

Friends of the Library Groups



- **What are Friends of the Library groups? How do you establish a Friends group?**
- **Could a Friends of the Library group help us with the visibility of the library in the community?**
- **What kinds of activities do Friends do, and how will people be able to distinguish library trustees from Friends?**
- **How is a Friends group different from a Library Foundation?**

Effective Friends groups can be a tremendous asset to the library and ultimately to the community by increasing the visibility of the library, by offering opportunities for citizens to contribute to their library, and by providing a sense of fun related to the library. Here are a few general points about Friends groups and about their related collaborative activities with the local library, library staff, and trustees.

- **Friends** are citizens interested in providing support for the library's programs and services. They are volunteers that work with the local library staff and trustees to find out how the Friends could help to provide grassroots support of some programs and/or services. Friends groups are limited only by the imaginations of their members and of course by the charge under which they operate.
- **Friends** usually have their own 501 (c) (3) designation from the IRS (Internal Revenue Service) and are registered with the Nebraska Secretary of State's office, or they can be under the "umbrella" of another group with this designation such as a local community foundation. This gives them official recognition and allows people to make donations that have certain tax advantages.
- While **Friends** have an organizational structure, they strive to do things (e.g., book sales, summer reading-related activities for kids, auctions) that will provide monies or other support that will enhance the library's basic services.
- Sometimes **Friends** members in the future might want to become a member of the library board of trustees. These individuals would bring with them useful knowledge from their Friends activities to assist with planning of programs and services.
- Library **Foundations**, while sometimes functioning under the same 501 (c) (3) "umbrella" organizational structure as the Library **Friends** group, have a different purpose. A Library **Foundation** is usually established in order to provide the library with a means of raising significant sums of money (or other support such as securities, stocks, trusts) for major activities such as library construction/renovation, other large capital projects such as a new computer system, or providing an endowment for future library needs or enhancements. The activities of **Foundations**, then, are usually planned toward more financial matters and related fund-raising activities and less toward more constant visible activities such as a Friends group might provide.

What kinds of activities do Friends usually sponsor in public libraries?

There is the traditional book sale, although some **Friends** groups have modified the annual book sale activity. For example, some sponsor a continuous book sale in the library with a specific area set aside for display of books. Here are some other possible activities:

- Establishment of a Teen Friends group
- Literacy programs, Read-a-Thons, Book and Author Event
- Collaborative community contents/events

****** Chat for Continuing Education Credits******

Questions to discuss at a regular Library Board meeting about Friends and related activities (Each board member participating can earn 1 hour of continuing education credits for Board Certification):

- Do we have a Friends group? If so, how do we make sure that we work collaboratively? If we don't have a Friends group, should we and how do we assist with initiating interest?
- What are some program and service areas that could benefit from the supplemental support of a local Friends group?
- How do we effectively communicate with an established Friends group or other community members of our needs?

This gives me a good start but where else can I look for additional information?

(Please note that all books and videotapes are available for request by library staff and/or library trustees from the Nebraska Library Commission. Some regional library system office libraries might also have some of the sources available too.)

- *101+ Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends* by Sally Gardner Reed, Neal-Schuman, 2004.
- *The Essential Friends of Libraries: Fast Facts, Forms, and Tips* by Sandy Dolnick, American Library Association, 2005.
- Series of videotapes entitled, *Friends Indeed*, made several years ago by Nebraska Library Association and the Nebraska Library Commission covering: organizing a Friends group, fund- raising on the web, "fun"draising ideas, revitalizing a group, and Friends as advocates.
- *Friends of Libraries Sourcebook* by American Library Association, 1996.
- *Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends, and Foundations (ALTAFF) website: <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/altaff/index.cfm>*
- Don't forget to contact your **local regional library system office** or the **Nebraska Library Commission** for additional information. Check this website for regional library systems contact information: <http://www.nlc.state.ne.us/system/> or contact Richard Miller, Library Development Director via email: richard.miller@nebraska.gov phone: 1-800-307-2665; 402-471-2045 at the Commission.

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