



Friends News and Notes

Friends of Libraries Section — A Network of Library Advocates in New York State

www.NYLA.org/Friends

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Daniel W. Casey
courtesy of ALA

Call for Nominations FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award

Was one of your New Year's resolutions to be more intentional about recognition of your volunteers? Would you like an opportunity to recognize your Friends of the library or another active library supporter? The **FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award** honors the efforts of a volunteer member or group within the library community who have contributed to the growth of libraries or Friends of the library organizations.

With this award, FLS annually acknowledges not simply good work on behalf of libraries but recognizes the people who go above and beyond what is asked of them. These library civic leaders see a need, focus on a challenge, share goals, and commit to exceptional community service. Recent recipients have included the Friends of the Fairport Public Library and Kris Macdonald, Friends of the Beekman Public Library, in 2021; Jane Harkinson, Friends of the Cornwall Public Library in 2022; Marjorie L. Gascon, Friends of the Webster Public Library in 2023; and in 2024, Paulette Quinn, Friends of the Marcellus Free Library.

The recipient receives a plaque and the Friends of the library group with which the individual or group is associated is given a one-year organizational membership in FLS/NYLA. FLS will coordinate with the nominator to send a representative to a reception for the award recipient at their local library. The award recipient will also be announced at the FLS Annual Membership Meeting in November 2025.

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FLS in 2025 Events and Dates

- ✓ FLS Connections!, conversations offered via Zoom, will return in 2025. Stay tuned for upcoming topics and registration details.
- ✓ Application and Nomination packets for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship and the FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award will be available in January. It's not too early to think about applying for this \$1000 scholarship to attend the 2025 NYLA Conference, or to nominate a deserving individual or organization for exceptional service to the library community. The submission deadline is June 1.
- ✓ FLS is planning to hold an in-person Friends group Meet-up again in 2025. The date and location will be released as soon as plans are finalized. This is a great opportunity for Friends to get together to talk shop and share ideas. Networking is how we learn from each other.
- ✓ National Friends of Libraries Week is October 19-25, 2025. It's not too soon to think about celebrations, activities, or a membership drive during that week. See the article on page 7.
- ✓ Mark your calendars now for #NYLA2025. The conference is November 5 - 8 at the Saratoga Springs City Center.
- ✓ FLS will hold its annual membership meeting Wednesday, November 19 at 7:00 pm.

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FLS creates a network to connect and inspire Friends groups in all types of libraries to support the New York library community.

FLS, a unit of NYLA, embraces and promotes diversity and inclusion in all their forms.



A Message from FLS President Chris Lund

Now that the holiday season has ended and we're settling into the long New York winter, it's easy to fall into the trap of buying into the bad reputation these next few months have of being the "worst time of year." But I've always felt

that this reputation was undeserved and that January and February are highly underrated. After being busy all year, topped off with the mad rush of the holidays, these months often offer a great opportunity to slow down, relax, and maybe catch up on all the things you've been putting off during the past year (like maybe finally replacing that broken faucet that got permanently clogged when your water softener blew out, or sealing up those tiny gaps and openings that the mice are using to squeeze into the house in apparent mockery of the two cats who just sit idly by while the mice use their litter box...).

It's also an excellent time of year to reassess and to consider what new and interesting projects you want to take on during the upcoming year, like perhaps joining and/or rejuvenating your local Friends of the library group! There's nothing like a long stretch of cold and snowy weather to

remind us of all the great services our libraries can provide to help us stave off cabin fever.

With that in mind, this issue presents a lot of good information that can help you get started on these goals, with full reviews of our great 2024 FLS Conference programs. Discover how you can learn all the ins and outs of the legal aspects of forming (and running) a Friends of the library group, get some tips on improving your volunteer recruitment and developing and managing your group's executive board. How can you revitalize a Friends group? Learn some strategies for building successful community partnerships. Read about some non-book sale scalable fundraising ideas for various Friends group sizes, including a garden tour in Auburn, a birdhouse decoration and sale event in Marcellus, and the Saratoga Book Festival. Special thanks to all of our presenters and to all of the members who volunteered to attend these sessions and write reviews/recaps for us.

As always, I want to thank everybody reading this for being a member and for all that you do with your local Friends groups. For many varying reasons, 2025 has the potential to be a year filled with lots of challenges, tests, and stressors for public libraries, and Friends groups are in a great position to provide a lot of the support that these libraries will need, so keep doing what you're doing, and know that your work is appreciated.

Apply Now for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship

Are you a member of a Friends of the Library group? Do you serve as the Staff Liaison to your library's Friends group? Do you have a stellar Friends group at your library? Could you or one of the Friends volunteers benefit from a professional development opportunity at the NYLA Annual Conference?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, please consider applying for the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship (RECS) to attend the 2025 NYLA Annual Conference. The award pays up to a maximum of \$1,000 for an individual to attend the conference. Reimbursements may include registration, tickets for events and meal functions, lodging, and travel expenses.



"Some people are drawn to bars, some to church groups, I was drawn to the library!" This quote is by Randy Enos, who spent a very successful professional career supporting libraries and library Friends groups. The FLS Executive Board has honored him by naming him President Emeritus

and paid tribute to his commitment to professional development for volunteers and staff by establishing the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship in 2018. The scholarship is underwritten through an endowment funded by designated contributions to FLS.

Whether a community volunteer or a library staff member, applicants must be a member of FLS/NYLA and involved in a local Friends group at any type of library in New York State. Applications must be received by June 1. Learn more and find the application packet on the FLS RECS page. Visit www.NYLA.org/Friends > Our Awards and Scholarships > Enos. See [page 12](#) to donate to the fund.

The application form and supporting documentation should be submitted to FLS.nyla@yahoo.com. Use the same address for any questions. The Scholarship Committee will review all eligible applications and notify applicants of the results in the summer.

Thank you for your interest and support. It's not too soon to think about applying!



Leadership at Every Level: Fund-Protect-Empower NYLA 2024 Conference Friends Program Recaps

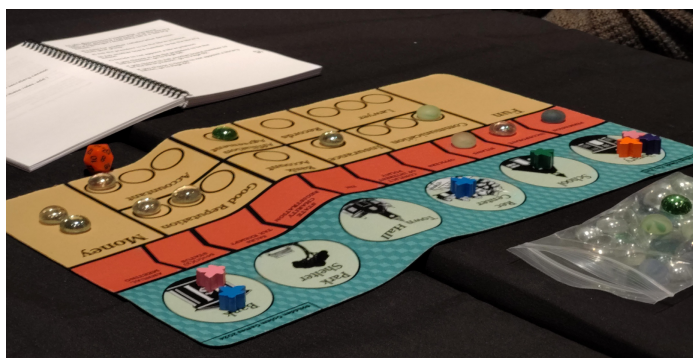


Several programs at the NYLA annual conference were specific to Friends, Friends groups and those library staff, trustees, and civic leaders who work to support libraries; to help libraries not only survive, but thrive. Members of FLS attended these sessions and have written recaps/reviews to either refresh your memory if you were there or to give you a sense of the broad range of programming available and the quality of the information presented. Thanks to all of our guest writers.

FLS Pre-Conference Continuing Education Workshop Forming Friends: The Board Game!

By Jim Foster

Stephanie "Cole" Adams is the guru of library law in New York State. Her sessions at NYLA overflow with attendees no matter the topic and she provides the voice behind the always popular "Ask the Lawyer" forum sponsored by the Empire State Library Network (ESLN) councils.



Last spring the Friends of Libraries Section of NYLA asked Cole to present a pre-conference workshop focused on the legal aspects of forming or reviving a Friends organization. Instead (or, rather, in addition to presenting the workshop) Ms. Adams created a board game called Forming Friends. Workshop attendees spent Wednesday afternoon playing the game and asking questions about the process of forming a Friends group. Forming Friends is a collaborative, choose-your-own-adventure style game. The concepts covered can be applied to forming almost any not-for-profit, though it focuses on Friends organizations and scenarios specifically.

During the workshop, teams worked together playing the game and discussing scenarios, much like a group of library supporters might do while forming a Friends organization. Should we spend money on a lawyer or a big event? What is the best way to raise money? Will donations be tax deductible? Where should we hold our meetings? Do we need by-laws and an MOU? Do we need an accountant? Are we allowed to advocate for the library politically? Should we have someone be a liaison with the library?

Some of the specific "choose your own adventure" aspects of the game were fun, while others were challenging and

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Teaming Up! Success in Community Partnerships

by Amy Discenza

Teamwork makes the dream work, baby. Ariel Bero and Megan Gillander of the Oneida Public Library (OPL) presented on Thursday afternoon to a lively group of library staff and supporters about the work they've done to increase community collaborations at the Oneida Public Library. Their accomplishments helped OPL to become the 2023 Central New York Library of the Year.

Partnering with community organizations allows library staff and volunteers to reach people outside their usual patron base and can help create a buzz about the library by showcasing it in a different light. Bero and Gillander encouraged attendees to make connections wherever possible by joining community groups, such as the Rotary and Chamber of Commerce, and city or town committees; tabling at local events; and even starting a nonprofit consortium.

Bero and Gillander went on to provide an array of programming and outreach ideas that can inspire a library of any size to be more present in their community. Highlights include:

- ◆ Partnerships with the school district, the police department, the fire department, parks and recreation, the county youth bureau, and an LGBTQIA+ organization to provide a broad spectrum of programming across the city for Oneida County Safety Week. Festivities include anti-bullying and cyber safety presentations, story times, a community resource fair, coffee with a cop, and even a fun run.
- ◆ A partnership with the Madison County Historian resulted in a walking and cemetery tour.
- ◆ OPL regularly collaborates with the City of Oneida Parks and Recreation Department. Together, they've organized a pet painting program to help celebrate a new dog park in town, an Amazing Race-style event inspired by the television show, numerous tree lightings and holiday parades, a parks passport program, and a prom for adults.
- ◆ A partnership with a local education center supporting people with autism and other disabilities inspired OPL to plan annual sensory Santa and Easter Bunny events at the library. The center advises library staff on how to

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Board Development and Management Strategies

by Lisa C. Wemett

Michele Wernsing, a founding member and past chair of the Friends of the Naples Library (OWWL Library System), provided insights, best practices, and tips on the development of leadership boards for Friends groups in her session which led off the FLS offerings on Friday morning, November 8.

“Board development is the process of providing training and resources to board members in order to improve the board’s performance and effectiveness.” Examples of that training would be sessions on donor relations and fundraising techniques, best practices in governance, and team building. Board members should be motivated to fill in the gaps they have in skills related to the management of nonprofits. Boards should consider arranging for special presentations and speakers to discuss specific issues, such as conflict of interest, compliance with NYS and federal laws governing nonprofits, and running productive meetings.

In the **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** with the library’s Board of Trustees, the Naples Friends state that their mission is “to raise public awareness in the community and to support the services and programs of the Library.” Michele rephrased this into a **simple mission** or “North Star” for all Friends groups: “We raise money for the library, to make grants to the library as they request, serve as goodwill ambassadors to the community, and promote the passage of funding for the library.” Some groups supply volunteer labor for library projects when requested, but it extremely important to avoid mission creep. “We do not get involved with Library policies, staffing, budget, or other internal matters.”

Effective board members think strategically and demonstrate good leadership, using their communication and networking skills to work as a team. They are lifelong learners and understand the importance of respecting the group process when decisions are made. Board members are honest, ethical, and altruistic. Every board member must be a current member of the Friends, demonstrating their personal monetary commitment to the organization. Board members should be encouraged to support the group with a donation that is meaningful to them.

The **composition of the board** should mirror the characteristics of the community in terms of age, sex, and ethnicity. Cultivate relationships with parents of young children who are often very invested in the library’s services. Some boards include high school students. The governing group should also reflect a variety of talents in the arenas of education, legal, and finance. These goals can be difficult to achieve, but growing your board with community leaders with backgrounds in IT, public relations, social work, and

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Easy as 1-2-3: Finding Valuable Volunteers

by Lisa C. Wemett



Most Friends leaders would state that there is nothing easy about finding and engaging volunteers to work with the organization.

“We need more worker bees!” is a common refrain. But following the structured approach outlined by Scott McLeod, Director of Civic Engagement, [Queens Public Library](#), would help the board of directors of Friends of the library groups or other leadership teams to accomplish their work.

Who are you recruiting? There are multiple audiences for your message: working professionals, students from middle school through college level, recent retirees and soon-to-be retirees, the unemployed and the under-employed. The last groups can provide assistance to your group while building skills to include on their résumés.

Recruiting volunteers is a comprehensive process that starts with understanding the needs of the Friends organization and additionally, the needs of the prospective volunteer. Scott’s toolkit includes ten tenets leading to volunteer engagement and satisfaction. Efforts that are regular and sustained over a period of time will make the work easier and successful. His proclamation that “You do not ever want to waste someone’s time” are words to live by when working with today’s volunteers.

Here are the essentials to build your toolkit:

Online presence: You possess a variety of tools to assist with your pitch. Your website, social media, professional-looking images, video, and face-to-face interactions all play a role in your recruitment efforts to reach a large pool of potential volunteers. Organize your message carefully before asking others to participate. The Friends webpage is very accessible, making it a crucial tool to showcase the group’s mission and to highlight and share volunteer opportunities, engaging potential volunteers effectively.

Communications: Communication plays a vital role in recruitment. You must be able to articulate information that makes a connection to the public and clearly states your goals and objectives. What is required from a volunteer? What kind of impact will their contribution of time and skills make for the library?

Recruiting online: Friends groups have traditionally relied very heavily on word-of-mouth recruiting. But even ten years

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Fundraising Without Book Sales

by Jean Sheviak

Three speakers from different library Friends groups talked about very different, but successful, fundraising events that did not involve book sales.



Lynda DeOrio, Michele Merwath, and Jen Allen

Lynda DeOrio from the Friends of Seymour Library in Auburn, NY, said their group wanted an "event" fundraiser to go with several other types of fundraisers they do. Another nonprofit shared information about a garden tour the group had sponsored ten years earlier, so the Seymour Friends decided to try this approach.

In February before the planned July event, they began with press releases, Facebook posts, and contacts with gardeners. They also invited plein air artists to participate by painting at the gardens for a \$15 participation fee. March brought contacts to 44 potential sponsors with the promise of 2 free tickets and publicity on posters for their \$100 donation. Ultimately eight gardens, nine plein air artists, and eight sponsors were involved. In addition, members of the Friends donated raffle baskets.

The Friends made plans to handle ticket sales, arrangements for overflow parking with local businesses, and publicity. The artists chose the garden where they would paint. Attendees received an informational brochure, parking information, and a ballot for a people's choice award for an artist. The tour ended back at the library where participants could enjoy music while casting their ballots and purchasing raffle tickets. 145 tickets were sold for the event, double the number they had budgeted. Expenses for the event were \$649, and income totaled \$4235, with the raffle being the largest income producer. Friends of Seymour Library has decided to sponsor this event every other year going forward.

Jen Allen, Executive Director of the Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library, discussed their annual book festival, which she notes is a huge undertaking. This annual festival began as a virtual event in 2021. Currently it takes place on an October weekend with local and national author events throughout Saratoga and a one-day literary marketplace.

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Keep It Growing! Strengthening Your Friends of the Library Group

by Joyce Laiosa

This two-part workshop on Saturday morning focused on recruitment of new members to your organization and keeping them. Today's volunteers are looking for meaningful volunteer opportunities. This workshop emphasized practical systems for volunteer recruitment and engagement in Friends groups. Networking and messaging with your community plus marketing that message will revitalize core supporters and maintain the important advocacy work for the library.

When recruiting volunteers, clear expectations with written up-to-date job descriptions are very important. New recruits need to see procedural manuals or instructions for all the work that is being requested. Mentoring is important for new volunteers to learn the tasks they are being asked to do. Groups can grow their leadership by listening to new voices and thinking outside the typical "box." For instance, perhaps you can't find anyone to take over the presidency of your organization; that might be the opportunity to recruit co-presidents or even three or four co-presidents.

Older/longtime members may feel ignored or that there is "no value" to their membership. Communication of the group's projects and successes needs to be relayed through donation "thank-you" letters and email blasts to all members about the Friends activities. There is also a place for volunteer recognition - from social events to mentions on digital signage or in the library's newsletter, with awards, and more!

Getting younger volunteers may seem difficult, but this workshop had a multitude of ideas from where to recruit to personally asking people who might have a volunteer mindset. Community partnerships are a place to make yourselves known and to show off your participation within the community (from farmers markets to parades and festivals). Stay positive, work with a team which will sustain the group, and you will grow a strong base of supporters.



Seven Ideas About Book Recycling

Lisa C. Wemett's first listicle for 2025*

Paulette Roes, Director of the North Country Library System (NCLS) in Watertown, presented "Leading Sustainability through Coordinated Book Recycling" at the NYLA Conference in Syracuse. I believe she started off saying, "Let's talk about trash." (Yes, sometimes books that are mildewed or infested with insects are, in fact, trash.)

NCLS serves an enormous geographic area of four rural counties where many smaller libraries are bulging at the seams. Best practices in librarianship dictate weeding the collection to make room for newer materials and to enhance access to all items, but what to do with those ex-libris volumes, not to mention donations the Friends cannot use or leftovers from book sales?

In 2018, NCLS began to help their member libraries dispose of weeded materials and remainders from book sales through a partnership with the Development Authority of the North Country (DANC). DANC had a recycling specialist on staff to assist with the initial project, which required work with library system staff to establish policies and procedures for their members that wanted to participate. The library system staff now operate a book debinder that allows hardcover books to go into the paper recycling stream. DANC offers a website, North Country Recycles (<https://www.northcountryrecycles.org>) which provides a centralized location for residents of the NCLS service area to learn more about the book recycling program and recycling other consumer waste. See the link under "Recycling 101" for additional ways to give books new lives.

Here are some ideas generated from Paulette's talk that may get your Friends leadership talking, too!

1. 32 million trees are felled each year that are turned into books. When those books are discarded, consider alternate ways to keep them out of the waste stream.
2. Check with your waste management company, but most paperbacks can be placed in your blue box for recycling.

Don't overwhelm the system—be reasonable with the volume of items you are putting in the box on collection day.

3. The Sustainable Libraries Initiative (<https://www.sustainablelibrariesinitiative.org/>) is designed to offer tools and resources that library leaders need to incorporate sustainability as a core value in their work. Friends, staff, and trustees can support a certification program for their library, helping it gain recognition for their efforts and support from its community. Recycling books is one step in the right direction.
4. What community groups and organizations in the library's service area are working toward the same goal as the Friends? There are multiple nonprofits supporting literacy initiatives that might be an outlet for your sale remainders, whether to students across the globe or to people who are incarcerated in the local jail. Research who might be able to use your unwanted materials.
5. In a similar vein, take the time to find out which local thrift stores, like Goodwill, will take book donations. Compile the information and inform patrons which additional agencies and stores besides the Friends are glad to accept books and other media for resale. This action is especially important when the Friends must restrict donations due to limitations on storage space.
6. Check with nearby libraries. We're not in a competition. The library in the next town may want the books you didn't sell, either for their next book sale or their bookstore.
7. Simplest of all: give away books to library patrons. Create a cart of free books in the lobby. People love free stuff! Fill it often.

*In journalism and blogging, a listicle is an article structured as a list, consisting of an introduction, three or more list items, and a call to action. It typically features a number in its title.

Forming Friends, continued from [page 3](#)

and thought-provoking. For example:

- "The Friends' newly elected president is caught in a major scandal involving a forged fishing license."
 - Your choices are: Hire a professional to handle public relations OR Let the scandal rage on.
- "The Secretary loses the notes he needed to complete the minutes of the most recent meeting."
 - Your choices are: Who needs minutes? OR Meet to re-create the minutes.
- "A board member engages in lobbying without the Friends being registered to lobby."
 - Your choices are: Immediately register to lobby OR Agree to stop lobbying OR Ignore the issue and have a fundraiser.
- "The Friends are invited to collaborate with the local arts

group to run a fundraiser called 'Books, Bodies, and Paint'."

- Your choices are: This sounds a bit risqué. Decline nicely and use the time to organize the finances. OR This sounds fun! You decide to do it.

Throughout the workshop, Cole laughed along with us as we played, and she also explained legal concepts and answered lots of questions about the entire process. As a library administrator, I always learn something new whenever I talk with Cole or hear her speak, and as an added bonus at this particular workshop, playing the game was genuinely a lot of fun! For more information about Forming Friends: The Board Game, see the article on [page 11](#).

Time to Start Planning: National Friends of Libraries Week

Friends of Libraries groups have their very own national week of celebration thanks to [United for Libraries](#), Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends and Foundations, an affiliate of the American Library Association. Held annually each October, [National Friends of Libraries Week](#) (NFOLW) offers a two-fold opportunity, both to promote Friends organizations to the community and to encourage volunteers and supporters to become members. This is also an excellent time for the library's Board of Trustees to recognize the Friends volunteers as library civic leaders and draw attention to their important work. In 2025, NFOLW will be held Sunday, October 19 through Saturday, October 25.

Although NFOLW was started back in 2005, the Friends of the Chili Public Library (Monroe County Library System) had never celebrated NFOLW previously. The group determined that would change in 2024! The Friends subcommittee that planned NFOLW 2024 had two tenets: (1) increase membership and (2) have fun!

When the Friends of the Chili Public Library (FCPL) hosted the fall meeting of the MCLS Friends Council on October 19, President Eileen Malloy Desormeaux carefully outlined what the group determined to offer for NFOLW. Their ambitious plans had started to play out the previous week. The Friends requested that the Chili Town Board pass a proclamation lauding the Friends of the Chili Public Library. As a thank you and to raise awareness of the group even more, each Town Board member received a Friends "swag bag" which, of course, included a membership form to encourage the Board members to become members of the Friends.



Throughout the week, two tables were set up in the library's lobby, one to promote Friends membership and one to have some fun with library patrons of all ages. At the membership table, new members became

eligible for a drawing for one of three prizes (an air fryer, a blood pressure monitor, and a pickleball set). Display items included a trifold about the Friends, the commendation from the Town Board, and information on the library programs sponsored by the Friends. This table was staffed each day with Friends volunteers (50 hours total over the course of the week).

The second table offered fun engagement activities. Patrons could guess how many apples were in the jar. A drawing for a \$25 Target gift card was held for the entries with the correct answer. A paper tree trunk became decorated with multi-color apples as patrons wrote down their favorite books and authors, literary characters, library staff members, and even furnishings ("kitchen playset")! Patrons

could purchase a chance for a raffle basket of baking supplies donated by a Friends member.



Their biggest celebration was a reception for their Friends lifetime members on Tuesday evening. FCPL offer a lifetime membership at \$200. These donors are recognized on a plaque which is on display in the library.

Eileen felt more could be done to engage these members with the Friends and the library. All lifetime members were invited to a reception along with the library's Board of Trustees and town board members; 48 members and nine library trustees attended.

The gathering featured a continuous slide show of Friends activities, a display of crafty creations made at the popular monthly adult craft sessions underwritten by the Friends, refreshments provided by local businesses (Target, Wegmans), and a small gift for each member. The hosts took the opportunity to suggest that another way lifetime members could support the library might be to give gift memberships to the Friends for the holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, or other occasions.

Eileen said, "Due to the incredible kindness of our Friends by donating food, paper products, gifts, raffle items, etc." there were no expenses for these NFOLW events. By the end of the week, the group had garnered 28 new memberships and had three renewing members. Ticket purchases for the raffle basket plus new membership fees added \$340 to the Friends revenue. The group certainly met their two primary goals! There was "lots of fun and laughter," said Eileen. "Members are already talking about doing it again!"

Don't miss out on the fun—set up your NFOLW planning committee now and be prepared for October to show off everything your group does to enrich your community's library!



Board Development, continued from [page 4](#)

real estate will provide members who can contribute to discussions based on their broad backgrounds. Librarians working in settings not associated with the public library (i.e., library staff in colleges and public schools who are residents of the library's service area) and readers, like members of the library book discussion groups, are welcome recruits. Be willing to be flexible with the time of the Friends regular meetings, which will reinforce that you are trying to be inclusive.

Recruitment of Friends leaders starts with a **nominating committee** who should collect bios or résumés of board candidates. We need to be deliberate, not desperate, to locate people to serve. Be open to recommendations from current board members, but carefully review suggestions to help diversify the board, allowing for a variety of professions and skill sets. Potential volunteers are looking for a sense of purpose, engagement with other like-minded individuals, and meaningful activity.

There should be an **informal interview with the nominee** by the Board president and chair of the nominating committee. Discussions with the candidates need to be honest about time commitments, membership, and any other requirements to serve. A **thorough vetting process** eliminates people who do not share the values of the library, excludes people with a political agenda or those who wish to pursue a self-interest, weeds out people who do not want to raise money, and hopefully, eliminates people with difficult or contrary personalities that the organization would be forced to deal with down the road. If the interviewees determine they are not a good fit for the board, **outline other ways they could contribute**, such as volunteering for special events or activities, advocating for library funding with a "get out the vote" committee, or serving on an advisory panel. Friends need volunteers at many levels.

Once the candidates are elected or appointed, all Friends groups should provide a more formal onboarding session as an **orientation** to the organization as a whole. You want board members to "hit the ground running." Create a **board manual** which should include the Friends articles of incorporation, current by-laws and its conflict of interest policy, a copy of the Friends operating agreement (MOU) with the library, contact information for all board members and committees, the annual budget and recent financial reports, and any other long-range planning document concerning the group's goals, especially in the area of fundraising. An orientation should discuss expectations of ethical standards and conduct for members, a review of the year's schedule of meetings, and a behind-the-scenes tour of the library, including introductions to staff members.

You've invested all this time to locate, recruit, interview, and train these board members. How do you keep them long-term? Michele outlined nearly a dozen strategies, including using their talents, asking for help, and assigning them

meaningful tasks. **Busy people expect organization and structure.** Meetings should be focused, productive, start and end on time, and be scheduled in advance for the year. Members should receive an agenda, financial report, minutes that document board decisions and actions, and committee reports that can be read in advance of the meeting date. A **Trustee Liaison to the Friends of the Library** should attend each Friends meeting to facilitate communications between the library's Board of Trustees and the Friends. Similarly, a Friends Liaison to the Board of Trustees should provide a report of Friends activities at the library's month meetings.

Avoid mission slippage. The Friends board should be hyper-focused on raising money for the library, with an annual financial goal in mind, and not try to run the library. As a group, **celebrate all successes.** Members of the board want to feel appreciated and valued. Board leaders need to thank all board members for their commitment of time and any financial contributions they make. In an effort to avoid cliques, Michele encouraged holding social events, like a potluck supper, with library staff and members of both the Friends and library boards.

Management strategies for the long haul include periodically reviewing the Friends by-laws and revising them as needed; holding open discussions as to whether the current structure is continuing to work (i.e., the number of meetings, the time of the meetings, committee or task force structure); and looking at the success of recruitment strategies, reviewing the current skill sets represented on the board to determine if new areas of expertise may be needed.

Teaming Up!, continued from [page 3](#)

make the events a good experience for visitors who are easily overstimulated.

- ◆ A local LGBTQIA+ organization works with OPL to plan author talks, pride displays and art events, workshops to support trans youth, and Naloxone training at the library.
- ◆ OPL staff work with the Oneida City School District to honor BOCES and other trade school graduates who are often left out of traditional graduation ceremonies, create story walks and field trips to the library, a one-district-one-book program, student art shows, and a paparazzi-style prom photo party.
- ◆ OPL partners with the New York State School for the Deaf on a program that combines robotics with community building, bringing hearing and deaf or hard-of-hearing students together.

Don't be afraid to dream, advised Gillander, whose motto is "Just ask." Now, get out there and make some community connections.

ago, 67% of people wanting to give of their time found volunteer opportunities online. Post COVID pandemic, this percentage has increased even more. Beyond your group's social media, Scott offered a variety of online volunteer websites that groups can use and many are free: [VolunteerMatch](#), [Points of Light](#), [Catchafire](#), AARP's [Create the Good](#), and [Idealist](#). As you diversify your communications, ask your audience which platform they prefer. Recruitment starts by painting a compelling story of the job and tasks needed for your group with a fully developed job description that is clear and concise. What is the job you want to complete? Who is the ideal person to complete the job? Provide specific information on skills, traits, characteristics such as demeanor, personality, previous experience, etc. When and where does the job occur (include times, days, length of service)? The more effort you put into your service description, conveying a sense of purpose and impact for prospective volunteers, the greater quality of viable applicants you will receive. You need a menu of projects to appeal to a wide audience of potential volunteers.

Visuals: Remember to customize your approach based on the preferences of your target audience and your specific needs and projects. Your images should foster cross-cultural appeal—you are trying to reach volunteers in a wide variety of demographics with diverse skill sets.

Content creation: According to HubSpot research, 62% of consumers have watched video content (i.e., product demos, reviews, FAQs, unboxings, etc.) to learn about a brand or product. A short, bite-sized video about the Friends will create an immersive experience for viewers and is easily sharable on social media. Consider an investment in a low-cost video production account (e.g., Biteable, Animaker) and then set up a YouTube or Vimeo account to host your video.

Print materials: What's old is new again! Print is physical. You engage with it and when well designed, it builds the Friends brand and establishes credibility about the organization. New improvements you should consider adding an interactive component to your brochures: QR codes, infographics, links to websites, and social media tags (e.g., @NYLA1890).

Social media: Create short- and long-term goals for all campaigns. Typically, people need at least seven "touches" before deciding to donate or take action. But you are not obliged to create and maintain all of these touchpoints simultaneously. Good news: 88% of people check their emails every day. Bad news: 41% of your emails will be looked at for less than eight seconds and 30% are looked at for less than two seconds. Craft impactful messages and repeat over time.

Visibility: The majority of paid jobs are filled through direct contacts and networking. Similarly, over 50% of volunteer positions are filled through word-of-mouth and

recommendations. What neighbor recruited you to join the Friends book sale team? Friends leaders should develop a script or talking points to highlight what the Friends do to support the library. "Get out of the house" and go tabling—be active in community events with a table display staffed by friendly volunteers to maximize visibility of the organization.

Recognition and Retention: Retaining volunteers should be part of your overall plan and relies on taking care of volunteers from your first "touch." Adding opportunities to recognize and celebrate accomplishments should exist throughout the lifecycle of your volunteer program.

Sustainability: Use your toolkit, which you must build incrementally. As you encounter various issues in your volunteer program, add solutions when needed that will help maintain it long-term. Be consistent in addressing problems.

Evaluation: Evaluating your recruitment process is an important step to help ensure you are meeting your desired goals and objectives. Evaluation identifies "pain points" that often slow down your ability to secure volunteers, leading to delays in placements and increasing attrition. Use surveys, one-on-one interviews, and annual group forums for volunteers to discuss their experiences so you'll receive useful, first-hand information. You want to obtain both positive and negative feedback from volunteers at key points during the organization's intake and onboarding process. A next step might be to convene a workgroup or task force to bring new ideas to improve the recruitment process and/or develop retention strategies. And then it is time to start again.

Learn more about the volunteer experience at the Queens Public Library at <http://volunteer.queenslibrary.org>. Scott McLeod encourages you to reach out to him with questions at smcleod@queenslibrary.org.

Friends of the Fairport Public Library: 50 Years of Service!

When our young Millennial friends turn 50, we instinctively think "Oh, they're so young!" (This is especially true if we have a decade or two on them!) But when a Friends group turns 50, it is huge cause for celebrating the longevity, tenacity, and staying power of the volunteers that brought the group to this point. Perhaps not so "young," but certainly vital and still doing great things.

Declaring that "your continued support helps the Friends to sponsor programs designed to add to the cultural and educational life of our community," Friends old and new were invited to help the Friends of the Fairport Public Library

~ continued on next page ~

Fundraising, continued from [page 5](#)

Friends of the Fairport Public Library

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The Friends partner with a number of organizations, including Skidmore College and the Chamber of Commerce. There were 33 events in 2024. The marketplace was held 10-2 on Saturday. 90+ authors attended, paying \$50 to participate. Cost for vendors and publishers was \$100. They included some children's programming at the marketplace to draw attendees. In addition, they sold tickets for three "beyond the book" events to expand their audience: Gossip Girl Brunch (\$100), Warren Zevyes concert (\$50), and a stand up comedy event (\$40). A free members-only event with three national authors who are local was held the Monday before to thank the Friends for their work on the festival. They have about 70 volunteers for the weekend.

How do they make money? Book sales, ticket purchases, literary marketplace participants, and sponsorships. Raffles and snacks were offered at the marketplace. Attendance has grown significantly, though they have found it harder to get sponsorships. They do not bring in high-fee authors. Most authors come for free, except for hotel costs.

Jen notes that this concept is scalable. A Friends group could start with a single author event in a year or just offer a literary marketplace. Go to saratogabookfestival.org for more information and a complete list of the extensive programming for this event.

Michele Merwath of the Friends of Marcellus Free Library said their group was concerned that they were not able to earn money through book sales during COVID, so they looked for a project to involve the community, other organizations like churches, and children. "Birds of a Feather Flock Together" emerged as the answer. Their goal was to get unpainted birdhouses into the community to be decorated by local artists, churches, business offices, or any community organization and then auctioned by the Friends. They purchased 26 unpainted birdhouses for \$105. Sponsors had three weeks to deliver the completed houses to the library. For a month the houses were displayed with a raffle box by each one. Raffle tickets were sold for \$1 or 6 for \$5 ("too cheap!" noted Michele). Additional raffles included bird food and supplies which were donated by local businesses.

The Friends did lots of publicity, which was successful. They learned that more people wanted birdhouses than they had available, sponsors would have paid for their houses, and this would be a good annual fundraiser. The project raised \$1000 to support the summer reading program and, just as important, really brought their community together.

celebrate their 50th anniversary in September. A detailed timeline display of milestones of the intertwined activities of the library and the Friends helped refresh memories of the years spent advocating for a new library, moving, early book sale efforts, and more. The celebration also recognized the 10th anniversary of The Corner Bookstore, established by the Friends in the fall of 2014 to sell used and vintage books in a storefront close to the library.



An invitation to these combined celebrations was sent by postcard and via email in late August, giving a detailed account of the start of

The Corner Bookstore which transformed an empty retail shop into a cozy space providing high quality books for readers of all ages and interests. The bookstore's efforts also support diverse causes such as Rotary International, mental health recovery services, books for those incarcerated, and scholarships for local students via Dollars for Scholars.

The store's involvement in the Fairport Perinton Merchants Association has led to an interesting project, contributing to "boater bags" which are given to visitors who arrive by boat on the Erie Canal and dock in Fairport. These gift bags are distributed by the dockmaster and are filled with goodies from local merchants, including a free paperback book from the bookstore and a coupon to entice them to visit while in town. The store also participates in many other community-wide events, including the summer's annual kick-off, Canal Days, with a major book sale of donated treasures.

In 2023, nearly 6,400 customers walked through the bookstore's doors, purchasing over 16,000 books. Total sales exceeded \$63,000 (exclusive of the Canal Days sidewalk sale), which allows this group to continue its good works and support to the library for special events, concerts, summer learning, and a delivery service by volunteers to bring library materials to patrons who cannot get to the library. The community members are great customers but also are generous in their donations of countless books and other media for the store's inventory.

FLS is pleased to recognize the Friends of the Fairport Public Library and their nearly 250 members who help with all these projects. This group was also the recipient of the FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award in 2021. Definitely still going strong! Congratulations!



Forming Friends is Here!

FLS was proud to debut **Forming Friends**, a collaborative board game, at the 2024 NYLA Annual Conference. **Forming Friends** simulates the process of starting up and running a nonprofit organization using a Friends of the Library group as the structural model.

"We created **Forming Friends** to keep FUN at the center of forming a Friends group, while faithfully teaching the process," says attorney Stephanie Adams. "Friends groups have to address formal things like incorporation and legal compliance, but without fun, you're missing an essential element of the journey."

With the trappings of a traditional board game, **Forming Friends** is a table-top, collaborative adventure that simulates the process of forming a not-for-profit corporation and running a Friends group. The players are taken on an adventure while learning about the essential milestones and key resources that volunteers need to start a Friends group for their library. Players roll a 20-sided die, follow the adventure guidebook, and track their progress on the **Forming Friends** playmat as they work together toward the ultimate goal to provide financial and volunteer support for their local library, helping it thrive and meet the needs of their community.

"Drawing inspiration from real-life issues and situations faced by Friends makes **Forming Friends** a really exciting experience," said game designer Sebastian Cole-Goldberg of Hidden Golem Games. "Since every step compounds on previous in-game decisions players make while solving problems together, every decision feels real."

Participants in the pre-conference session where **Forming Friends** was introduced gave it great reviews in their workshop evaluations. A staff member at a library system stated, "I learned so much about how to properly form Friends groups. This game is a great tool to assist people with the steps they should be taking." An academic librarian commented, "The board game helped explain the process of setting up a nonprofit. I loved the 'choose your own adventure' and collaborative format. Very fun!" Participants had an opportunity to discuss the game with its design team at the conference trade show, indicating they were looking forward to using it to encourage library boards to develop Friends groups.

Forming Friends is available online from Hidden Golem Games for \$55, plus tax and a \$10 shipping and handling fee. (<https://hiddengolemgames.com/formingfriends>). Online orders for tax exempt groups are available for \$65, which includes the shipping fee. Purchase orders cannot be accepted.

Stephanie "Cole" Adams is an attorney in Buffalo. Her firm, the Law Office of Stephanie Adams, PLLC (the LOSA),

focuses on laws that impact the cultural and built environment. Adams' primary clients are libraries, educators, students, and creative professionals. The LOSA provides the ["Ask the Lawyer" service](#) that the nine library resources councils of the Empire State Library Network offer to each library in the state. She is a frequent and popular speaker at NYLA Annual Conferences and conducts library trustee training sessions. Adams is a member of the American Library Association's Lawyers for Libraries faculty. Adams is a graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Law. Learn more at www.stephanicoleadams.com.

It Takes a Village...

And fortunately, FLS has a lot of dedicated villagers. Many hands make light work. Thank you to everyone who played a role for FLS at the 2024 NYLA Annual Conference! Our success depends on you.

Speakers:

- Stephanie Cole Adams, Esq., Law Office of Stephanie Adams
- Ariel Bero and Megan Gillander, Oneida Public Library
- Tony Iovino, Oceanside Library
- Michele Wernsing, Friends of the Naples Library
- Scott J. McLeod, Queens Public Library
- Lynda DeOrio, Friends of Seymour Library
- Michele Merwarth, Friends of the Marcellus Free Library
- Jen Allen, Friends of the Saratoga Springs Public Library
- Joyce R. Laiosa, FLS Executive Board
- Lisa C. Wemett, FLS Coordinator for Professional Development

Room Moderators:

- Jim Foster
- Ristiina Wigg
- Lisa Wemett
- Kerstin Cruger
- Jean Sheviak

Staffing the FLS Booth at the Trade Show:

- Amy Discenza
- Chris Lund
- Jean Sheviak
- Jim Foster
- Terry Mulee

And thanks to anyone else who stepped in and lent a hand, including the guest reporters for newsletter articles (see by-lines).

FLS would love to see your name on this list for the 2025 NYLA Annual Conference in Saratoga Springs! Email us at FLS.nyla@yahoo.com.

FLS Executive Board and Auxiliary Volunteers

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FLS Enos Scholarship Coordinator: Terry Mulee
Coordinator for Professional Development: Lisa C. Wemett
Coordinator of FLS Trade Show Booth: Jen Allen
Coordinator on Friends Councils: Jim Foster
Marketing Coordinator: Meg Sgombick
Nominating Committee Chair: Erica Freudenberger
NFOLW Coordinator: currently vacant
Regional Workshop Trainers: Joyce Laiosa, Lisa C. Wemett

Contact us anytime at FLS.nyla@yahoo.com
Visit the Friends of Libraries Section at
www.NYLA.org/Friends

FLS is not publishing email addresses in an attempt to eliminate phishing scams. Please use the NYLA Membership Directory to find contact information or use the FLS email. Please indicate your email recipient. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Casey Award Nominations

~ continued from [page 1](#) ~

To nominate a group or individual, use the nomination packet for the FLS Daniel W. Casey Library Advocacy Award posted on www.nyla.org/friends under "Our Awards and Scholarships." Submissions must include all relevant information outlined on the nomination form. Selection criteria include contributions of the nominee (group or individual) to library service, including positions held, years of service, and accomplishments such as successful fundraisers and volunteer engagement. Community outreach, marketing initiatives, advocacy, and leadership should all be highlighted.

All nominations and relevant supporting materials (e.g., screenshots of webpages, clippings of press releases, PDFs of promotional materials, letters in support of the nomination) must be submitted electronically and received by 5 p.m. on Sunday, June 1, 2025, at FLS.NYLA@yahoo.com. Questions concerning the award process can also be submitted to Lisa C. Wemett, FLS Coordinator for the Casey Award, at this email address. Thank you for your interest!

FLS Enos Conference Scholarship

Please consider a donation to the FLS Randall Enos Conference Scholarship Fund to ensure this worthy scholarship well into the future.

To make a donation, log in to your existing NYLA account (or create one) at <http://www.nyla.org>. Once you have logged in, select "Make a Donation" from the Quick Links. Scroll down that page until you find the FLS Randall Enos Scholarship Fund and enter your donation amount. Then scroll to the bottom and select "next" to complete your donation. To use your credit card, select "Pay Now" and continue with your payment details. To send a check, select "Invoice Me" and complete the page. Once you receive the invoice via email, print it out and mail it to NYLA along with your check.

Thanks for your continued support of FLS and the Friends who help libraries across New York State.

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Newsletter Editor: Terry Mulee
Proofreader and Contributor: Lisa C. Wemett

The current issue of Friends News and Notes is available on the FLS [Our Newsletter](#) page. Archived issues back to August of 2023 may be accessed by FLS members.

NYLA leads, educates, and advocates for the advancement of the New York library community.