

FRIENDS ON CAMPUS:

Academic Libraries and Their Friends

An Anatomy of a Successful Friends Group: The Friends of the Sojourner Truth Library

In an interview with Barbara W. Petruzzelli, Assistant Library Director of the Sojourner Truth Library at SUNY New Paltz, FOLUSA was able to find out what makes their Friends group successful.

The Friends of the Sojourner Truth Library is a relatively new group founded in 1997. As happens so often with the start up of a new group, the heart and soul behind the group's beginning (and its continued good health) is Paul Brown. Dr. Brown was a former university professor of psychology. When he left the faculty to enter private practice, he wanted to do something to give back to the college and settled on the library.

"My daughter attends Lafayette College (in Easton, PA) and I was impressed by the money the library Friends and foundation were able to raise," said Brown. "State institutions have a much harder time making the case for support but they need it, so I decided to try to do something about it."

Upon meeting with members of the university's development office and the library director, Brown decided to start a Friends group - one that now boasts approximately 300 members. Though loosely structured, (the group does not have by-laws or policies, for example) the Friends have been able to raise the profile of the library and over \$150,000 to date. Run by a twelve person steering committee comprised of the library director, current faculty, emeritus faculty, a community member and, of course, Paul Brown; the group meets once a month to plan activities and take care of basic business.

In the beginning, the Friends brought in new members through a direct mail campaign to faculty and staff. Now, however, joining the Friends is an option included in a campus-wide mailing from the university's development office which is sent out to raise money for a variety of campus needs. This eliminates the need for an independent appeal by the Friends, but the library still keeps a membership database in-house and handles all the renewals.

People who join the Friends are given a free guest library card and are invited to special "meet the author" receptions that are held in conjunction with public author programs. Past authors have included Nicholas Basbanes and Roger Cohn. In addition, Friends members are put on a campus-wide mailing list for notifications and news about upcoming events at the university and receive a discount on campus parking passes. The dues are reasonably priced at \$30.

In addition to membership dues, money is raised by two semi-annual book sales. All the books sold come from donations from individuals, businesses, and even the campus bookstore. No library withdrawals are included. In past years, the book sale was dependent on the honor system. Instead of staffing the sales, buyers were asked to contribute \$1.00 for hardback books and \$.50 for paperbacks - bringing in approximately \$2500 per sale. This year, however, the sales were publicized on www.booksalefinder.com which resulted in a much greater turnout and a lot of dealers. Because of this, the Friends will be looking for volunteers to staff

future sales to ensure that everyone acts "honorably!"

As a special twist on the traditional "book plating" program, the library also has a book plate program to honor outstanding graduates. Each year, all university departments are asked to name an outstanding student graduate from their respective departments. Then, with funding from the Provost's office, a book plate is placed in a book to honor each student. The student receives a copy of the book plate suitable for framing. In addition, the students each receive a free membership in the Friends. Through subsequent renewals of that membership, students are given a very inexpensive way to give back to their alma mater.

Barbara Petruzzelli reports that they best thing about the Friends is the wonderful public relations they convey to the library. "It's not the library tooting its own horn," says Petruzzelli. "It's Paul and the Friends saying wonderful things about us. Their speaking out on our behalf gives the library credibility it wouldn't otherwise have."

Calling All Academic Friends!

FOLUSA wants you! We are in search of individuals to write articles for the "Friends on Campus" column in each issue of *News Update*. If you have an interesting story to tell about your academic Friends group, have advice to share, or expertise on a specific subject applicable to Friends and libraries, please contact FOLUSA by email at bethn@folusa.org or by phone at 800-936-5872.

And don't forget to check out the recently updated links of all Friends on Campus articles in The Friends Zone. Many of these articles are applicable to groups in public and school environments as well!



Friends of the Sojourner Truth Library