

# FOCL POINT

Newsletter of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries /Spring 2011



## Friends of Connecticut Libraries BOOT CAMP APRIL 2011

Many Friends have found themselves put in a position of responsibility without adequate training or background. Some have turned to FOCL asking for guidance. We answered by holding our first Boot Camp the morning of April 9<sup>th</sup> at the University of Hartford.

There were three concurrent sessions: a *Presidents panel* with representatives of a small, a medium, and a large Friends group discussing budgeting, planning, communications, organization, community awareness, and other topics of interest to the attendees; a *Used Book Sale panel* with experienced chairmen from four different sales, ranging from small to large, discussing the entire process from collection to disposal; and a *Treasurer's session* featuring Patty Jean Foley, CPA, who was prepared to discuss any topic relative to being a good Friends treasurer, but mainly covered a few topics that the participants requested she focus on.

About seventy Friends from around the state began arriving at 9:00am to enjoy the morning refreshments before the sessions began at 9:30. By noon the three sessions wound down and our first boot camp came to a successful conclusion.



Carl Nawrocki, FOCL President, welcomes guests and presenters



## PRESIDENTS PANEL

The Presidents Panel provided a great opportunity for those attending not only to hear tips from the presidents of three thriving Friends groups, but also to ask questions and share ideas among themselves. The Panel was moderated by Mary Engels, Director of the Middletown Library Service Center and liaison to FOCL from the State Library.

Carol Eckert President of the Salem Friends distributed an excellent handout on planning and budgets. Emphasizing the importance of communication and relationships, she said that planning must begin with knowing what is happening in the community, having a good relationship between the library board and the Friends, and focusing on the group's mission. The Salem Friends mission, for example, is to provide direct support to, build awareness of, and sponsor programs and activities for the

library. This informs their decisions on how to spend the funds they raise. One important factor to take into account when creating a budget is timing: when the money will be raised in the fiscal cycle, i.e., peak fundraising events, may or may not coincide with time sensitive expenses.

Natalie Harbeson, President of the Friends of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington, described how she keeps meetings fun by bringing refreshments and taking the time to thank volunteers. She encourages new ideas through brainstorming and by sharing interesting projects from the FOCL and ALTAFF newsletters. To facilitate planning and communication, she meets with the Library Director before meetings. Her group is making a conscious effort to seek new people who can help with technology since Facebook, the web site and Twitter are becoming more and more

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*Presidents' Panel (Continued from page 1)*

(l-r) Presidents' Panelists Natalie Harbeson & Barbara Leonard; Participant Martha Mayer

important to communication. The newsletter, with its list of library programs, used to be a key motivation for joining the Friends, but this isn't the case anymore. Though the group continues to do bulk mailing of printed newsletters, there is more interest in e-newsletters, one advantage of which is color photos. The Friends have developed their own web site ([www.friendslrwlibrary.org](http://www.friendslrwlibrary.org)) using Wild Apricot's membership and web site management software. Through the site they are able to list events and handle registrations, as well as do bulk emails. Attendees expressed a lot of interest in learning more about the software. Natalie also shared many handouts and resources.

Barbara Leonard, President of the Avon Friends, shared her group's methods for cultivating good relationships with external organizations. For example, school teachers are given the opportunity to purchase books from the sale ahead of time, and the Friends sponsor

films for seniors. They have community liaisons with the Rotary and Lions groups, participate in community events, and make an effort to speak personally with the superintendent and town selectmen about what the Friends do. She suggested Board members carry Friends brochures with them and have business cards to hand out. In addition to their newsletter (5 times/year), they use the online site Avon Patch to publicize their activities. She also mentioned the importance of belonging to FOCL and ALTAFF.

The question and answer period at the end of the session included lively discussions of many topics. Included were: awards such as Friend of Year; ground rules for board meetings; balancing talent on the board; Robert's Rules of Order; starting and growing Friends groups; balancing work and fun for the board; and more about technologies. The participants appreciated the open discussion with the opportunity to learn from each other. ☺



Presidents' Panel Audience

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## TREASURER'S SESSION

Patricia Foley, a regular at FOCL workshops and a CPA, presented "Things Your Treasurer Should Know." Though her prepared PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handout covered duties of the Treasurer, record keeping and reporting, budget preparation, and software and technology, Patty moved quickly through some topics to focus on what the participants really wanted to discuss. She has a clear vision of the treasurer's role and enlightened the group with noteworthy information.

The participants included experienced and inexperienced treasurers. They came from small communities and large, from both public and association libraries.

Patty began with a discussion of today's economic situation, and the effect it has on our libraries. Libraries are forced to slash hours, programs, and personnel. Friends know that libraries are important, that they represent freedom of speech, and that they are a place where democracy truly exists! Friends must support their libraries through advocacy. They should make sure the Library Board and the Town are informed about the role the library plays in their community, as well as what the Friends have done in support of their library. The Friends' treasurer should understand the numbers involved, including Friends numbers, library numbers, and town numbers, population numbers and budget numbers. The treasurer can then help the officials not only know the numbers, but understand their impact on the library and on the town's residents. When support is received, possibly a budget restored, the Friends should be sure to thank town officials for their support.

In advocating for the library, it's important to know the Friends' mission statement. Friends groups are usually described as a membership of interested people whose mission is to support and cooperate with their library in developing, maintaining and enhancing the library. In addition Friends work to focus public attention on the library and get people excited to come into the library.

The duties of the Treasurer are many. They include knowing, or at least having a copy of, the bylaws. If the bylaws are over ten years old, it is time to review them. A treasurer should have a finance committee to determine and review financial policies and procedures. A professional would be helpful to have on the finance committee. A

Friends group should be incorporated in the state of Connecticut and registered as a 501c3 non-profit organization with the Federal government. Patty recommends that the treasurer set up and maintain a Treasurer's Handbook for reference. Things that would be contained in it are: bylaws, a time line, policies and procedures, the IRS determination letter, state registration, sales tax exemption, bank account authorizations and copies of signature cards, etc.

Record keeping and reporting are important functions of the treasurer. The treasurer's Financial Records may include balance sheets, statements of revenues and expenses, statements of activities, statements of cash flows, and notes of explanation. The records should include financial information on book sales, membership, event revenue, grants, etc. It's also important to review and keep copies of the Friends meeting minutes. They might include motions passed that will affect the treasurer's



Treasurer's Panel Speaker  
Patty Foley



Treasurer's Panel - (l-r) Audience: Mary Cikatz, Donna Funteral, Carol Shimelman

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*Treasurer's Session (Continued from page 3)*

activities. Important records need to be kept in a safe place. These include bank and investment account statements, and monthly and year end treasurer's reports.

The budget should be determined annually. Some Friends budget their income, that is, estimate what they think they will raise, and then wait for requests from their Library Director, sometimes in the form of a wish list, to determine expenses. Some Friends budget both their income and their expenses, based on known, annual requests from their library. Any monies raised over budget may then be available for additional, special requests. Some organizations give just one check to their director. Others write checks out as needed. Whatever the method, the Friends group should have a budget meeting, or long range planning meeting. Responsibility for the budget is not just the treasurer's. Every person on the Board has fiduciary responsibility.

It's important to budget revenue conservatively, never higher than last year's. Project the revenue – membership, book sales and other income – based on past experience. Project the expenditures – programs, acquisitions, museum passes, summer reading materials, DVDs, newsletter printing, and other expenses – based on past experience and what is known of expected library needs. The more that is known the better the budget will be. The budget is a goal against which to measure actual income and expenses. These statistics are needed to help in making decisions on future expenditures, on future budgets.

The Friends should plan to set up a cushion over time, a reserve equal to one year's budget, by setting aside some funds each year. Then if something happened to interfere with normal Friends fundraising activities, the Friends could still function.

In regard to software, there is no one right answer. Whatever works for your Friends group is what you should use. Some groups would do fine with a pen or pencil and a spread sheet. Others may find that one of the many small software packages that are available would work for them. (There's no need for a Friends group to build its own software.) Quick

Books is simple and can be found on line for free. Some groups find that Quicken suits their needs. Accounting software packages like Peachtree are somewhat more complex. For any of the packages, it would help to know how to use spreadsheets. However you don't need to be a CPA to do this task. It is necessary to back up the data frequently. And software should be updated periodically, maybe every other year.

In addition to the usual topics for Treasurers, Patty shared her wisdom on other subjects with the participants, some for Treasurers, some for Membership chairs, some related to publicity: PayPal is a form of on-line payments that is beneficial for Friends. It saves the Treasurer time.

When the Friends give the library a big check, invite a local paper to witness it and publicize it.

With membership, a bill should be sent reminding members how great it is to be part of the organization. The Letter with the bill should contain what the money can do and how their money made things happen at the library. Basic membership should be affordable, but don't be afraid to raise donation levels. The highest level could be \$200 or more. Keep it simple! Friends needn't send membership gifts. People are not giving because of the gifts, but for the mission. If Friends do send gifts, the gifts should be valued at less than \$6.

A Friends group should have a website. "Wild Apricot" is a hosted website that is free if your group has less than 50 members. (It can also be used to collect membership dues using PayPal. And it can provide some financial reports.) On a web page, pictures of people help establish a relationship with the reader. Keeping the site up-to-date, including changing the date of the last update, is important. Remember you have 45 seconds to catch the user's attention.

Patty advised the participants to, "be happy and successful," and assured them that, "people want to be on your team!" The participants left having learned many interesting details about what a treasurer should know and ready to become confident and successful Treasurers. ☺



## USED BOOK SALE PANEL



FOCL President Carl Nawrocki in his opening remarks said that the purpose of Boot Camp was to learn and return to the basics of used book sales. The four presentations were selected to give the audience a beginning-to-end view of a sale. He said the speakers were selected for their experience and the size of their sales. Questions and discussions were encouraged, which led to a lively panel session.

The first speaker was Charmaine Glew, from the Friends of the Simsbury Library, who described the communications necessary to make a book sale function properly and be profitable. She identified four audiences, the Friends, volunteers, Book Dealers and the general public. She said that Simsbury Friends use numerous ways to get the word out about the sale including the Internet, sandwich boards, the library's newsletter, local newspapers, flyers and snail mail. Most importantly, they advertise on national book sale sites, Booksalefinder.com and Booksalepirate.com, to attract dealers. Additionally, they send email and snail mail to each dealer within 100 miles.

Communications with the volunteers start right after the sale. The Simsbury Friends place signs in the library doorway thanking the volunteers and people who have donated and announce the final sales numbers. Before

volume sorting starts again, they send out post cards and e cards to the regular volunteers reminding them of the upcoming tasks. Prior to each sale, they get in contact with each volunteer, assigning volunteer times and tasks.

Simsbury Friends offer up well over 50,000 books for sale. Given that the sorters discard 2 out of 3 items donated; they have to collect 150,000 books during the course of the summer. They collect books all year but the major drive starts after Memorial Day. Donation carts are placed in the entrance of the library along with a sign describing what is and what is not acceptable for donation.

Collected books go through a triple sort. The initial sort checks for mold, odor, date, highlighting and assures that the book is not missing any pages and is in good condition. The second sort places the book into the appropriate category box. It is performed by more experienced volunteers. Hardcover fiction is sorted by author and soft cover by genre then alphabetized. With the large volume of books being sorted, there is the possibility of a good book being discarded. So, for the third sort, two experienced volunteers sort through the discards making sure a "treasure" hasn't been inadvertently discarded.

Rob Feinson and Bob Mosley from the Danbury Friends picked up the sorting

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### Used Book Sale Panel Speakers



**(l-r): Charmaine Glew, Rob Feinson, Bob Mosley, Norm Rabe**

# 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 [friendsetlibraries@gmail.com](mailto:friendsetlibraries@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 Bethel Public Library**, at their annual meeting, presented \$25,000 to the Library's Capital Campaign. Guest speaker cinematographer Corey Boutilier spoke about his Barnum film project and presented sneak clips of his upcoming movie, *P.T. Barnum – The Lost Legend*.

Also, the Friends funds 17 passes to museums around Connecticut.

**The Friends of the New Britain Public Library** administers the Library's participation in the Campbell's Labels for Education Program, which allows the library to earn free educational merchandise by collecting and submitting UPCs from participating products.

**The Friends of the Avon Library** has provided their residents with Universal Class, a data base that offers free on-line classes. Over 500 courses are available to residents with valid Avon Library cards.

**The Friends of the Mystic & Noank Library** sponsored Authors and Hors D'oeuvres, a special evening to benefit the library. Mystery writer Jessica Speart discussed *Winged Obsession*, a non-fiction account of her recent experience in Japan investigating the world's most notorious butterfly smuggler. Children's book illustrator and author Pamela Zagarenski, a 2010 Caldecott award winner, shared her journey as an illustrator.

**The Friends of the Case Memorial Library** in Orange welcomed actor Richard Clark portraying Atticus Finch from *To Kill a Mocking Bird*. Following a brief Annual Meeting, the audience

was entertained by Two Guitars with Judith Handler and Mark Levesque.

**The Friends of the Portland Library** sponsors Family Shakespeare, a program that brings New England Shakespeare productions to Portland. Last August they presented Twelfth Night.

The Friends also sponsor artist receptions throughout the year for talented local artists, complete with home-baked goods and beverages.

**The Friends of Guilford Free Library** presented many varied programs. Their Author Program featured Gina Barreca "probably the funniest woman writer in America."

Through Veterans' Eyes: The Iraq and Afghanistan Experience included Larry Minear, who interviewed scores of soldiers about their experiences, and Jonathan Trouern-Trend, author of *Birding Babylon: a Soldier's Journal from Iraq*.



The Friends also sponsored a bus trip to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts to tour the new wing celebrating "The Art of the Americas," over 5000 pieces representing 22 countries.

The Friends sponsored additional programs for adults on art, science, the Civil War, and poetry, plus a Lunch & Learn series and a movie series; and programs for children on animals (Birds of Prey, Turtles & Tortoises), Song & Dance, Music & Movement, and Magic, plus children's authors with their recently published books.

**The Friends of the Meriden Library** publishes a two page newsletter, which they mail and email along with a four page library newsletter, monthly! Several issues included their annual

membership “Renewal Form for 2011.” They also select a Friend of the Month which is announced in the newsletter.

The Friends held a book signing by local poet Paul Scollan, author of *Liberty Street Hill*, at their downtown Bookstore.

Early this year the Friends began discussions about the future of their downtown Bookstore. Due to a lack of profitability, the decision was made to close the store and request to move it into the Friends Room at the library. The request was approved by the Library’s Board of Directors. (See Friends Bookstore to Move Back into Library p. ?)

The Friends of the Lucy Robbins Welles Library in Newington welcomed author Jan Mann of *Cruising Connecticut with a Picnic Basket* to their annual meeting. Mann’s book combines a selection of day trips with suggested picnics to take along. As part of their year long 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, the Friends hosted a Golden Gala dinner and silent auction, with guest speaker, sports journalist and author of *The Pint Man*, Steve Rushin.



## Save the Date

**Annual Friends Conference  
Central Connecticut State  
College  
New Britain, CT**

**Saturday  
November 5, 2011**

*Proposed topics:*

*“Do We Need Insurance?”*

*“Fundraising Other Than  
Used Book Sales”*

### **Board Member Frank Ridley**

Frank W. Ridley was recommended to the Board of the Friends of Connecticut Libraries by a retiring FOCL Board member from the Friends of the Meriden Public Library. In Meriden, Frank had been president of the Friends and was also responsible for getting the Friends started in on-line book selling.

With a background in insurance and marketing, public relations and advertising, Frank came to us quite well connected. His resume reveals his participation in political, religious, service, educational, and charitable organizations, often in leadership positions. And apparently in his spare time, he’s been involved in historical societies and arts and crafts associations, collected stamps and sang tenor. He has brought lots of varied experience to our board, as well as initiative and creativity, and is always ready with useful advice. With all of his activities, he almost always seems to find time for one more meeting!

We welcome Frank to our board, and look forward to his continued presence and participation.

*Used Book Sales (Continued from page 5)*

discussion describing how they track down experts in certain areas to help refine the sort. For example, they have a retired elementary teacher who leads the sorting of children's books. Danbury is a large city having a substantial foreign language population, so they try to get sorters fluent in the different languages spoken.

Bob made the group aware of sales potential of LP record jackets. While a small market for the record, there is a growing market for the jackets. He said it is important that someone check the sorted books for rare and first edition books, signed and Association books, as they have a higher value. Danbury Friends keep their not sold Romance books for a special sale prior to Valentines Day that turns out to be quite profitable. They also discussed the first signs of the impact of e books as they have noticed a drop in new hardcover donations.

Norm Rabe from Salem described how a used book sale works in a small town. With limited storage space at the Library, the initial sorting is performed right away and discarded book are taken right to the transfer station. This is especially true of large donations that could easily overwhelm the storage space. Kept books are placed in cut down liquor boxes and transported to the old library that the Town lets Friends use for storage.

The used book sale is held at a large school gym and the sorted books are displayed on 90 tables. The tables come from just about all nearby non-profit organization including the Coast Guard Academy. Salem School allows set-up during school hours with certain restrictions on the movement of trucks and volunteers. 20,000 books are moved and set up on tables within the space of 4 hours.

Norm said that the Friends get great support from the Town government, Salem School, and a number of service organizations that makes the rapid transformation of the gym possible. It is vital that the Friends work well with all these organizations and that Town government views the activities of the Friends as benefiting the Town. Administrations and

organizations change, so it is important that new officials are made aware of who the Friends are and what they do.

Salem Friends make sure that security is set up prior to the beginning of the sale. The sale entrance and exit are at opposite ends of the gym. Customers are given receipts when they purchase books and receipts are hole punched when they exit.

Shelly Hall from Stratford described how they conduct a book sale in a limited space. Instead of having a very large book sale, the Friends hold 9 small (book nook) sales and one larger sale. Books are displayed using a tier system using boards placed on milk crates. The picture on the FOCL web site banner is taken from their sale. ([www.foclib.org](http://www.foclib.org)).

The books are priced by date. The price of new books is \$4.00. Books more than 2 years old are priced \$2.00 and so on. Non-fiction books are priced at half the marked price. Children's books marked \$5.00 are sold for \$.50, \$5-9.00 are priced at \$1.00 and so on.

The large sale runs for two days at regular prices followed by a half-price day. The last day is a bag sale at \$5 per bag. Selected leftover books are placed in boxes and used for the "Book Nook" sale. Mostly fiction and children's books make up the sale.

The extra work of selective pricing brings in extra profits but there is pressure on the volunteer checkers and cashiers to be accurate. Shelly said that we are all concerned with books walking out the doors, but she is also concerned with dollars walking out the door. Having cashiers who are well trained and can withstand the chaos of the first hours of the book sale is essential. She also said that it is very important that the sale staff be well trained and that we realize that not everyone can perform every function.

The Book Sale discussion wound down slowly as the participants tried to gather as much information from the panelists and the other participants as possible. The success of our first Boot Camp for Used Book Sale organizers opens the door to future similar sessions. ☺



### Some Intrigued Used Book Sale Panel Participants



(l-r) Carolyn Aho, Carol Steven, Laura Hage



(l-r) Mary Hally, Mickey Fazzino, Diane Lindsay

## IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE MONEY

**FOCL Panel, May 2, 2011**

**Connecticut Library Association Conference, Stamford, CT**

FRIENDS GROUPS DO MORE THAN RAISE MONEY for their libraries. They are about raising library awareness in the community. The three panelists were Ann Sexton, Friends of the Ferguson Library of Stamford, Laura Einstein, Friends of the New Canaan Library, and Ann Jepson, Friends of the Ridgefield Library. All three did an excellent job of telling their stories to an interested audience with many questions to be answered.

Ann Sexton talked about the Friends of the Ferguson Library mailing to a membership of 680; providing discounts at the bookstore and Starbucks (located in the library building); sponsoring a literature contest, providing a "books to babies" program; and having a library advocate at all town meetings.

Laura Einstein shared the perspective of the Friends of the New Canaan Library. They provide a good will ambassador to town meetings, and all library card holders are automatically members of the Friends. Their group is structured around projects that include

art initiatives; book talks and movie discussions; four concerts; special lectures; and children's programs.

Ann Jepson talked about the Friends of Ridgefield Library's long range planning efforts. She shared her view that long range planning efforts enhance relationship building and identify new and important relationships; ideas really come to front and center of the organization and goals are set and achieved.

Clearly, advocacy at the town level; attracting and bringing a larger audience to the library; providing needed library resources and programs for citizens of our towns; and building long term relationships with agencies and other community organizations are all important strategies. Friends groups have much to offer their libraries and their towns.

(The three panelists' PowerPoint presentations are available at

[http://focl.cslib.org/?page\\_id=2395](http://focl.cslib.org/?page_id=2395))



## **Friends Bookstore to Move Back into Library**

(Re-printed from the Friends News section of the Meriden Public Library Newsletter,  
With permission of the editor)

This headline topped a story in the Monday, March 1 issue of the Record-Journal that reported on the prior day's meeting of the Library's Board of Directors in which the rumors of the last few months regarding the fate of the Friend's Bookstore were brought to a conclusion. The Board approved our request to move the downtown bookstore to the library, and so ends a fifteen year episode in the life of the Friends of the Meriden Public Library. As a long term member of the Friends, a past President and your current newsletter editor, I have been much conflicted about this turn of events. Our original motivation for starting a downtown bookstore was noble indeed. Not only were we making some extra money for the library and bringing very low priced literature to the local citizenry, but we were playing a part, a very small to be sure, in the revitalization of Meriden's downtown.

Some of our members at the time opposed this program even to the point of quitting as members, but the majority decided to give it an enthusiastic try. In July 1995, after a major amount of work cleaning, decorating and installing book cases by book sale chairman Bill Anderson and Gil Cruz of the library staff, and others, the Friends bookstore opened at the corner of West Main and Grove St. The City owned the building and rented the space to us for \$1 per year. The contract was drawn up by past president Tom Griglun.

A few years later the City was able to rent the store on Grove St. to another organization, and we were asked to find another location with the promise that, if it were commercial property, the City would grant us the funds to help pay the rent. After looking

at many sites downtown we settled on the store at 1 Colony St. and again, after a huge amount of work by Ed Bartlett and many others on refurbishing, rebuilding and installing book cases, we opened a bookstore and coffee shop, the latter in partnership with the Stone House Bakery. A three year lease was negotiated by Friends President Frank Ridley and past-President Jim Abrams followed by a Ribbon Cutting ceremony on Friday September 20, 2002 held as part of the Library's Tenth Annual Evening of Celebration. (Remember those?) Despite the prominent location and attractive appearance of this store, business gradually declined, and at the same time rent increases by the landlord forced us to move again in 2008.

*"The downtown bookstore has dominated the efforts of our volunteers for over fifteen years now and it is time to refocus our objectives toward more effectively serving our library."*

This third move was to our current location at 35 West Main. Joe Giannetti and Gerry Dion were the prime movers of the crew that remodeled the store and installed book cases with help from the buildings owner, Ross Gulino. When all the work was done the official opening and ribbon cutting was held on Sept. 13, 2008, attended by Mayor Mike Rhode and other dignitaries. After a fairly productive start, since that time several downtown businesses have closed and business has declined. A recent realistic evaluation of our financial prospects by Treasurer June Hadley disclosed that our expenses for rent, and the essential utilities: heat, electricity, telephone and internet service for our on-line book sales, would exceed our income for the foreseeable future. And so another change was necessary. This time we are going back to the library.

The downtown bookstore has dominated the efforts of our volunteers for over fifteen years now and it is time to refocus our

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*(Continued from page 10)*

objectives toward more effectively serving our library. We owe a vote of thanks to all our members who have struggled to make the store a success. Our effort was greatly admired by Library Friends all over the state, most of whom, if they do have a bookstore, operate it in or immediately adjacent to their library....

We are now embarking on a new and challenging phase of our life as a Friends of the Library group. We will need the help, advice,

and participation of all our members in the transition to an organization that more effectively serves the needs of our library.

*Gil Alwang, Newsletter Editor*

Note: The move back to the library has begun, and the members are optimistic that the bookstore will once again raise funds to benefit the library. ☺

## The First Connecticut Book Festival

**THE FIRST CONNECTICUT BOOK FESTIVAL** was held May 21-22 at the University of Connecticut campus in West Hartford. As stated in its program booklet, "the purpose of the Connecticut Book Festival is to promote and celebrate books, reading, and our state's bountiful and diverse literary community." It was modeled after the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. and book festivals in other states.

Over the course of two days, many Connecticut authors, and illustrators, presented their works either individually or as part of a panel. Attendees had the opportunity to listen to, question, and converse with the authors, and to purchase books and have them autographed. Participating authors included James R. Benn, Diane Smith, Gina Barreca, Wendell Minor, Lary Bloom, Tony Abbott, and many more. Panel discussions included: Masters of Mysteries; Locally Grown: From Farm to Table; Bridges between Two Cultures: Latino Writers in Connecticut; Why, How, and When We Write; and Marked & Purged: Writing the Truth for Teens through Realistic Fiction and Fantasy.

There were many activities for children, as well. Under and around the Kid's Activities Tent could be found a book nook, a scribble table, story times, a journal-making activity

(sponsored by the Amistad Center for Art and Culture), an instrument petting zoo (with members of the Hartford Symphony on Saturday and the New Haven Symphony on Sunday), pet therapy greyhounds to read to, a balloon artist, and sidewalk chalk drawing. The Mystic Paper Beasts Theatre Company wandered the grounds costumed as characters from books and myths. Connecticut State Troubadours held a Mini Showcase.

Under the exhibitors tent could be found representatives of many local cultural organizations. Among them were the Mark Twain House & Museum, the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center, the Hartford Public Library, the Jewish Book Festival, the Hill-Stead Museum, the Connecticut Poetry Society, Drunken Boat, Sustainable Food, Yale University Press, and others.

A planning committee comprised of representatives of many state and local organizations interested in books and libraries organized and ran the Festival with the generous support of FOCL and with the help of numerous volunteers. Though the turnout was less than expected, the First Connecticut Book Festival was well organized and well presented.

☺



Friends of  
Connecticut  
Libraries

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