

FOCL POINT

When Library Friends Gather, There's Bound To Be Talk



At least that was the case at the FOCL Fall Conference at Central Connecticut State University in November with, clockwise from upper left, Chris Klemmer of Granby, FOCL board member Janice Hollywood of Waterbury, Sally Cabrera of Cheshire and Carl Nawrocki, a FOCL board member from Salem.

What Do Library Directors Want From Your Friends Group?

What do library directors want from Friends groups?

Yes, they appreciate the money you raise but value your voices almost as much.

They want you to speak up for libraries, whether it is to your neighbor, your town council, your

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Friends, Libraries Urged To Reach Out to Communities

Libraries or their Friends sometimes survey people inside their building as to what to offer.

But Jean Canosa Albano, assistant director for public services for Springfield City Library in Massachusetts, said they need to turn outward to offer what is really important to their communities.

For example, a park in Springfield that paid tribute to basketball was closed for repairs, its glass panels boarded up. When the library held a community meeting, residents said they felt as if the city didn't trust them not to destroy the panels. After this information was relayed to city officials, the park was completely reopened.

Meetings like that help libraries work with their communities to take action. Libraries become more relevant to residents because they helps them deal with issues facing them.

To organize these meetings it's important to:

- Focus on shared goals not problems
- Find a sense of common purpose
- Build a foundation for future action
- Realize that reaching out is part of ongoing work, not a one-time effort

What Springfield found was that "people want a safe, vibrant community with strong schools, diverse leadership, a high quality

of life and lots of places for residents to gather," Albano said.

"But they're concerned that violence and fear, lack of understanding between institutions and community members and limited opportunities for young people are undermining their aspirations for their community."

So the library offered programs on gun safety at home, how to set up a neighborhood watch, conflict resolution and nonviolent mediation.



Laura Riley of Simsbury listens to Albano's talk.

"As people talk about these concerns, they talk about a lack of trust in authority and in city institutions," she said.



The Springfield City Library in Massachusetts realized it needed to turn outward to offer what is really important to the community, said Jean Canosa Albano, the library's assistant director for public services.

"They mention that there are no safe places to gather, and that too often the positive things that are happening in their community aren't celebrated.

"They say we need to focus on building leadership opportunities for young people, to help prepare the next generation of diverse leaders. They want reasons to be outside in the community, more opportunities for young people, more intergenerational events and more mentors."

So the Springfield Library offered a harvest festival and an open mic night for teens and young adults.

They also organized a photo project called "When Strangers Become Friends." People in the library who didn't know each other were asked to pose together

Thirty Libraries Represented at FOCL's Fall Conference

About 80 people representing 30 different libraries flocked to Central Connecticut State University in New Britain in November for the ninth Friends of Connecticut Libraries Fall Conference.

Welcoming them and thanking them for their advocacy for libraries was Carl Antonucci, CCSU library director.

"Our goal here at Central is to break down the walls of the academic library and connect with the community," he said.

Connecticut State Librarian Ken Wiggin presented bad news from the state.

After the General Assembly passed a budget, it looked as if libraries would end up with the same amount they had last year, which was still down from several years ago, Wiggin said. But several areas left to the governor's discretion were cut including the state library, cut by 7 percent.

Because of this the state will cut:

- Delivery services between libraries
- Payments to communities for letting out-of-towners use libraries



Connecticut State Librarian presents the bad news about cuts to library funding.

Also, the access the State Library gives library patrons to such popular magazines as Consumer Reports and People and to professional journals for students working on research through www.researchitct.org might have to be cut.

Federal money that the state expected might be cut if state money doesn't meet federal standards.

And he warned that these state budget issues will continue to exist for the next three to five years.

Reach Out

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for photos. That seemed to break down barriers between people.

Just like their libraries, Friends groups can question community needs to learn what to offer.

The Libraries Transforming Communities program was devised by the American Library Association as a way to strengthen librarians' roles as community leaders and change-agents. The slogan for the program is, "Because our divided nation needs conversation more than ever."

An explanation of the program and information on how to use techniques described in your library are available on the association's website under tools. Another way to get to the site is by searching the Internet for "Libraries Transforming Communities."

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 Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington and the GFWC Newington/Wethersfield Woman's Club co-



sponsored a Teddy Bear Clinic at the library. Volunteer teddy bear doctors from both organiza-

tions ran a pop-up repair clinic for teddy bears and all gently loved stuffed toys. The children enjoyed crafts and reading materials while waiting for their wounded ones to be repaired. Once repaired, the toys waited in the "recovery room" until their owners were ready to leave the library. Participants made a donation to Newington Human Services or gave a gently used book to the Friends.

Friends of the New Britain Public Library promote their Every Day Book Sale, open during regular library hours



and located between the computer room and the reading room, as the only downtown

book store in New Britain.

Friends of the Mystic & Noank Library held their third Annual Craft Exchange. Participants brought unfinished projects or unused supplies, in plastic bags,

to the library. Then they swapped their leftovers for someone else's. If they had nothing to exchange, they could still come and choose yarn, crochet supplies, and other



items for a craft of their own. "It's a friend-raiser, not a fund-raiser."

Friends also had an Art Silent Auction throughout November as a fundraiser. Many exciting items were donated for the auction including four original vessels that Cameron Johnson turned using exotic woods, and three John Mecray framed, limited edition, signed and numbered prints.

Friends are also sponsoring vacation and winter family matinees on Saturdays through February. December movies included "Home Alone," "The Emoji Movie" and "Deep." Participants may bring a snack and a covered drink to enjoy while watching the show.

Friends of the Watertown Library honored one of their own at a reception after their annual meeting.



They celebrated Millie Booth

for her more than 26 years of dedication and service to the Friends and the Book Nook. She retired at age 92 after more than 2,500 hours of volunteering. She was described as "small in stature, but huge in impact...a remarkable woman."

Also, Friends sponsored Game Time, where young adults – ages 10-plus -- could play favorite board games with their friends. Included were the classics Monopoly, Scrabble, Trouble, Parcheesi, Checkers and Sorry.

Friends of the Simsbury Public Library sponsored a bus trip to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.



Included was a docent-led tour of museum

highlights, including the "Calder: Hypermobility" show. After the tour, participants had an opportunity to visit the High Line, a 1.45-mile linear park (once a railway) redesigned and planted in 2009 as an aerial greenway with trees, flowers and a view of the Hudson River.

Friends of the Bethel Public Library and their library board held their annual wine & food tasting

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Friends, continued

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fundraiser "Spirits of Bethel: Food by the Bite & Libations at the Li-

brary." This year beers and bourbons were added to the wines, the silent auction and the raffle.

Friends also sponsored a History Tour Box detailing the library's history. It is on Greenwood Avenue just past the P.T. Barnum statue, and is one of more than two dozen tour boxes installed by the Bethel Historical Society.

In addition, the Friends sponsored a dramatic performance: "Mary Rowlandson, Indian Captive" in which actress Virginia Wolf brought to life the true story of a woman captured by the Narragansetts during the King Philip War,

her three-month captivity and her ultimate reunion with her family.

Friends of the Cheshire Public

Library paid for a presentation of the "Nutcracker" by the Brass City Ballet. The live, narrated performance celebrated the magic of Christmas through the story of Clara and her journey through the Land of Snow to the kingdom of the Sweets.

Friends of the Meriden Library sponsored a presentation by Sioux Wimler, who, with Sabrina Gran-niss, created "Crunchy Bits," following their passion for all things crunchy. Wimler explored alternative ingredients to dairy and gluten to create vegan and gluten-free delicious baked goods. She returned for a second program to create vegan and gluten-free decadent desserts.



Friends also paid for a seminar on "Simplifying the Financial Aid Process." Jennifer Philip, an experienced financial aid consultant, provided parents and students with tips on securing the best possible financial aid package. She explained loans, grants and scholarships and covered financial aid forms and how to compare, and appeal, financial aid offers.

Friends also presented a performance of great jazz at the library. The Survivors Swing Band, a seven-piece professional jazz band based in Connecticut, enter-



tained with classic melodies from a by-gone era – hot tunes and soothing ballads of

the Swing Era -- plus more from other decades. Improvisation made the tunes fresh while still keeping true to the original melodies.

Special Library's Friends Group Learns What Wadsworth Atheneum Can Offer

The Friends Group of the State Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped had a guided tour for the blind of the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford on Sept 13.

The group of 10 was divided into two's, and each pair had a docent guide them to several exhibits. The docent described each work of art in detail and answered questions.



The Atheneum was very welcoming and eager to put into practice their new program of assisted tours for the blind and persons with disabilities.

After the tour, the group had an excellent lunch at the Hartford Public Library café. All proclaimed complete satisfaction with the day's

events and looked forward to doing it again.



Yelena Klumpus of the Ferguson Library in Stamford, Suzanne Maryeski of the New London Library and Leticia Cotto of the Hartford Public Library talk about bringing different types of people into your library and into your Friends group.

Friends Welcoming Everyone — And How To Go About It

Four library officials talked about how to welcome different types of people into your library -- and into your Friends group. Each spoke from experience:

- Dawn LaValle, director of the Connecticut State Library Division of Library Development, used to work at the White Plains, N.Y., library, where 25 percent of the community was non-white.
- Yelena Klumpus works at the Ferguson Library in Stamford, where 42 percent of the community speak a language other than English and are from 48 different countries.
- Suzanne Maryeski is director of the New London Library, which serves a population where 41 percent of the people speak a first language other than English. They

offer Indian fashion shows, Mexican fashion shows, an African-American film festival and are now adding Arabic books for their new Syrian population.

- And Leticia Cotto works for the Hartford Public Library where about 20 percent of the population speak a language other than English and 32 percent of families are headed by women.

Also, its 10 branches serve different communities, with each branch manager expected to offer programs based on that particular community.

Each said they try to serve their particular communities and that Friends groups can do the same.

"If you ask Friends members to help in a diverse activity, they will meet people in the community," Klumpus said. Many Friends are

retired so by helping at a library activity, they meet working people, she said. They might consider sponsoring programming beyond what they've been comfortable with in the past.

In Waterbury, the Friends of the Silas Bronson Library took over a Halloween event that the merchants used to sponsor.

"We had a program -- Mardi Gross -- that attracted 1,400 people," said Janice Hollywood, of their Friends. It included crafts, scary movies, scary stories, green-screen photography and costume contests for kids and teens.

Sometimes it's difficult getting people who are from countries that don't have American-style libraries to come into the library. They may think there's a charge or they see

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Welcoming

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libraries as part of a government and they don't always trust the government. Even participants in English language classes at the library might give alias or false phone or email addresses.

LaValle said her library had an issue with Hispanic Heritage Day for several years. So they went through the schools and made it part of children's activities. That brought in parents.

Klumpus said her library started with an international film festival, which brought in a wider audience. More diverse programming grew from that.

Cotto said Hartford hosted a systemwide open house with events at each branch that included food.

"We pulled in a diverse audience," she said.

Friends don't have to do this by themselves, LaValle said. They can consult library staff, the director, community groups, churches and the chamber of commerce.

"In my town diversity is age and gender," said Chris Klemmer of the Granby Friends. They found that chainsaw art brought in both older men and younger people.

LaValle said Friends do have to think beyond nationalities when they think of diversity.

"Men are a severely underserved population in a public library," she said.

"We used to meet during the day. You're only going to get retired people. We had to adapt."

— **Peg Busse,**
Ellington Friends

Cotto said gardening programs "bring in a nice diverse group of people."

A Friend from the Bloomfield group said they hold gift-wrapping parties near the holidays, bringing in fathers with their children.

To get some of these people who come to the library to join your Friends might require effort. Some groups might not give them anything to do or they might give them too much. Or your longtime Friends might not be "friendly" toward new people.

You don't need all super members, said Carol Eckart of the Salem Friends. Have different people do different tasks, something they're interested in.

"We used to meet during the day," said Peg Busse of the Ellington Friends. "You're only going to get retired people. We had to adapt."

Have a table at programs the Friends sponsor and see if you can talk with prospective members, Cotto said.

Maryeski credited her library's Friends with helping get the library budget increased. It makes a big difference to officials if they know that local people support the library.



Dawn LaValle of director of the Connecticut State Library Division of Library Development, said that when Friends think of adding diversity to their libraries they should include attracting people of different ages and genders.

Directors

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state representative or even your U.S. senator.

“State officials need to know in their hometown how important it is to them the money that trickles down to the local library,” said Mary Etter, director of the South Windsor Library.

Advocacy and awareness are just two issues that came out of a survey when library directors throughout the state were asked their views of their Friends groups.

Of the 169 libraries in Connecticut, 115 directors responded to a survey taken Aug. 22-Oct. 3, 2017. Of these, 83 percent have Friends groups.

Advocacy is even more important for municipal libraries, which get most of their operating money through taxes, than for association libraries, which get some money through taxes but most from donations.

The state statutes that govern how libraries operate are rather

Colchester and vice president of the Connecticut Library Association, explained the library statutes this way:

“If you haven’t figured out how to do this [run a library] in your town, do it this way. But if you have figured it out, continue doing what you’re doing.”

But directors of both kinds of libraries want people to speak up. When asked the difference between advocacy and awareness, Byroade said it was a matter of whether you spoke to government officials or your friends and family. Awareness could be something as simple as telling someone new in town about the library’s story hours for preschoolers or the knitting group.

Sometimes awareness can be fun.

Peggy Brissette of the Mystic and Noank Friends, said her group put together a book cart drill team that marched in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade. As they went by,



spectators would shout, “It’s the library ladies!” Powerful people see this and pay attention to the library.



“People on both sides of the aisle support their library,” said Kate Byroade, director of the Cragin Memorial Library in Colchester.

“It’s a really easy, cheesy thing to do,” Brissette said.

As for advocacy, Nawrocki said you need to let newly elected officials know what your Friends group does and that you vote.

“The library is a bipartisan issue,” Byroade said. “People on both sides of the aisle support their library. It’s more about reminding them why we are here.”

Because association libraries depend heavily on donations to survive, one director surveyed felt overly controlled by the Friends.

“I feel as if I am their employee. They are resistant to change and funding improvements/new programs. They scoff at anything over a few hundred dollars.”

Byroade said that was a sad situation. But said she could understand that Friends know how much they will make in a year and

“State officials need to know in their hometown how important it is to them the money that trickles down to the local library.”

— **Mary Etter,**

South Windsor Library director

confusing, said Carl Nawrocki, who conducted the survey for FOCL.

Kate Byroade, director of the Cragin Memorial Library in

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Directors

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so might have to deny a director's requests to fund projects over that amount.

Nawrocki asked if directors provide the Friends with a "wish list" of ways to spend money.

"You kind of like to know what your library director plans to spend the money on," he said.

Friends groups vary on the issue of funding library requests. A total of 57 percent control the flow of money and vote on the director's requests. But 23 percent give the director an annual dollar amount and let that director decide how to spend it.

Frank Ridley of the Meriden Friends said his group sits down with the director and discusses what she wants for the year. Sometimes there are special



Carl Nawrocki, of the FOCL board of directors, surveyed library directors as to what they would like in their Friends groups.

requests, such as when the Friends paid for a new reference desk.

Friends don't always have a good relationship with their director.

Byroade said she heard of one

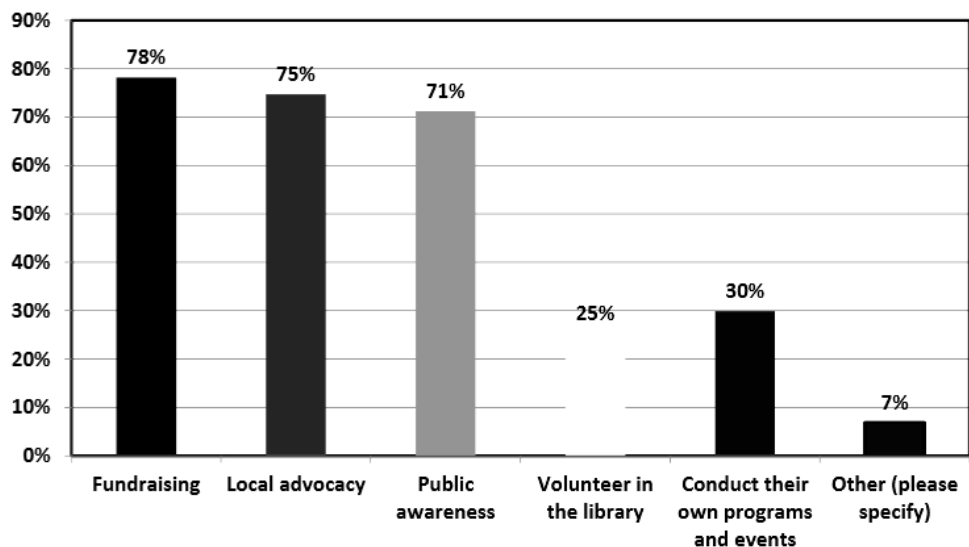
library where the Friends asked staff what they would like to have at the library, but rejected every request.

In another case, years ago one library asked the Friends to fund a diaper-changing station. It was rejected because many of the Friends were elderly and questioned why it was needed when they remembered changing diapers on the floor.

Many libraries will mention Friends groups in newsletters or at programs paid for with money raised by the Friends.

But Nawrocki also recommended they nominate their Friends for annual FOCL awards. Only 20 percent have ever been nominated for the awards, which are presented in June.

In What Areas Would You Like Your Friends Group To Focus



Talking Two by Two at Fall Conference





**We Came,
We Shared,
We Learned**





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and designed by
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Award Season Coming

Friends groups will soon receive a letter asking them to nominate individuals, projects and their group for the Annual FOCL Awards to be presented at our Annual Meeting on June 9.

Did your group try something new this year?

Did you realize a major goal?

Do you know of people who made things happen or provided extraordinary support to your Friends organization?

It is a wonderful way to honor members who work hard and effectively for your organization.

Please consider someone from your group for an award. They will be very happy to receive it.

And Before Leaving ...



FOCL board member Rob Sweeney makes sure those who attend the Fall Conference submit their opinions on the event.