Involve your Community Partners: Friends, Staff & Trustees

Friends of Libraries

As library ambassadors in the community, Friends serve as the eyes and ears of the library as well as its voice. The larger the Friends group, the more decision-makers will sit up and take notice.

• Make sure your fellow Friends know their role in library advocacy and the need to work in cooperation with the library administration and board.

• Start an advocacy committee to work with library administrators and the board in building public awareness and support for the library.

• Make friends with key decision-makers. Invite them to speak to your Friends group or be guests of honor at special events.

• Publish updates about library issues and suggestions for supporting them in your newsletter.

• Recruit others to join the Friends and to speak out for libraries.

• Thank or recognize officials who support the library. Make them honorary Friends. Feature them in the Friends’ newsletter.

• Let library administrators know about concerns—and compliments—you hear from others.

• Testify at hearings in support of the library.

• Raise and give funds to help raise awareness and build support for the library.

Learn what other Friends are doing. Join FOLUSA, the national support organization for Friends of Library groups. For info, see www.folusa.org.

LIBRARY STAFF

While library directors must take a leadership role, everyone on the staff—including librarians, LTAs, clerks, pages and delivery drivers—can help to raise awareness of what the library offers and needs.
Library directors/administrators

- Be enthusiastic and positive. Encourage others to speak out. Thank them for their support.
- Recruit and work closely with community leaders, encouraging their involvement and interest in the library.
- Communicate regularly with key community/campus/school leaders to keep them current with library concerns—and let them know how their funding makes a difference for your users.
- Keep library board members, staff, Friends and users informed of library needs and concerns. Provide updates, messages, training and suggestions to help them support the library.
- Maintain your advocacy network. Invite library users and others to testify at budget hearings, participate in media interviews and visit legislators.
- Participate in influential community or campus groups and use this as an opportunity to get the library’s message out and recruit advocates.
- Maintain a VIP list to receive the library’s newsletter, the annual report and other special mailings.
- Work at keeping a high profile for your library. Develop a marketing communication plan with a strong, consistent message.

All library workers

- Know the library’s message and be prepared to answer any questions you might get.
- Ask library users, your family, friends and neighbors to help spread the word.
- Be on the alert for good library user stories in your daily work. Collect them and forward to the appropriate person.
- Be a walking, talking billboard for libraries. Wear t-shirts, hats/other accessories that are pro-library.
- Use a library message as part of your e-mail signature.
- Look for new and creative ways of delivering the message—on the job and off.
- Listen and provide feedback to library administrators on issues/concerns that you may hear about.
- Keep current. Make a point of reading library updates so you can be knowledgeable.

TRUSTEES

As a trustee, you are in an ideal position to reach out to legislators, decision-makers and the public. You know the valuable services your library provides. You also know what it takes to provide those services.

- Use your political savvy and connections on behalf of the library.
- Make a point of getting to know key officials. Stay in touch even when you aren’t asking for something.
- Work closely with the library administration and staff in developing advocacy messages and strategies.
• Share your insights on how best to communicate library needs to the broader community and decision-makers.

• Make a point of recognizing legislators and business, campus and community leaders who have supported the library.

• Join the Association of Library Trustees, Advocates, Friends & Foundations (ALTAFF) and your state association’s trustee section to stay informed about the bigger picture of libraries.

• Be prepared to respond to questions that might arise about library matters, especially any sensitive issues.

• Make yourself available to speak to groups or the media.