

FOCL POINT

Friends Gather To Honor Year Of Triumphs



Barbara Leonard, president of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries, presents an award to Karla Umland of the Bill Memorial Library in Groton.

Friends groups from libraries from around the state were honored in June when the Friends of Connecticut Libraries gathered at Middlesex Community College in Middletown for their annual meeting.

Libraries ranged from Babcock Library in small-town Ashford in the east to the Meriden Public Library in a city downtown near the center of the state to the Milford Public Library in the west near the shore of Long Island Sound.

In the past year Friends chapters have been formed in libraries in Berlin, Granby and Middlefield,



Barbara Leonard presents an award to the Friends of the Mystic and Noank Library: Peggy Brissette, President Sally Salancy and Roger Richards.

said the president of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries, Barbara Leonard. And the group has kept up close contact with the State Library, the

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Author and college professor Sally Allen

Author Started as Fan of Books, Now Helping Others Enjoy Them

Author Sally Allen has always loved books. As a child her mother scolded her and her siblings for reading while they were driving through Italy.

Allen shared this love of books and how she

learned to look at them in a deeper way at the Annual Meeting of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries in June at Middlesex Community College in Middletown. She told how it all lead up

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Awards, continued

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Connecticut Library Association and the Association of Connecticut Library Boards.

And then, it was time for the awards.

Group Award Municipalities Less Than 15,000 Friends of the Mystic & Noank Library

The Friends of the Mystic & Noank library had an outstanding year. Their collective contributions in virtually every



Chris Johnson, director, Mystic and Noank Library

aspect of library business including — fundraising, patron outreach, family programming, community-building and marketing — puts this group's effort far above the norm and makes them truly worthy of an award.

The Friends A (above average) team consists of 25 men and women. A subset of the group, known as the "Cellar Dwellers,"

convene each week to sort, catalog and price books for future book sales.

They also list specialty items on Ebay for resale. In June and December, books are hauled up from the basement.

Six times a year, several volunteers copyedit the eight-page newsletter (Bookends) and ready the 2,000 hard copies for distribution.

The library is proud of the varied programs offered throughout the year.

Key among them has been All Things Pumpkin, a harvest celebration with stories, crafts, special visitors and treats for all. The Friends welcomed 100 guests to the library for the afternoon.

The library often hosts school groups for special programs. The Friends serve as tour guides and library cheerleaders.

The Friends won the "Best Community Group" in 2015 in the Mystic Irish Parade for their library book cart drill team.

The pinnacle of the Friends annual volunteer efforts is the Annual Library Fair, held the first Saturday in June. Friends seek donations from local businesses of items or gift certificates for the Fair's Silent Auction.

In addition, they hold a white elephant sale, arrange for food and beverage donations, organize a bake sale and hire entertainment



Cindy Curry, president, and Sue Harkness, both of the Friends of the Babcock Library in Ashford, accept an award for their successful fundraiser.

for the family friendly event. The Friends have held 35 consecutive fairs.

Most critical to the library is funding for special programming expenses, materials, and educational supplies. In March the Friends agreed to subsidize a new summer yoga and art program for \$600. The Friends make significant gifts to the library fund twice a year and have done so for decades.

"Without the Friends' support ... I don't think we'd be able to serve the community," said Chris Johnson, library director.

Focused Project Municipalities Less Than 15,000 Friends of the Babcock Library, Ashford

Friends of the Babcock Library orchestrated a Gifts of the Vine:

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Awards, continued

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Wine and Spirit Tasting, Art Sale and Show. This major fundraiser heightens awareness of the library by attracting and involving the community.

"We've enjoyed doing this and it provides this wonderful opportunity for our community," said Cindy Curry, their new president, in accepting the award.

Ashford is fortunate to have access to a lovely property, the Church Farm Center, owned and operated by Eastern Connecticut State University. The Babcock Friends plan collaboratively with Donna Snell, CSU administrative assistant at ECSU. The connection brings both student workers and ECSU employees to Gifts of the Vine. The owner of Ashford Spirit Shoppe graciously provides a

The Wine and Spirit Tasting at the Babcock Library in Ashford has been called "The Ashford event of the year."

variety of wines for tasting through various distributors. Attendees are able to order wines at a discounted cost with 10% of the sales going to the Friends. Another distiller in Ashford offers brandy tastings.

The day before the event, a team of Friends of the Babcock Library gathers at the Ashford Senior Center to prepare the food that is offered at the event. The food has been rated "fabulous."

On the day of the event, the barn houses the art show. Ten to 15 local artists show a variety of works including braided rugs,

pottery, quilts and paintings. A local band provides music.

The setting is bucolic, and attendees have a wonderful afternoon tasting wine, viewing art, listening to music, bidding on silent auction items and enjoying the delicious appetizers.

The event adds about \$4,000 to the Friends of Babcock's budget. It has been called "The Ashford event of the year."

Focused Project Municipalities Less Than 15,000 Friends of the Bill Memorial Library, Groton

Their revitalized Friends group had fond memories of a haunted house held at Bill Memorial Library for several years, the last time in 2008. Inspired by the fun that their families had in the past,

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FOCL President Barbara Leonard chats with an attendee from Waterbury before the meeting.

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.

Friends of the Bethel Public Library recognizes that a library has to change with the times to meet the demands of the community it serves. In 2014 a Friends grant was used to buy E-readers for the library. Keeping pace with the ever-changing world of technology, in 2015 the Friends helped to buy a 3D printer for the library's Maker Space.

This summer, the Friends presented a special program: Cuba – Birds, Bath, and Beyond. Included were photos, stories and more from Tia Murphy's travels, Cuban cuisine to sample and a variety of books on Cuba to buy.



Friends of the Guilford Free Library supported two new initiatives in 2015. The children's room added a Makerbot mini 3D printer, which enables children to



learn the design elements of 3D printing and take home their own

creations. Adult and teen services added a collaborative work area that includes four workstations and storage shelves, two mobile tables and eight chairs, all devoted to advanced technological projects. As a result, new programs have been offered that make use of the new space.

Friends of the New Britain Public Library filled a display case at the main library with spring things to celebrate the end of winter with all the things that



make us love spring: birds and baseball (welcome, New Britain Bees!), flowers, golf, and, of

course, the Friends April Book Sale.

In September, the Friends will invite friends to join them at Trinity on Main for "Literary Libations," a night of fun, including a local author showcase, finger food and drinks to promote and raise funds for the library.

Friends of the Watertown Library held a spring luncheon at Vasi's Restaurant in Waterbury. Sheree Marcucci, marketing and public relations officer for the Palace Theater in Waterbury, shared information on all the wonderful events happening now and coming soon to

the theater. A behind-the-scenes tour of the theater is in the Friends' future.



In the fall, the Friends

will be trying a new fundraiser: selling LC Priesters Pecans, gourmet quality pecans from a business in existence for 70 years.

Friends of the Cheshire Public Library recently sponsored a program titled "How to Attract Hummingbirds, Songbirds & Butterflies to Your Garden."



They also sponsored a program called "The Healing Power of Meditation," on using meditation to improve physical, mental and spiritual health.

Friends of the Babcock Library in Ashford will be holding a fundraiser Sept. 10 at the Church Farm on Route 89. For \$30 participants can enjoy the Gift of the Vine wine and spirit tasting from 3 to 5 p.m., an art show in the barn, a silent auction, music by the Quiet Corner Fiddlers, delicious food and 7 tables under the tent with wines, beer and spirits. For more informa-

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Friends, continued

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tion or tickets call Sue Harkness at 860-429-2822.

Friends of the Mystic and Noank Library held their Annual Spring Fair on June 4. Of course there was a book sale, which lasted through the following Saturday. But there was a lot more. In early May they opened the silent auction, which culminated on Fair Day. They also partnered with the Mystic Garden Club, which sold plants and garden accessories and donated the total proceeds to the Friends. And then there was the fudge, the soup, the bake table, live music, the Mystic Garland Dancers, and, for the younger crowd, glitter tattoos, face painting and make-your-own bookmarks. And the final day of the book sale was also the final day of a raffle for a two-night stay at Spicer Mansion, a luxury historic boutique inn in Mystic. (By the way, on the Monday after the book sale ended, the leftover books were carted away by the Friends of Salem Library.)



Volunteers and others, above, enjoy the fudge for sale at the Mystic and Noank Library Spring Fair.

Paperback books are ready for sale at the Spring Fair.



Taking Some Time To Compare Notes

Members of the Milford Library Friends, from left, Anne Bolin, Marion Morra and Karuna Kasbawala, and their library director, Chris Angeli, chat between sessions at the FOCL Annual Meeting.

Awards, continued

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the newly elected Friends executive board started envisioning and planning a haunted library tour for 2015.

First the executive board built a team that was excited to produce a haunted library experience. They envisioned an event suitable for a PG-13 audience.

"It's an old library and becomes spooky very quickly," said Karla Umland, of their Friends.

Dramatically inclined high school students from a couple of local towns met at the library several times, creating a script and planning the scenes for each stop on the tour. The library staff and their families also got involved as actors and guides.

In the meantime, the Bill Memorial Library teens group produced a short video trailer to the haunted library tour. Through

a grant, the young adults used a digital camera to take photos of the historic library building. Using filters, music, and video effect, the result was a creepy preview of the event. The short video event went out to the Bill Memorial Library website and Facebook page. It reached more than 600 people.

"We really have to give a lot of credit to the kids," Umland said.

Not only did the Friends bring various segments of the community together to plan the haunted library, they also brought the neighborhood together on the night of the event itself. On the library grounds, the Friends set up a campfire, refreshments and a creepy tableau for photo opportunities.

Many people saw the publicity and planned ahead to attend. In addition, quite a few people noticed the activity outdoors as they were walking through the neighborhood. They were drawn to the welcoming environment and decided to take the tour.

Some guests enjoyed it so much that they went on the tour multiple times.

The result was that 95 tickets were sold. The Friends made roughly \$475. More importantly, it solidified the Friends of the Bill Memorial Library as a community entity, and everyone had a lot of fun.

"It brought the neighborhood together," Umland said.

"They raised funds but more importantly helped publicize the library," said FOCL's Carl Nawrocki, in presenting the award.

Group Award Municipalities Between 15,000 and 25,000 Friends of the Southbury Library

The Southbury Public Library was faced with two potential disasters. One would have dramatically curtailed some of the

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Save the Date!

**Annual Friends Conference
Central Connecticut
State University
New Britain**

Saturday, Nov. 19

**Proposed topics:
Membership
E-sales**



The breakfast buffet line of fruit and bagels is always popular at the Annual Meeting.

Awards, continued

(Continued from page 6)

library's most appreciated programs and the other could have shut the building down.

The first was the decision by the fire marshal and the building inspector to ban the use of the basement for the Friends book sales on the grounds of public safety.

Book sale profits support a range of popular programs and events beyond the library's budget.

The second was the evidence that the building boilers were unlikely to make it through another winter.

The first selectman attempted to take a million dollar gift given to the library and use it for the town's general fund. The Friends raised \$5,000 for a defense fund to protect the investment gift.

When the chairman of the board of finance appealed to the library board and the Friends of the Library, architects were hired to prepare a plan to satisfy fire and building safety codes. The Friends raised and gave \$7,000 for this plan.

The Friends pledged \$100,000 for the boiler and basement repairs. To date, \$34,500 has been raised, primarily by their "Books for Heat" special book sales.

The full \$100,000 wasn't needed because the boiler could be repaired rather than replaced.

The Friends of the Southbury Library have had a banner year, and the town of Southbury issued a



Jeff O'Sullivan of the Friends of the Southbury Library, thanked FOCL for the award the group received.



Also accepting the award from the Southbury Friends were Edgar Mills, Chris Tolley, Deborah Mills, and O'Sullivan.

proclamation in praise, which read, in part:

Whereas: The Friends of the Southbury Public Library are the principle provider of funds for sponsoring Children, Teen, and Adult programming at the library and
Whereas: The Friends have demonstrated their ability to step up in times of need, providing funding and leadership for a library Task Force, Engineering studies, Building programs, Legal Guidance and
Whereas: The Friends have built one of Connecticut's premier Library Book

Sales programs and
Whereas: As stewards of the library, the Friends have provided physical and emotional support beyond measure to the Library Board and.
Whereas: The Friends have built exemplary programs for young people to volunteer with community service in support of the library.

"They all should be getting medals for going above and beyond," Nawrocki said in presenting the award.

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Group Award Municipalities Over 25,000 Friends of the Meriden Library

The Friends of the Meriden Public Library have supported library services in Meriden for 30 years. The Friends operate a book store in the library for about 33 hours a week, usually year round.

However, for the last year, the support by the Meriden Friends has been extraordinary. Due to issues facing the library, the Friends have donated more than \$40,000 to the Meriden library!

This included their typical annual giving of more than \$4,000 to children's programming and more than \$3,000 for museum pass memberships. The balance of their donations can only be described as awesome.

The Meriden Library responded to a call for a rally in support of state funding for libraries by paying for a mini-bus to carry supporters from Meriden to Hartford and back. A dozen Meridenites dressed in red, rode to our capitol. Bolstered by the number of constituents attending the rally, a local legislator spoke in support of libraries, one of just a dozen who did so.

Also this year, after years of planning and lobbying for funds, a library renovation was coming to fruition. The renovation included several areas of the library. However, funds from the city and state were insufficient to replace the 40-year-old reference desk



FOCL President Barbara Leonard congratulates representatives from the Meriden Library Friends, David Skinnon, library director Karen Roesler, Joan Edgerly and Frank Ridley.

area, which was shabby and in need of repair.

"We were improving our circulation desk and entrance, and it just made the reference desk look terrible," said Karen Roesler, library director. "I just mentioned it and they came forward with a check to pay for it."

The Friends came through with a check for \$27,800 for a custom-made desk about 18 feet long and 3 feet wide.

Although it is important to acknowledge the financial support that the Friends provide to the library, the wonderful collaboration that exists between the Friends and the library board demonstrates the best of what a Friends group does for the community.

Group Award Municipalities Over 25,000 Friends of the Milford Library

Since their inception in 1981. The Friends of the Milford Public Library have been responsible for funding all library programs including summer reading, cultural, and educational programs and special events.

But, in late 2014, many of the Friends' executive positions were vacant. The Friends started an awareness campaign to attract both members and leaders. This campaign resulted in a re-energized group. They focused on the following:

- Enhancing the Friends and the library's visibility in the community.

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Advocacy, continued

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- Building a more cohesive, inclusive membership so that members felt more of a connection to the group and increased their investment
 - Including high school students
- New programs included:
- Coordinating the construction, maintenance, and stocking of three "little libraries" throughout the city, plus a "Commuter Take a Book" shelf at the local train station
 - Soliciting community donations and assembling "Welcome to

Milford" packets for new residents and library users

- Projects aimed at high-schoolers including book awards for juniors at five public and private high schools in Milford and organizing an oral history project for high school students to coordinate, conduct and record interviews with artists involved in the City of Milford's permanent arts collection
- Expanding their book sale to include two large community events
- Instituting a greeter table in the library lobby and arranging monthly meet-ups, "Fridays with Friends" for Friends members and

trips to area museums and attractions

- Organizing a schedule of monthly news stories or press events to increase visibility in the community and reinstituting their newsletter
- Re-organizing membership procedures so that every member is personally contacted about membership, renewals and getting involved in the organization.

These new initiatives have brought an energy, excitement and interest to the Friends group and to the library. They have made the group a welcoming organization.

"We just have so much fun," said Anne Bolin, Milford Friends president, in accepting the award.



Friends of the Milford Library were honored for re-energizing their group. Accepting the award are, from left, President Anne Bolin, Kathy Goldbach, Cheryl Cappiali, Marion Morra and Karuna Kasbawala.

Author, Continued

(Continued from page 1)

to her book, "Unlocking Worlds: A Reading Companion for Book Lovers."

"Once I was almost sent home from a friend's 8th birthday party because I was sitting in a corner reading a book," Allen said.

And as a teen, she said, "the one time in my life in high school when I cut school it was because I wanted to spend the day in the library."

Growing up in Queens, N.Y., the library was like a second home for Allen. She remembers the moment when she learned to read in first grade as the instant words suddenly made sense. And those books could take her anywhere.

"I was going to London with Mary Poppins and Sara Crewe," Allen said. Characters in books taught her to grow, how to listen and how to have patience.

She always had to have a book with her, and still does. Two years ago she said she tore a rotator cuff taking 25 books on a summer vacation. She got an e-reader but said she still likes printed books.

But Allen had a shock when she took her first college literature course — and hated it! It wasn't the books but that the professor actually analyzed them instead of just appreciating them.

So Allen searched for another major, eventually getting her bachelor's degree in political science and history.

Along the way she took another course and read "Love in



Author Sally Allen sells and signs her book, "Unlocking Worlds: A Reading Companion for Book Lovers" at FOCL's Annual Meeting.

a Time of Cholera" by Gabriel García Márquez. She was amazed and surprised by how much words could do that she never realized before.

"It brought me back to literature and made me a better reader," Allen said. She finally understood that "loving a book doesn't have to be separate from understanding how they work."

And when she read Ernest Hemingway's "A Farewell to Arms" and studied World War I at the same time, she suddenly understood how the book brought the war alive for her. Studying books more closely deepened her understanding of herself and the world.

Allen eventually got a master's degree in English language and literature and a PhD in English education. She teaches communications today at Pace University in New York. Her

graduate thesis was on how books change us.

"I feel as if it's almost a cellular level change," she said.

Now reading takes a long time for her because she really wants to understand every word.

Allen is not one to make notes in her books the way she used to.

And when she writes, it is by hand in a notebook, the way she did as a child.

"On a computer I want it to be perfect so that slows me down," Allen said. But writing by hand helps her isolate her thoughts.

And her husband and son know if they can't find her in their Westport home it's because she's working at the desk that she's hidden away in a closet.

Allen said she finds the quiet helps her. But if she decides it's too quiet, she just might pop on some Baroque music, finding it the kind of music that inspires her.

Ever Wonder What Goes On at a Typical Regional Meeting?

About a dozen active Friends from six libraries in the southeastern/central regions of Connecticut filled a conference room of the Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester on Saturday, May 21.

Three participants were also members of the FOCL Board.

The meeting was organized to provide a place for representatives of various Friends groups to discuss and exchange ideas of mutual interest.

After the usual table introductions, discussion began and continued for about two hours. Topics covered included:

- Membership mailings – annual donation appeal or membership drive, where to get or how to develop a distribution list
- Getting volunteers – recognize that there are three levels:

donors, workers and leaders. Make sure to have jobs for workers and to follow up with people who offer to work. Act as salespeople, and remember that most people volunteer because they are asked in person

- Advertising and publicity – make sure Friends get credit for events they sponsor and the items they pay for (announcements and signs), post notices in local newspapers and on Facebook
- Book sale pricing, sorting, publicity including print and social media, using credit cards, disposing of leftovers, occasional theft
- Other fundraising ideas – indoor golf tournament, flower bulb sale, combining book sale with other attractions such as a plant sale, a silent auction or white elephant sale

Also brought up for discussion and being considered for inclusion at a future FOCL conference were the following topics:

- The difference between association and town-run libraries; state and town laws regarding funding of association libraries; and how Friends groups differ as a result
- Insurance needed, or recommended, for Friends groups
- IRS reporting requirements for Friends groups
- State legal requirements for Friends groups in regard to registering as non-profit corporations, paying sales taxes, etc.

Participants decided the meeting was useful and agreed that another regional meeting should be planned for next spring.



And the Winner Is ...

Gail Dunnrowicz reads the names of raffle winners, who won everything from flowers to the traditional 10 pounds of chocolate.



Friends of
Connecticut
Libraries

Middletown Library Service
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We're on the web!
www.foclib.org/

Newsletter edited
and designed by
Marjorie Ruschau

It's Almost Time To Renew Your FOCL Membership!

Join with other Friends groups, libraries, and library advocates to support FOCL's work on behalf of Friends groups throughout Connecticut.

FOCL compiles and shares information on fundraising, programming, advocacy for libraries, membership, volunteering and group organization through its newsletters, workshops, conferences, meetings, website and advisory visits to new Friends groups.

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

Please take time to join or renew your membership when the annual group and individual/



institutional membership forms arrive in the mail at the beginning of September.

Printable forms and online renewal will also be available at the FOCL web site at <http://foclib.org/focl-membership>.

Membership Categories

Friends Groups Membership — \$50 per year. For Friends groups supporting a particular library, be it public, academic or special interest.

Individual/Institutional Membership — \$15-\$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 wish to support the Friends library network throughout Connecticut.)

