People are looking for deals, he said.
At the auctions, held at the South Congregational Church in Glastonbury, a book valued on one of those sites for $75 will probably net you $25 to $40. However, you aren’t paying commission or having to sell it yourself.
But if you have a book you think is more valuable than Gullotta does, he doesn’t begrudge you selling it yourself. And books that he comes across worth more, he will turn over to New England Book Auctions in South Deerfield, Mass., which has buyers looking for more expensive books.
“Our organization does well with books up to about $3,000 to $4,000 and then people put their hands in their pockets,” he said.
Gullotta said he needs your books by July or August for the October sale. You could group books in lots of a dozen. Books published after 1980 are essentially without value at the auctions.
It’s hard to tell what will sell well, he said.
“You have to figure if you’ll do better at your own sale,” he said. Recently he had 3,000 to 4,000 mystery books that sold for just $150 total. But a signed book — that’s another story.
An autographed “Stephen King will always sell,” he said.
Friends of the Farmington Library recently used Connecticut River Book Auction to sell some antique books and got one quarter of the price they were listed for on Abe Books.
“I’d rather sell them [for that] than not sell them at all,” said Linda Chapron of Farmington.
The most important thing he needs, Gullotta said, is the name and address of someone to mail the check to, which will be made out to your Friends group.
If you advertise the October auction in your towns, he said it could turn into an annual moneymaker for all libraries.
Contact Gullotta at tpgullotta@aol.com or (860) 908-8067.

Looking for a Non-Book Sale Way To Raise Money for Your Library?

The Friends of Connecticut Libraries hosted a free fundraising expo March 23 at the University of Hartford to give groups ways to raise money for libraries.
“In all the conferences we have had we hear people say they would like to have fundraisers that are non-used book sales,” said Carl Nawrocki, an organizer from the Salem Friends.
His group raises 30 percent of their funds by something other than book sales. Other fundraisers suggested included:
• Silent auction
• Antiques show
• Ice cream social
• Dining for dollars, with a percentage from a night at a local restaurant to go to the Friends
• Indoor yard sale. Whatever is left can be sold at the next outdoor sale.
• Savers.com. Collect clothing and household items, deliver the items to a Savers.com site and they will pay you — fundrive.saverson
• Seasonal plant sale
• Hand-knit sale. Items made with donated yarn
• Discounts with Connecticut Library Consortium, such as discounted tickets for Goodspeed Opera House or tote bags or computer flash drives that can be bought at a discount and resold.
F ore! Make way for miniature golf inside your library!

Library Mini Golf will come to your library and bring an entire 18-hole course to put inside, said Rick Bolton, co-founder of the small company.

It will also supply putters, balls and pencils. Staging a mini-golf fundraiser brings in younger families, Bolton said.

It helps to have a few teenagers assist with setup, he said. But on the day of the event, just two people are needed to take the fee and hand out equipment. The event is better if held while the library is open.

“We've never had a complaint,” Bolton said.

Library Mini Golf was founded in 2005 in Trumbull as a fund-raiser for libraries hurt by Hurricane Katrina. Someone talked about staging a “Gulf” event and one member misheard and thought they said a “golf” event.

They discarded any idea for an outdoor golf tournament. Instead they came up with this idea and raised $10,000 for the Waveland, Miss., library.

Since then they’ve thrown 450 events in 25 states and raised about $5 million. Library groups usually raise $10,000 to $15,000 per event, Bolton said. The record is a small town that raised about $40,000.

Connecticut libraries that have staged mini-golf events include South Windsor, Durham, Stamford, Bethany, Essex, Derby and Ellington.

These events also draw positive media coverage to the library, he said.

Money is raised in five ways:

1. **Title sponsor** — Fund-raisers must find 1 or 2 companies to give enough money to cover his fee and costs of $2,495. Then the event is named after that company. Getting a title sponsor isn’t hard, Bolton said, recommending asking a local utility. “If you call six businesses who have had full-page ads in the paper, I guarantee you will get one to sponsor you,” he said.

2. **Hole sponsors** — Solicit companies to sponsor each hole, with the agreement they will be able to advertise at that hole. Bolton recommends charging one-eighth the cost of a full-page advertisement in the local paper.

   “When it comes to who to ask, get someone who has not given your library money before,” he said.

3. **Silent auction** — Solicit donations from sponsors. It’s best to have certificates for special services such as an accountant offering a free tax return for a new client, a lawyer offering a free will for a new client, a dentist offering dental work.

4. **Playing fees** — Bolton recommends fund-raisers charge $3 to $5 per player. As for what the minimum age is, he said “As long as they can walk.”

5. **Food service** — Beverages and snacks. If your group doesn’t want to prepare their own, arrange for someone to cater it or for a food truck to be parked outside, with a fee going to the fund-raiser.

   “You don’t always make money on this but if you don’t do this, you will lose people,” Bolton said.

For information about Library Mini Golf, contact Bolton at 203-375-3432 or RBolton7272@gmail.com.
If you're looking for a different type of fundraiser, or maybe something to hold along with your book sale, the director of the Berlin-Peck Memorial Library has a jewel of an idea.

The library organized a Baubles and Bling sale in December, just in time for people shopping for holiday presents, said Helen Malinka, director. It netted them $1,500 for a 5-hour sale.

She explained the idea at FOCL’s March Fundraising Expo.

About two months beforehand they advertised for donations of old jewelry. Fliers placed in town hall, schools and stores pulled in about 800 items.

These had to be sorted, cleaned and, in some cases, discarded, which was the time-consuming part, Malinka said.

Items were placed in small plastic bags bought at a craft store, with a sticker saying what was in each bag: necklace, bracelet, etc. A colored dot sticker placed on each bag indicated whether the price was $1, $3, $5 or $10.

It helps to have someone who knows jewelry look to make sure there is not some really valuable donation, she said. Valuable pieces were sold on consignment by a local jewelry store.

In the weeks leading up to the sale, some items were displayed in the library to generate interest. Also, the staff, including the janitor, modeled some for the library's Facebook page. And they placed an ad in the local paper.

For the sale, bags were placed on tables. Two people staffed the checkout table and two staffed each other table.

The first sale was so successful that the library planned to hold another before Mother's Day — just in time for more shopping.