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We Love Libraries - Friends of Georgia Libraries news

Melanie Duncan

Middle Georgia Regional Library System, duncanm@bibblib.org

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Friends of the Macon-Bibb County Library

A key component of any library system in these tough economic times is an active Friends of the Library group, and the Middle Georgia Regional Library System, headquartered in Macon, Ga., has been the beneficiary of such a group for 45 years. Our Friends group was founded in 1966 with twelve members. There are close to 40 active members today, including a variety of ages and professions, and even retired library personnel. Members meet twice a week to sort books, movies and audiobooks donated by local residents, and to process donations used to purchase memorial and honor books.

There are many more Friends who pay a yearly membership fee to support the group. The fee entitles the member to an invitation a Preview Party held the night before the Old Book Sale opens to the public. Attendees are allowed to purchase a select number of items before they are available to the general public, usually whatever amount of books that will fit in a bag provided by the Friends group. Membership also includes free admission to Friends-sponsored programs such as author signings and a subscription to the quarterly newsletter, *The Bookworm*.

Each spring, the Friends hold an annual Old Book Sale to raise money for the libraries. In previous years, the Old Book Sale was held at the Long Building at Central City Park. However, in August 2011, the City of Macon condemned the building, forcing the organization to scramble to find a new location. The 44th Annual Old Book Sale will be held March 15-18, 2012, at the Macon Centreplex, with the Friends Preview Party on March 14 from 5:00-8:00 p.m. The sale will take place during the Cherry Blossom Festival, which starts March 17 in Macon. The proceeds from the sale have funded well over \$1 million in new books, audiobooks, films, summer reading club programs, library furniture and equipment, and local history preservation programs.

In addition to this change of venue for the Old Book Sale, the Friends relocated from a workspace on the ground floor of the Washington Memorial Library to a new location offsite. Renovations to the Washington Library necessitated moving items and equipment into the area previously used by the Friends, and the sheer volume of donations precluded the continued use of the greatly reduced workspace. As a result, the Friends moved into a storefront in Riverstreet Corners (2720 Riverside Dr., Suite 129, Macon). The benefits of the new location include a larger sorting room, better lighting, generous office space, and a large storage area. The move to the new location has proven to be quite successful.

The Friends have also created their own webpage to supplement the information available on the library website. The new webpage, www.friendsofthelibrarymacon.com/, is still partially under construction. The Friends plan to add a gallery of the old and rare books donated to entice buyers to the Old Book Sale. If you wish to contact the Friends for information about their programs, please call 478-745-2422 or e-mail: info@friendsofthelibrarymacon.com

By Melanie C. Duncan, M.L.S.
Branch Librarian, Shurling Library
Middle Georgia Regional Library System, Macon, Ga.