

## FRIENDS OF THE CLINTONVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY HISTORY

### The First 25 Years 1985-2010 By Doris Abrahamson

Many people found the crowded conditions in the Finney Public Library frustrating. Not only was the working space for the librarians restricted to a small area, but the stairs leading up to the library and down to the Children's Library were daunting too many patrons. These were among the reasons given to call a community meeting on September 25, 1985, at the local bank community room. Two staff members from Appleton explained the formation and function of a Friend's group. At the time no one said, "raise money" or "make a donation," but it had the same effect.

Reading the scrapbook for the first year shows an organization having fund raisers and donating the profits to the Library Building Fund. All this was in addition to the Fund Raisers sponsored by the newly formed FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY.

The first officers were: President – Doris Abrahamson, Vice-President – Jeanne Klemp, Secretary – Gale Hoffmann, Treasurer – Chuck Gillette, and Directors were Pete Oberhauser, Carole Sabel, and Gail Stillings.

After four years of fund-raising activities, the Friends' officers began to question how long this was to continue without some indication from the city that they were even listening. A public forum was requested for our Annual Meeting in October 1989. By this time \$13,000 had been added to the building fund by the Friends. The mayor, members of the city council, and the Library Board were on hand to answer questions about the proposed new building. The Library Board provided a financial plan showing how a \$921,000 library could be funded without adding to the tax base. This total was requested to be on hand by 1991, from the following sources: \$390,000 in the Library Building Fund, \$306,000 from a municipal loan to be repaid by County usage fees and a pre-budgeted city payment of \$125,000 from a federal grant to be applied for and \$100,000 raised from the community to pay for furnishings and equipment. This plan was approved.

The federal grant was applied for and received, and the local funds to be raised were increased to \$125,000 and expected to be on hand by July 1990. By the end of this fund drive the Friends had collected over \$157,000. Records show that the city received a check in August for \$104,000.

Most of the money collected was used to provide automation for the new library. To attempt to list all the people in the community who helped with the fund raising would be like copying the telephone directory. Everybody had a hand in it.

Bob Seaman was the overall Fund Chairman. Art Joerres was in charge of Industry donations, Margaret McCauley and George Zachow headed the Special Donors list.

The ones who really put us over the top were Beth Mack and the Alumni group. We heard from people in Saudi Arabia and Ghana as well as most of the fifty states.

The Art fair fell into our laps shortly after FOL (Friends of the Library) was organized. There were eleven Art Fairs before FOL took over from the Arts & Crafts Club. Their membership was small and aging so they were looking for a group willing to give the Art Fair a new life. Jeanne Klemp, Carole Sabel and Gail Stillings were sent to find out all they should know to run a successful Art Fair. Gail left the area shortly after this but the other two, with the addition of Eileen Gossens, chaired the Art Fair for many years. FOL stated from the start the Art Fair was to be a cultural endeavor for the community without worry of financial gain. In recent years the problem has been finding interested personnel to run the Fair since it demands some attention throughout the year. We are grateful for all the years of guidance we had from Jeanne, Carol, Eileen, Beth Mack, Judy Dorn, Barb Newton, Carol Johnson, Tracy Yearwood, and all the helpers they recruited. This was the first year without an Art Fair sponsored by the Friends. The subject will be reevaluated at a later date.

In the past twenty-five years we have been both educated and entertained. We began by singing with the MacDowell Chorus for two years, birding with UWGB's Past-President Weidner, hearing the lives of First Ladies, and sharing in Tom Pease family fun. After moving the library to our new location, Ben Franklin, Eleanor Roosevelt, Louisa Mae Alcott, and Will Rogers put in appearances. We've had the Spoon Man, we've drummed and juggled, and we have had live animals, storytellers, and science programs. Among the authors we've heard from were Michael Perry, Don Oakland, Justin Isherwood, Ellen Kort, and a review of Bill Bryson's "A Walk in the Woods." Ellen Kort conducted a writer's workshop. In addition, many of our local residents helped us learn more about their concerns and their experiences in faraway places. We have had study groups and discussion groups and refreshed our memories of World War II. A Master Gardeners group tends to the plantings, keeping our library grounds beautiful. Most of our programs were free to the public or at a very low charge. We can be sure the next twenty-five years will bring more education and entertainment.

How do we raise money today? Well, are you a member of the Friends? Are you familiar with our Used Book Sales? We have them twice a year and would have them more often if they didn't demand so much work. To long-time FOL members, the Used Book Sales provided a source of conversation. "Where did we go after Mitch's?" and "What about Sixth Street?" We've been recycling used books from the first.

Since there was no room in the old library, a storage place was a top priority. Anton's conveniently left the store on Ninth Street, and that became our first home. Behold! The building was sold. We moved to Zimmer's Bakery across from the old library. This building had a pipe standing up almost a foot above the floor restricting it from public

use. All sales had to be outside-lugged boxes out and lugged boxes in. (It was at one of those sales that I was told that for an old girl, I was pretty tough!) Again, the building was sold. From there we went to Mitch's old building for the first time and were able to have a sale INSIDE-once we got the door open! New plans came up for the building, but Cal Waite had a storage place on Sixth Street that we could use. Again, the sales were outside only. Although for Winter Whirl we moved some boxes of books to sell in the First National Bank basement. Then Cal needed the space. We then moved to Third Street. The old Beer Depot was available. Outside only once again. You guessed it- the building sold. Ike's old paint shop was our next stop. We could be inside but the space was really too small. Then that space too was destined for other use. The old Buick garage (now housing the Ambulance Service) was used but again only for outside sales. We moved in a snowstorm and had a summer sale complete with rain. Finally, we were located in the old Ben Franklin building (across from the Congregational Church) and the space was terrific. There were no lights in the building so we had only outside sales once again. We used to claim that all the "For Sale" buildings should be happy to let us use their space since it worked like a charm to get it sold. "Have Books, Will Travel" was our motto. In spite of all this moving our sales usually went well. And our prices were really low: 10 cents for paperbacks and 25 cents for hardcover. Often, we dickered for a box at a time. To finally have a building with room to store AND sell books INSIDE was and remains a delight. Since we now have décor, we raised the prices to our current charges: 25 cents for paperbacks, 50 cents for hardcover, and 10 cents for all kids' books. We are frequently told these prices are too cheap, but the objective is to keep people reading, and we have found our sales are profitable.

Over the years the Used Book Sales have been organized by Doris Abrahamson with Chris Dittman and Pat Schley ready to help in this venture. Moving books is still a requirement for every sale. New donations are now stored in the basement of the library. Space is limited and shelves get crowded fast. By the time of the next sale, it is a case of organized confusion. All these books must be packed in boxes, elevated via the dumb waiter to the main floor and then transported to the Community Room. At the end of the sale, books that haven't been sold must be returned to the basement shelves. IT'S WORK! We have been very fortunate to have capable helpers from Beat the Heat moving books for us. Without them there wouldn't be a sale. Generally, the profits from these book sales have been used to finance children's programs.

The money we raise from memberships and from used book sales has been used for programs, prizes, the scanner, the defibrillator, and other related costs. We are a nonprofit organization, pledged to support library objectives. We should expect to pay for treats, for kids' programs, advertising, programs at annual meetings, and other

related fees. If you are asked to buy a ticket to a future Friends' program you will benefit some child or some adult. Better yet, support the library by becoming a Friend.

No matter what our project was, we had the support and cooperation of the library staff. From Harriet (McCauley), Kathy (Michell), Diane (Raschke) and Gale (Hoffmann) to the youngest part-timers, they have all been willing to help. THANK YOU-all of you. It hasn't been said enough. All the members, officers and directors of the Friends have worked hard to make this organization successful, but more was required of some because of the time they served. The current officers (2009-2010) are President – Sanny Oberhauser, Vice-President – Kathy Akey, Secretary – Steve Shelton, Treasurer – Ann Klemp, and Directors – Jeff Hoffman, Chris Dittman, Penny Kettenhoven, Carole DeWolf, and Deb Kamp-Schroeder. Officers and Directors through the past twenty-five years include: Doris Abrahamson, Chuck Gilette, Peter Oberhauser, Bob Arkens, Sanny Oberhauser, Doreen Williams, Jim Simpson, Barb Newton, Ann VanGrinsven Tony Tomlyanovich, Chris Dittman, Ann Klemp, Deb Kamp-Schroeder, Jeanne Klemp, Carole Sabel, Tim Sweet, Roger Sage, Roger Patrickus, Judy Paulson, Kris Kenfield, Joyce Rasmussen, Mary Oelhafen, Jeff Hoffman, Tracy Yearwood, Penny Kettenhoven, Carole DeWolf, Gale Hoffmann, Gail Stilling, V.J. Wadleigh, Beth Mack, Wendy Brock, Art Joerres, Dick Yatzeck, Joan Paulson, Steve Heckman, Carol Johnson, Steve Shelton, and Kathy Akey.

#### 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary up-date

It is with great gratitude and thanks to Doris Abrahamson for writing a good summary of the first 25 years of the history of the Friends of the Clintonville Public Library. We are now approaching the Friends 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary (September 25, 2025) and it is time to update the Friends long history.

In general, the Friends have continued to fund raise through membership and book sales to continue the long tradition of supporting library programs, materials, equipment, and furnishings when needed and appropriate for our support. It is because of the Friends support that the summer library programming from the beginning continues to this day and also providing our community children and adults with outstanding programs and activities. All the library directors have often stated that without the support of the Friends the summer programming would not be possible. The Friends has always provided for children's, teens and adult programming throughout the year.

There is a lost period of time from when Doris wrote her history of The Friends (2010) until 2015. No records can be found for that five-year period. That means the history of the Friends will be picked up from 2015 on. As Doris said in her report the Friends continue to educate and entertain and support our Library requests and needs.

The following are some highlights that have taken place since 2015.

In 2015, The Friends started a bargain book sale in the entranceway of the library. This has generated a lot of foot traffic of people coming and going from the library to look over the books being offered for sale. As a result, many dollars (even though the books are sold at a bargain price of twenty-five cents each) are brought into the Friends funds for the year through these sales. (Note there is just a locked box to put their money in, but it seems most people are willing to pay for such cheap bargain books on sale.) Ralph Williams oversees this program, often coming in every day to put out new books for sale.

October 19, 2025, a motion was made and passed that the board President can call for an email vote if necessary to deal with any issues that may come up between board meetings. It was first used in July of 2016, and continues to be used if necessary.

In May of 2016, we purchased three banners with the Friends logo to be used at various events.

In January of 2017, the FOL started paying for a movie license. Now the library can show various movies as part of the children's, teens, and adult programs and at community events.

There was no April 17, 2018, Friends board meeting due to a 29-inch snowstorm.

In July of 2018, the library board created the Clintonville Area Public Library Hall of Fame. This is for the induction granted to individuals who have made an exceptional contribution to the area of library services over a sustained period of time. In July of 2019, Jeane Giordana, President of the Friends board at the time, submitted the application to have Doris Abrahamson, the founder of the Friends of the Clintonville Public Library to be put on the Clintonville Area Public Library Hall of Fame. The library board accepted this application and a plaque with Doris' name was put on the Clintonville Area Public Library Hall of Fame wall. Doris is the first and so far, only name being recognized for this honor.

In April 2019, the board made several revisions of our By-Laws. One major revision was to allow a board officer to be able to continue to serve after their two, two-year successive terms were completed if approved unanimously by the full Friends board members. Another major revision was to drop how long a board member can serve (use to be that they could only be on for two years). One other major change was to permanently set the number of board members at 9, four being officers and the other five being board directors. Other minor revisions were also made. (You can see the By-laws on the Public Library Website under the Friends heading.)

In June of 2020 the library book club read their 100<sup>th</sup> book – My beloved world by Sonia Sotomayor – a Supreme Court Justice.

Due to the closing of the library due to COVID-19 our last in person board meeting was held on January 21, 2020. After that the board meetings were held using Zoom meetings. We would not meet again in person for a board meeting until July 2021.

As a result of COVID, the Friends annual meeting for the next two years was cancelled. We sent out an annual newsletter in place of meetings. Yet our loyal Friend supporters continued to send in financial contributions during this time to continue to support the library needs.

In December 2022, the library closed to put in new carpeting. The library held an open house on January 16, 2023, to welcome the public back to the library. Not only did they put in new carpeting but also rearranged the shelving and moved the teen section from the East side of the library to the West side of the library. The Friends provided funds for treats. The Friends also had a display promoting the Friends groups and listed the activities and programs they had committed to providing for the year. Someone from the Friends was also present during the day to promote the Friends group.

In April of 2023, the Friends purchased six portable computer carrels to be used for patron computer usage.

In 2024, we lost our first (as far as we know) active Friends board member – Pat Dougherty. The Friends approved a \$100 to \$150 donation in her name to be used to purchase library materials, especially children's books. In July of 2024, a policy was written to cover establishing a memorial for just such a situation in the future if it arises.

In June of 2024, the library held its first outdoor picnic to kick off the summer library program. The Friends provided funds for food and supplies for this. Three Friends board members assisted in handing out food and beverages during the picnic. Around 350 people attended this activity.

In January of 2025, the By-laws were updated listing the duties of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and Library Board Liaison. This is the first time that the duties have actually been listed and put into print for future reference for future board members.

As Doris Abrahamson had mentioned in her report the Friends do a lot of educating and entertaining as part of their activities. We have continued to do that from the beginning and into the future. Here is a short list of some of those presentations:

- 2017 Betty Pearson – Writing Memoirs
- 2018 Jim Rice on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Packers
- 2022 Jon Pahl the author of Fethullah Gülen, A Life of Hizmet Fethullah Gülen, Why A Muslim Scholar in Pennsylvania Matters to the World

- September of 2023 Violet Noell a teen author who self-published her first book at the age of 15
- October of 2024 Tammy Borden a Clintonville native and the author of Waltraud: A true story of growing up in Nazi Germany.
- In 2025 we brought in three guest speakers: In March John Armbruster the author of Tailspin, in September Robert Block, talking about WWII POW camps in the U.S. and Wisconsin, and in October Robert Kinderman, the author of children's books, a memoir and his first adult fiction book. We will continue to bring in many more guest presentations and to support activities for all ages.

The Friends will continue to support the library for many years to come.

The Friends history update was written by Richard Block, President of the Friends board, in July 2025.