

**PUBLIC LIBRARIES NEED FRIENDS:
ASPECTS OF THE FRIENDS OF
MISHAWAKA-PENN PUBLIC LIBRARY'S
INVOLVEMENT AND IMPORTANCE TO THE
LIBRARY SYSTEM IN MISHAWAKA, INDIANA**

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What does it take to be a Friend of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library? Energy and interest. There are several levels of membership: Individual one- and three-year memberships; Family one- and three-year memberships; and Youth (K-12) membership. Every month, members receive *Hi-Lites*, the Friends of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library newsletter. [See <http://www.mppl.lib.in.us/hilitespage1.html> for the latest issue.] Members who enjoy taking on leadership roles can serve on the Friends' Board as president, vice president, treasurer, assistant treasurer, program chair, book sale chair, or hospitality chair. These and other active members as well as the librarians who help coordinate Friends' activities are indispensable assets to the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library (MPPL).

The Friends' book sale takes place four times a year. Volunteers work with library staff to solicit book donations, publicize, organize, and staff the book sales. Proceeds from the sales are used to fund a variety of library programs.

Maria Siqueria, Friends Board Member and Program Chair, develops new workshop ideas that bring people to the library more often. She says she's learned a lot having been involved in past workshops like "Make a Quilted Christmas Ornament!"

Friends cosponsor (with the MPPL and different area businesses) the children, young adult, and adult Summer Reading programs. Each program has a special theme. Last year the adult theme was "So Many Books, So Little Time," this year (2001) it was "Never Judge a Book By Its Movie." The Friends, as well as area businesses, provide special gifts or gift certificates for those patrons who read (or in the case of adults, listen to) the required number of books. Past prizes have included t-shirts, book bags, gift certificates from local businesses, and beanie babies.

The Friends also sponsor discussion groups. The Great Books discussion meets once a month. The Great

Decisions discussion group meets on alternating Monday afternoons from February through May and discusses topics based on a briefing book provided by the Foreign Policy Association and the American Association of University Women. Friends volunteers provide refreshments for these groups. Lynn Day is a volunteer baker who says, "My second love is baking cookies so I love to donate them for refreshments [for library programs]!"

Another event made possible with the help of the Friends is the Mishawaka-Penn Public annual Collection and Hobby Show held this past January. Participation was open to children in grades four through nine. Prizes were awarded to winners. Although they were not eligible for prizes, teachers and library staff also displayed their collections and hobbies. Friend, Ed Wallis, was a judge of the Collection and Hobby Show.

Wallis, who has been an active volunteer for ten years, is an outstanding example of a Friend who wears many hats. His invaluable contribution as a Friend includes his help with the library's book repair team. As an experienced book repair team member, he makes new book jackets from old by fitting, fastening, and taping these to fit the various-sized books. He describes his work as "interesting and useful without involving a rigid time commitment."

Friends also develop new program ideas. Local attorney, Richard Currey, led a discussion that was free and open to the public on the life of Theodore Roosevelt during a meeting of the Friends of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library and The American Heritage Roundtable. Currey is also on the Friends Board and provides legal advice for the library when necessary.

Friends volunteers can help make connections between the library and other community groups. Friend Linda Doshi from the Northern Indiana Center for History in South Bend, Indiana, requested that *Hi-*

Lites promote one of the center's programs: *Picturing Lincoln the Changing Image of America's 16th President*. The article stressed a need for volunteers for the Lincoln program. Awareness of the program also led to displays and to a Library program entitled *Everything You Wanted to Know About the Civil War, But Were Afraid to Ask*. A speaker from the Northern Indiana Center for History led the discussion of the Civil War. The participants also viewed artifacts from the Civil War such as Confederate currency and a tin cup and plate used by soldiers during the Civil War.

Another Friend, Ellen West, proved to be a valuable connection to local high school musicians. Her children are members of music groups and bands that hold concerts in the Library. Special programs during the holidays included Musical Selections Performed by Mishawaka High School Rhythm Express & Chamber Singers and the Mishawaka High School Jazz Ensemble that featured holiday jazz.

The Friends are also one of the sponsors of the Official Monopoly® Game Tournament where 24 players were needed to qualify. Mishawaka-Penn Public Library had 37 players. The winner at this event held at the library qualified for consideration as State Champion. State Champions get to compete in the National Championship 2003 and the winner of that goes to World Championship.

Other great programs the Friends help sponsor include excellent speakers. Humorist, Martha Branson-Banks, who is also the Director of Occupational Therapy Assistant Program at Lake Michigan College, Niles, Michigan, spoke at a library program entitled *Humor: Jest for the Health of It*. Branson-Banks, with 20 years of experience as a speaker on humor, provided an interesting free program for the public to enjoy at the library. The library also held a program called *Meet the Author: Mark Kelley*. Kelley wrote the book *Berman's Lament* and is a professor of communication at Goshen College, Indiana. He discussed the history and development of broadcast journalism and what prompted him to write *Berman's Lament*.

The Friends were one of the sponsors of a program for the entire family to enjoy called *The Space Shuttle*. Space flight historian, Brian Weaver, presented a multimedia program that discussed the conception, history, and present day uses of the space shuttle; its role in space activities, and the operational aspects, systems and subsystems. He shared his collection of books, magazines, artifacts, hardware, models, autographs, and other items from both the United States and Soviet Space Programs. Many of the items were also put on display at the library.

The Friends have further fun as a group when they take their annual bus trip. In October 2000 they went to

Meijer Gardens in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where they enjoyed touring the gardens and viewing the Gerald R. Ford Museum.

The Friends annual meeting and luncheon is also a good chance for the group to socialize. During the annual meeting, the library staff express their appreciation for the work done by the volunteers. Last year, volunteers received a small first aid kit as a token of appreciation from the library.

When various Friends members were asked what they enjoyed about being a Friends member, Maria Siqueria emphasized how much she enjoys working on the holiday library decorating committee with library staff and other Friends. Another member, Ellen West, likes taking part in the selection of materials such as Books On Tape, Accelerated Reader, and books for the Children's Department and for Mishawaka elementary school programs. West is also in charge of Mishawaka-Penn Public Library's entry in the Memorial Day Parade that promotes the MMPL's Children's Summer Reading Program. Friend Fran Means' volunteer contributions have included lining up speakers for library programs, furnishing refreshments at library programs and other meetings, and planning Friends bus trips. Means said, "I enjoy being on the Friends board because it has the widest variety of interesting people on it."

Friends of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library are also our best users. Dick Currey said, "I've used this library since I was a toddler and [it's] always seemed like a second home with just a few more books." Kris Monagle, Friends Board President says, "One of the greatest things about our library is that the staff is friendly and kind... The library is a sanctuary of knowledge and also a peaceful place in which one can relax." Mishawaka-Penn Public Library is very fortunate to have such good friends!

For more information about the Friends of the Mishawaka-Penn Public Library, see their home page at <http://www.mmpl.lib.in.us/friendshome.htm>.