

## **HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SOUTH BURLINGTON LIBRARY AND THEIR SUPPORT OF THE LIBRARY**

by Myke Esposito

Between the Fall of 1971 and the Spring of 1972, it became apparent that South Burlington would lose the services of the Mobile Library Unit of the Northwest Regional Library. After many joint meetings, it was decided to undertake a joint use of the High School Library and the community. In April, a Silver Tea to benefit the library was held and \$150 in donations was received as well as a considerable number of books. A Friends of the Library group was in the process of being formed with Mrs. Duncan Brown as Chairman.

1972/1973 This was the first year the services of the mobile unit of the library were discontinued. Through the cooperation of the School Board and others, the High School Library was expanded to serve the community as well. Mrs. Ruth Winton, HS librarian, gave much of her time to help this venture work smoothly. Many residents donated books, records and paperbacks and with the assistance of the Chair of the Friends and many volunteers, these individuals worked evenings. They helped with the processing of the donated books and were invaluable in helping the library function that year.

**1973/1974** Great support was given to the Community Library by a large number of people. The Friends of the Library group was becoming very active. At the Annual Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast, the Friends held a used book sale and earned about \$ 180 and this money was used to increase the collection of books for younger children. In May of that year, the Friends sponsored a two-day showing of the British film, "Beatrix Potter and the Tales of Peter Rabbit." This effort earned \$265 to be used also for the purchase of additional children's books. The Friends produced a new brochure for the SBCL which was to be used in future membership drives.

**1974/1975** The Community Library was growing steadily; book collection numbers were over 13,000 volumes. A copier was also made available for use by the public. Many books were culled and were given to the Beach House at Red Rocks for use at the beach. During this time frame, the Friends held their Second Annual Book Sale at the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast. Besides realizing \$130 from the sale, several boxes of paperbacks were sent to the South Burlington Correctional Library. During National Library Week, the Friends sponsored an open house, and two Vermont authors, Margaret Hyde and Norman Smith, were invited to display their books. The Vermont Historical Society booklet "Looking Around South Burlington" was offered to the public for the first time.

**1975/1976** In that year, a Citizen's Committee (charged by the School Board) was working to determine what the community sees as a possible addition to the school. The Library Community hoped that a new enlarged library facility would be built with additional space to serve the needs of the school and the community. Friends purchased a whole new section of card catalog furniture for a much-needed expansion of this index to the collection. Proceeds from the Third Annual Book

Sale held in conjunction with the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast allowed the library to participate in a Title 111 ESEA grant which would help the community.

**1976/1977** The library had basically been manned by volunteers and this year, thanks to added city funds, staff had been hired and the library was able to expand its hours. The Friends held a very successful Community Appreciation Day with varied activities including a showing of childrens' films, a sing-along accompanied by guitar, an exhibition of paintings and photographs and more.

**1977/1978** The previous year, the library had 925 residents with borrowing cards; this year it went to 1,494 and residents made 4,151 visits with a borrowing average of 2 books per visit. The Friends Annual Book Sale was held again in conjunction with the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and raised \$255. Some 12 cartons of books, etc. that had not been sold were taken to the Unitarian Church in Burlington by Trustees for their "Friends of Speech and Hearing Book Sale" the following week.

**1978/1979** In this year, the library environment was enhanced by a considerable collection of plants under the care of a volunteer. At this time, only a few people had requested the "Library-At-Your-Door" service which provides free home delivery to shut-ins. The Friends of the Library now had 55 members as a result of a very successful Membership drive in conjunction with their Annual Community Day. Over 500 people attended in the pouring rain. The Friends were able to purchase a free-standing display case for the library as a result of the Annual Book Sale.

**1980/1981** The library qualified for an incentive grant from the Vermont Department of Libraries for meeting public library standards at levels I and II. This resulted in receipt of approximately \$1100 in Federal Funds. The library was also grateful to the Friends for the following gifts: \$300 for books; \$200 for standing bulletin boards; \$450 toward the purchase of a card catalog unit.

**1982/1983** The Friends of the Library group was inactive this year. However, the programs for Community Day in January and \$500 for books were provided by the Friends.

**1983/1984** A member of the local business community volunteered to assess the support of local businesses for a special business resource collection. Contributions made possible the purchase of a number of books of high interest to the business community. The Friends of the Library welcomed many volunteers during this period. Donations of used books and records were given and were sold at the annual book sale providing a total of \$700 to the Friends in support of the library.

**1984/1985** This timeframe shows that there are 5,100 registered borrowers at the library, and this is large for a town of 10,679 residents. Volunteers assisted in many ways: caring for the plants, processing new books and, among many other ways, helping with the annual used book sale which earned \$1,300 this year.

**1985/1986** A survey was conducted by community volunteers to assess what services, materials and hours the community would want. Results showed that 42.5% felt they needed to know more about the library and 73% would prefer to use library books rather than purchase them. The Friends again held a used book sale in conjunction with the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast. A total of \$1,500 was raised for the library as a result of this effort.

**1986/87** The Friends of the Library held a book sale which raised \$1,068 for materials, and the Rotary Club assisted with moving the books from the library storeroom to the cafeteria and cleaning up after the sale. A large number of books were donated to Adult Basic Education and the Chittenden County Correctional Center.

**1987/88** Again, the Rotary helped with the moving of books from the storeroom to the cafeteria for the Annual Book Sale. The Book Sale was held in conjunction with the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and the sale netted \$1,662.

**1988/89** There was vandalism in May at the Library when 1,200 books were damaged by water. Many volunteers, including Friends, assisted with the cleanup process. The used book sale, with the help of Kiwanis and Rotary members, earned \$1,672.35.

**1989/1990** With the support of the community and through the efforts of a core of dedicated individuals, the annual book sale raised \$1,977 for the library. A portion of the money was earmarked by the Trustees to purchase two upholstered chairs for the periodical reading area.

**1990/1991** The book sale for this year netted \$1,896 for the library.

**1991/1992** The book sale netted \$2,000. Left-over paper backs were taken to COTS, children's books to the Food Shelf and hardcopies to the Ronald McDonald House.

**1992/1993** Trustees and other volunteers had been running the Friends of SBCL organization for the past few years. This year, the dormant Friends' group was re-vitalized and it was again active in support of library programs.

**1993/1994** The Friends organization is now providing the library with energy, enthusiasm and funding support for a variety of children's and adults' programs and activities. There is a new Library sign on Dorset Street, an Open House in February, acquisition of the Library of America, a classic American literature series and two new bulletin boards inside the library.

**1994/1995** In a typical week, the library benefitted from hours of community service by loyal volunteers including Friends of the Library who organized and staffed the book sale. The Friends also sponsored many programs. The Trustees acknowledged the many contributions by the Friends' support of the library's mission: without the support, enthusiasm, energy and funding by the Friends, the many programs and activities offered by the library would not be

possible.

**1995/1996** The library was grateful to all the volunteers this year, including the Friends, who organized the annual book sale. The sale netted over \$2,900 for library equipment and programs.

**1996/1997** The library was honored in a special way this year by being named a beneficiary of the estate of the late Paul Blanchette. Income from the endowment will support the library's non-fiction collection. Again, the Friends of the Library held their book sale, and it netted \$2,000.

**1998/1999** The Department of Public Works provided a new, user-friendly circulation desk. Through the efforts of the Program Librarian, \$9,500 in funding was secured from the Turrell Foundation for literacy programs for children. Once again, the book sale run by the Friends brought in \$2,100.

**1999/2000** Great news was announced that, in March of 2001, there would be a new full-time Community Librarian position, which has been needed for some time. Through the generosity of patrons bringing their donations of used books and other media, the Friends book sale was a financial success.

**2000/2001** The new Community Library Director started this year on May 14, 2001. As always, the library is indebted to all of its volunteers who contributed time and energy. The Friends contributed \$3,783 to library expenses, purchasing a scanner, sponsoring library programs, and financing the printing of customized library bookmarks. In May, they sponsored a Baby Brunch honoring the South Burlington children born during the past year providing a wonderful opportunity for parents and children to meet and socialize and become acquainted with the library and its services.

**2001/2008** The library welcomed a new Library Director in 2001; the Friends of the Library continued to have book sales as part of its fundraising efforts; there were various teas held for and by the Friends and there was continued support by the Friends for programs at the library. During this time, the Friends also sought and received a Turrell Foundation Grant in the amount of \$7,850. This was the fifth year that the Friends had received a Turrell Grant. This particular grant was used to fund parenting programs, community outreach programs, day-care, book bags and more.

Starting in 2009, there were changes in the Friends organization. Meetings, formerly held in the evenings, were changed to daytime; by-laws for the Friends organization were re-written; the President of the Friends became a permanent liaison to the Library Board of Trustees and attended monthly meetings; individual committees were formed. One of the newest at that time was Membership-; lists of all members were produced and provided to Officers, for Friends business only. A Development Committee was formed and their task was to revamp the Friends brochure, develop procedures on how to facilitate programs and refreshments and so on. As the years went on, new committees were formed: Fundraising, Publicity, Hospitality, Program and Executive. The Friends were instrumental in getting a separate postal address from the high

school for the library!

During this timeframe, a major task was undertaken by members of the Friends organization. There was no longer any room to store book sale books at the library! What to do?? The Friends negotiated space in the lower level for storage of books at the Faith United Methodist Church. Every week, a few people would sort books at the library, and then transport saleable books via bags/cars to the Church. This was a tedious but necessary process as there was no elevator to the lower level. The Friends then held used book sales at the Church. It was during this period that a new fundraiser was initiated: "The Cookie Walk." People were given specific instructions for baking, transmitting and scheduling for the sale of a variety of cookies---even dog biscuits! It was a great success along with the book sale at the Church.

Programs and fundraisers continued and then the Library Director retired in July of 2014. A search for a new director took place and three members of the Friends were included in the search process. The final decision was made by the Library Board of Trustees. In the Fall of 2014, the Friends were concerned that their use of a portion of the Church's basement would not be available in the future. Plans were made to have a discussion with the City Manager for South Burlington to perhaps lease space at the historic Wheeler House on Dorset Street. Discussions were held with the City along with Common Roots, an organization whose goal is to provide "Health Food for Healthy Kids from Healthy Farms." In February of 2015, a one-year lease was signed with the City of South Burlington that stated the Friends of the Library and Common Roots would share the Wheeler House.

With a new location, it was decided to have an ongoing Friends' Book Shop! But the Book Shop would need a name; a contest was held and the winning name was "A NOVEL IDEA." The Book Shop is now open Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10-2. Volunteers are always needed. In order to continually support the library, the goal of the Friends, it is necessary to have fundraisers. The used book sales twice a year, ice cream social with music and art exhibits were held at Wheeler House. Our Cookie Walk has been held for the last two years at the library. We do have raffle baskets promoting various themes:- Spring Tea (Jane Austen); Baseball/Summer Fun and so on.

The Friends signed a new lease with the City in 2016 to continue its work at the Wheeler House. It is with great pride that the Friends Organization, through creativity, imagination and forethought has been able to continue its goal with the help and support of its members. But remember, we cannot continue to do it alone - join the Friends and help support your current and future library.

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**History Updated**

by Sue Raatikainen

**2017-March 2020** During this time "A Novel Idea" book shop was a popular spot in the summer.

The Burlington Garden Club was active at Wheeler House, so many garden lovers frequented the shop. We were open 4 hours a day, Thursday-Saturday. Winter was slow so we cut back to two days a week from November - April.

Spring and Fall book sales at Wheeler House generated revenue for the library. The Ice Cream Social was a popular summer family event three years in a row. Spring and December events were held for members only. The Friends sponsored the Library Winter Concert Series and provided refreshments. The November Cookie Walk was another successful annual fundraiser. Annual contributions of \$4,500 were made to enhance library programs.

The library moved from the high school to University Mall in November 2017. The City of South Burlington voted to build a new library in 2018. The Friends Book Shop was included in the new library. A Book Shop Committee was formed to discuss the transition from Wheeler House to the new library. Construction began in 2020.

**March 2020-June 2021** In March 2020 our world changed drastically. The state of Vermont closed all non-essential businesses. We closed the bookshop indefinitely, not realizing that it would never open again at Wheeler House. In April 2020 we had our first Zoom meeting and continued to meet on-line monthly through June 2021. The Book Shop Committee also worked remotely. Despite our limited ability to fundraise we donated \$6,500 to the Foundations' Aspire Campaign for the new library.

The Book Shop Committee packed up Wheeler House in spring 2021. As the state lifted emergency restrictions and our members became vaccinated, we were able to have in-person meetings again. In June 2021 we provided refreshments for the Bag and Wagon event, the kickoff for the library move. We recruited new volunteers to work in the bookshop at the new library with the intention of being open every day that the library is open for a minimum of two hours.

**July 2021-June 2022** The new library and the Friends Bookshop (previously A Novel Idea) opened in mid-July 2021. Since then, volunteers have manned the shop two hours daily from 10:30-12:30. Patrons purchase books after those hours at the Circulation Desk. The shop has been very successful. Sales and book donations have been brisk. Our annual income was approximately \$3,700. In October 2021 and March 2022, we held multi-day, well-attended book sales in the Community Room. Revenue from these sales totaled around \$5,900. Our membership has more than doubled. In July 2021 we had 74 active members; as of June 2022 we have 156. We made another generous donation to the Library Foundation Aspire Campaign of \$2,500 and contributed \$5,000 for library programs and events.

While it is nice to review our financial success, we are also pleased to acknowledge our impact on the community. Our new location in the library has enhanced our visibility to the public. Regular

patrons stop in the shop to look for new books and to chat with the volunteer of the day. At both book sales we had numerous compliments about the organization and the variety of books available. The Winter Library concerts were renamed The Friends of the Library Concert Series. Four concerts were held in the new auditorium. In our first year sponsoring the series, The Connor Young Quartet, Hungrytown, Eclectica and The Sky Blue Boys entertained concert goers with outstanding music paid for by the Friends. Throughout the year we have provided free books for the Little Free Library in the mall. More recently we have filled the LFL at Farrell Park. The Rotary just funded four more LFLs for other South Burlington parks that the Friends will maintain. We are proud to support and advocate for the South Burlington Public Library through these varied activities.

**July 2022-December 2024** In addition to our big spring and fall book sales, we branched out into Pop Up Book Sales. In September 2022, we had a Saturday sale in the lobby featuring mass market books, DVDs, VHS tapes and our new canvas book bags. In December 2022, we participated in the first “Illuminate Vermont” event. We highlighted children’s books, new releases and graphic novels. We enjoyed participating in this popular holiday event next to the cozy fireplace and live music. Another Illuminate Vermont event was held in April 2024 around the total solar eclipse and, once again, the Friends sold books during a festive community event. In spring 2022, we assisted with a gathering for state librarians to visit our new library after their annual conference, hosted the dedication of the Marjorie Von Ohlsen Caldecott Award section of the Children’s Library, promoted National Library week with a poster and balloons and helped with a book signing for the cookbook My Vermont Table. We increased funding for the Friends of the Library Concert Series. The VSO Ensemble, Troy Millette and the Fire Below, Jenni and the Jazz Junketeers, Trifolia, Va-et-Vien, The Judy Emanuel Family Band and the Evan’s/Asbell Duo all performed in our auditorium. These varied groups provided outstanding entertainment for all musical tastes and were very popular. Our successful fundraising events allowed us to give the library \$10,000 in 2023 and \$15,000 in 2024. In addition to the Friends Concert Series, we paid for the popular Miss Emma for the Children’s program, Book Page magazine, online magazines, e-books, and Children’s audio books. We also provided funds for Children’s and Adult Summer Reading programs. We donated \$1,000 to the Vermont Libraries Fund to help out libraries damaged by the 2024 flooding. In 2025, the City is installing a StoryWalk from Garden St. to Market St. The Friends are proud and excited to pay for this project. We will help the library change the books seasonally and look forward to another link with our South Burlington Public Library community.