

## How to Create a Successful Library Friends Group

By Nancy Agafitei and Susan Greer

### I. Mission of a Friends Groups

Basic structure

1. Mission statement
2. Bylaws

Provide funds and volunteers to enhance library materials and services

1. Provide funds to buy supplemental materials for the collection
  - a. Print books at all age levels
  - b. e-Books
  - c. Audiobooks
  - d. DVDs
  - e. Computers and printers
2. Provide for supplemental programming
  - a. Children's programs (esp. in summer)
  - b. Teen programs
  - c. Special events (anniversaries, open houses, branch meetings)
  - d. Literacy/ESL programs
3. Provide support for staff
  - a. Staff training expenses
  - b. Thank-you gifts for staff
  - c. Hire extra staff in summer, if needed
  - d. Recruit volunteers to help staff

Advocate for library issues and support

1. Build support in the political community
  - a. Build a relationship with your local Commissioner
  - b. Attend City and County board meetings is a visible way
  - c. Raise library issues at town halls/ community forums
  - d. Invite elected officials to visit your library
2. Build support with the business community
  - a. Join the nearest Chamber of Commerce; attend meetings
  - b. Encourage staff to do presentations for businesses on library resources
  - c. Ask businesses to sponsor programs; advertise their support

3. Build support with community organizations
  - a. Make presentations to community groups on library resources
  - b. Capitalize on mutual interests with groups, and learn about their special programs (example: AAUW grants)
  - c. Recruit community leaders as Friends' board members
4. Build support with the Library Administration
  - a. Make local library needs visible to HCPL administrators
  - b. Join and support county-wide Friends efforts (HCFOL)

## II. Membership Issues

How do you get people to join?

1. Membership basics
  - a. Membership dues structure
  - b. Membership drives
  - c. Renewal notices
2. Benefits and giveaways
  - a. T-shirts
  - b. Decals, coasters, magnets
  - c. Invitation to events
3. Publicity
  - a. Membership form in library brochure and at every event
  - b. Distribute a newsletter to customers (currently \$420/yr. for up to 2500 contacts via Constant Contact)
  - c. Send Friends' press releases with library releases to subdivision newsletters and local newspapers
  - d. Maintain website and Social Media Instagram/Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn

How do you get people to volunteer?

- a. Make a personal contact
- b. Define specific jobs
- c. Recognize and reward volunteer efforts
- d. Have fun!

### III. Activities for Friends Groups

#### Fundraising possibilities

- a. Book sales
- b. Raffles (follow the law!)
- c. Support of local business events (B&N; Panera; Pizza Zone)
- d. Special thematic or seasonal fundraisers (Christmas; summer)
- e. Sell merchandise (flash drives; book bags; T-shirts, etc.)
- f. Encourage online donations (e.g. through Network for Good)

#### Other types of programs

- a. Sponsor author visits (help author's sell books)
- b. Host events that bring people to the library (open house; parties)

#### C. Sources of ideas

- a. Other HCPL branches
- b. Join "United for Libraries"
- c. Google

### IV. Financial Issues

#### Attaining 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status is important

- a. Being exempt from sales tax when Friends buy things
- b. Donations to the organization are tax-deductible to the donor

#### Complying with IRS, State of Texas, and Harris County requirements is required

- a. Annual filing of 990 information return (public document)
- b. Pay state sales tax on a regular basis (taking advantage of two
- c. one-day [24-hour] tax-free sales)
- d. Pay the required 2% concession fees to Harris County twice per year



## V. Links to Resources

[Barbara Bush Library Friends](#)

[E-mail Marketing via newsletters](#)

[Applying for 501\(c\)\(3\) status:](#)

[Maintaining 501\(c\)\(3\) status:](#)

[Network for Good \(for accepting donations online\)](#)

[Better Business Bureau](#) (becoming an accredited charity)

[United for Libraries \(American Library Association resource for Friends groups; small Friends group can join for \\$50\)](#)

[Explanation of the 990 Information Return](#)