

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 was the first year the services of the mobile unit of the Library was 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 also be used 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 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 needs of 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 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 the hours. The Friends held a very successful Community Appreciation Day with varied activities including a showing of children's' films, plus a sing-along accompanied by guitar; and an exhibition of paintings and photographs and more.

1977-1978---Last year the Library had 925 residents with borrowing cards; this year it went to 1494 and residents made 4151 visits with a borrowing average of 2 books per visit. The Friends Annual Book Sale was again held 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 next week.

1978-1979---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 have requested the "Library-At-Your-Door" service which provides free home delivery to shut-ins. The Friend 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 level 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-books; \$200- standing bulletin boards; \$450- to ward purchase of a card catalog unit.

1982-1983---The Friends of the Library group was inactive this past year. However, the programs for Community Day in January and \$500 for books was 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 \$700.00 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 things also helped with the annual used book sale which earned \$1300 this year.

1985- 1986---A survey was conducted by community volunteers to assess what services, materials, hours the community would want. Some results showed that 42.5%felt they needed to know more about the library; 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 \$1500 was raised for the library as a result of this effort.

1986-87 Friends of the Library held a book sale which raised \$1068 for materials and the Rotary Club assisted with moving the books from the library store room 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 store room to the cafeteria for the Annual Book Sale. The Book Sale was held in conjunction with the Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast and the sale netted \$1662.00.

1988-89 There was vandalism in May at the Library when 1200 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 \$1672.35.

1989-1990 With the support of the community and through the efforts of a core of dedicated individuals, the annual book sale raised \$1977 for the library. A portion of the money was earmarked by the Trustees to purchase two upholstered chairs for the periodical reading area.

1990-1991Book sale for this year netted\$1,896 for the Library.

1991 - 1992 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 Evidently, Trustees and other volunteers had been running the Friends of SBCL organization for the past few years. This year, the dormant Friends' group was revitalized 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 adult s' 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 \$2900 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 \$2000.

1998-1999 The Public works Dept. provided a new, user friendly circulation desk. Through the efforts of the Program Librarian, \$9500 in funding was secured from the Turrell Foundation for literacy programs for children. Once again, the book sale run by the Friends brought in \$2100.

1999-2000 Great news is that in March of 2001, there will 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 14¹ 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 this 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 timeframe, the Friends also sought and received a Turrell Foundation Grant in the amount of \$7850. 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 Friends organization were re-written; the President of the Friends was a liaison to the Library Board of Trustees and attended monthly meetings and this continues today; 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. Before I forget, the Friends were instrumental in getting a separate postal address from the HS 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, also, that a new fundraiser was initiated "

A Cookie Walk"!!! People were given specific instructions for baking, transmitting and scheduling for the sale of the 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. 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, as it is the goal of the Friends, it is necessary to have

fundraisers. Used book sales twice a year, Ice Cream Social with Music, Art Exhibits are 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” BookShop 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 2 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 3 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 \$4500 were made to enhance Library programs.

The Library moved from the High School to the 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 BookShop Committee also worked remotely. Despite our limited ability to fundraise we donated \$6500 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 look forward to moving into the new shop next month! We have been recruiting new volunteers to work in the bookshop as we hope to be open every day that the library is open for a minimum of 2 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 2 hours daily from 1030-1230. 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 \$3700. In October 2021 and March 2022 we held multi-day, well attended book sales in the Community Room. Revenue from these sales totaled around \$5900. Our membership has more than doubled. In July 2021 we had 74 active members, as of June 2022 we have 156. We made 2 donations to the Library Foundation Aspire Campaign totaling \$9000 and contributed \$5000 for library programs and events.

While it is nice to review our financial success, I am 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 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. 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 SB parks that the Friends will maintain. We are proud to support and advocate for the SB Public Library through these varied activities.