



Friends of Michigan Libraries
Connecting Friends across Michigan

Focus On Friends

September 2025

Our Website



Letter from the President Joe David

Just a Few Random Thoughts

Back-to-School Opportunities

The start of the new school year offers libraries and Friends some opportunities to connect with teachers and students and to make the library an attractive destination.

Talk to teachers and administrators to see if there are ways you can collaborate to meet their needs. Many teachers are short on resources and welcome free books and supplies you're able to provide. Expand and promote access to digital resources and set aside secure and welcoming study spaces. Make the library visible by participating in and supporting school events. Provide financial and volunteer support for creative programs your library staff might offer to students.

You can find plenty of great ideas on the Internet to get started. Just key in "back-to-school ideas for libraries" in your Internet browser.

Website Changes Coming

We're in the final stages of making some exciting changes to the design, navigation, content and services available on the FOML website. To familiarize you with the changes, we will introduce you to some of the key features in future episodes, including a new event registration and account management system.

We will also tell you how to take advantage of our new "Feedback Forum" and "Friendeavors" features to improve your operations, increase your visibility and offer ideas to other Friends groups who want to add to their success. Stay tuned!

‘Consult A Friend’ Popularity

When we launched our Consult-A-Friend (CAF) service earlier this year, we didn’t really know what to expect. So, we have been pleasantly surprised to see how quickly it has grown in popularity with our members, with 20 inquiries and counting in the first eight months of the year. Here’s what a couple of our members have said about CAF:

- "As a new president of a Friends group, Consult-A-Friend has been a priceless resource! Understanding how other groups handled items did help us to navigate what we would like to do. I would highly recommend this service to other Friends groups." - Gail Geasler, Friends of the Laingsburg Public Library
- "Our board recently used FOML's Consult-A-Friend service and were very impressed with the answer we received. It was a complex question and the prompt response we received considered the question from all angles and contained great ideas for a solution. I highly recommend the service." - Sylvia Arakelian, Friends of Harrison Township Public Library

Since there’s a good chance other members might benefit from the answers we’re providing in CAF, we will share some of the information in the “Tips for Success” column in our newsletters and add it to our FOML Member’s Handbook on our website.

Coming Events



‘Talk About Friends’ Workshop Headed to the Charlevoix Public Library October 10

Charlevoix has a beautiful library that is a marvel to visitors and residents alike. In fact, the library sells t-shirts and other merchandise that sums up their feelings with the tagline, “I came for the beach...but stayed for the library.”

Steve Hall, president of the Friends of the Charlevoix Public Library, said that many visitors are surprised that there could be such an amazing library in a town the size of Charlevoix. And, he thinks FOML members will feel the same way when they attend the “Talk About Friends” workshop there on October 10, hosted by his Friends group.

“The meeting itself is worth the trip north, but with the added bonus of seeing the breathtaking fall colors of northern Michigan and strolling the vendors’ tents in East Park during Charlevoix’s Apple Fest that kicks off on Friday, October 10,” he said.



He added that, if your Friends group has an issue that you need help with or an idea that has made a difference in your community, you should “come talk about it with other Friends and learn what they are doing to strengthen their libraries across the state.”

The workshop will begin at 9:30 am and will feature a Zoom presentation by Clare Membiela, library law consultant for the Library of Michigan, on “Important Principles & Practices of Friends Groups.”

For more information about the meeting agenda and to register, click on this link to go to the FOML website. And, to learn more about the rustic charm of the Apple Fest—including, freshly harvested apples, food booths, a farmer’s market, and an arts & crafts show—click on this link.

“Come on up north for the fall colors, the festival and, most importantly, a great workshop,” Hall said. “You’ll come for the meeting...and stay for the library. See you on October 10!”

Celebrate Your Friends Group October



NATIONAL Friends OF Libraries WEEK

OCTOBER 19-25, 2025

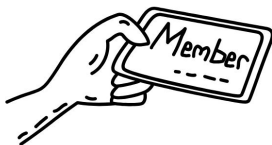
AN INITIATIVE OF UNITED FOR LIBRARIES

Friends of libraries groups have their very own national week of celebration! United for libraries is coordinating the 20th annual “National Friends of Libraries Week” October 19 - 25, 2025. The celebration offers a two fold opportunity to celebrate Friends:

- You can use the time to creatively promote your group in the community, to raise awareness, to thank your members and volunteers, and to promote membership
- This is also an excellent opportunity for your library and Board of Trustees to recognize the Friends for their help and support of the library.

Be sure to sign up for resource ideas, including graphics, at https://www.ala.org/united/events_conferences/folweek. If your library comes up with a creative way to recognize your group, tell us about it and send some pictures so we can share it with others.

Establishing Membership Dues Is More Art than Science



A Friends member recently reached out through the Consult-A-Friend program to see if Friends could offer a formula for how to establish membership dues for their Friends group. Specifically, they wondered if there was any correlation between the size of the community served by the library and the amount charged for dues. You can use the time to creatively promote your group in the community, to raise awareness, to thank your members and volunteers, and to promote membership.

Well, we had our theories based on past discussions with Friends groups throughout the state, but we wanted to provide an answer based on data...not our personal anecdotes.

So, we sent a short survey to our members, asking the size of their community and their dues structure, in addition to a few other qualifying questions. We received 22 responses and found that, as we expected, the variations on membership structures and dues are vast and almost entirely based on the individual preferences and needs of each organization.

Here are some of the key points we were able to mine from the data, most of which are likely not too surprising:

- A significant majority (81.8 percent) have some form of membership dues. Those that don't have dues rely on donations and book sales to generate revenue.
- There truly is no "normal" dues structure that correlates to the size of the community served. Instead, other factors (community socioeconomic status, the need for dues income, a preference for voluntary donations over mandatory dues, simplification, etc.) generally dictate how a Friends group will establish its membership structure and rates.
- The most common membership tier structure includes rates for students (\$5), seniors (\$5-\$10), individuals (\$10-\$25), families (\$15-\$35), and lifetime (\$100-\$1,000), with the rates varying from one group to the other.
- Five of the respondents include subjective tiers—like Supporter, Benefactor, Silver, Gold, Platinum, Diamond, Circle of Friends, etc.)—that are more intended to imply special status rather than demographic differences. None of them describe any differences in benefits for various levels. In fact, one acknowledges that there are no differences.
- Several groups use an "open" approach to dues. In other words, they establish a minimum "contribution" and leave it to the members to set the rate's ceiling where they are comfortable, with many choosing voluntarily to pay more than the minimum.

For most Friends groups, membership dues comprise a very small portion of their annual revenues, and they are intended mainly to identify the most passionate supporters of the library who are the best candidates for volunteerism, donations and participation in events, according to Joe David, FOML president.

“My local Friends group chooses to keep our dues very low because we’re fortunate enough to be able to rely on book sales and donations as revenue streams,” he said. “Understandably, not everyone has that luxury. So, it’s more important for them to rely on dues to fund their support of the library.”

A copy of the full results of the survey is available to members by sending an email request to FOML.

‘Harriet Larson Founders Grant’ Applications Due September 30

Members of the Friends of Michigan Libraries (FOML) are eligible to apply for FOML Grants and Awards, including the FOML Merit Award and the Harriet Larson Founders Grant. Take a look below and see if you qualify.



Applications for the Harriet Larson Founders Grant of \$750 are due September 30. The grant honors one of the founders of FOML. The grants will be awarded by the Grants & Awards Committee based on the following criteria, provided an applicant meets all of the applicable eligibility requirements and is a current FOML member:

- A new Friends group is being officially formed
- A Friends group that is being rejuvenated, with a higher priority given to a group with a longer period of inactivity
- An existing Friends group has a proposal for increasing membership, increasing community awareness, or a proposal for a novel approach to advocating for their library in the community.

Applications received by September 30, 2025 will be considered at the first FOML Board meeting following that date.

Apply for the FOML Merit Award



The FOML Merit Award recognizes Friends groups that completed a successful project or a number of successful activities during 2025. If you feel that applies to your group, it isn't too early to consider submitting an application for the FOML Merit Award.

FOML encourages Michigan Friends groups to apply for this award, with applications due no later than January 31, 2026. There are two \$750 award categories: a Friends group serving a population under 12,000, and a Friends group serving a population of 12,000 or more. (Consult with your library director for service population information.)

Merit Award winners will be presented with the awards at the 2026 FOML Annual Membership Meeting. You must have been a FOML Member during 2025 to be considered. To apply visit the FOML website.

Friendeavors

Pentwater Township Library offers 'Stitch It Up!' Sewing Workshop for Students



Remember when young girls took Home Economics and boys took Shop class? Learning to sew is one of those skills that used to be taught in school. But, changes in curriculum and in society have caused a generation or two of students to miss out on learning to use a sewing machine, follow a pattern, and create original clothing. Pentwater Library recently offered a two-day workshop, called "Stitch It Up," to fill that void.

Flyers and Facebook notices on the Friends' page were used to recruit participants between ages 10 to 18, with some having to be turned away due to space limitations. Sewing machines were loaned by members of the community or brought from home, and cotton fabric pieces were donated. The library was transformed into a sewing workshop taught by retired teacher, Marsha LaHaye, who is an active Friend.

With help from library director Mary Barker, the pattern for the shorts was duplicated on a printer and tables and chairs were pushed aside to make room for cutting the fabric. Then, sewing machines began purring as the class went to work.

"It was so much fun for the girls and for me to teach them basic skills in sewing," said LaHaye. "Only two of the girls had some experience sewing. They were all so excited to make a pair of shorts by the end of the second class. One girl even put on her shorts and wore them home!"

When asked what changes might be implemented in future workshops or by other Friends groups wanting to offer a similar workshop, LaHaye offered some suggestions:

- Have the students work in pairs if space is limited.
- Provide printed instructions with each pattern to facilitate the process.
- Add additional time to what you think is needed to avoid rushing.
- Offer some variety in the pattern options, such as a tote bag in addition to the shorts.
- If you're relying on donated sewing machines, allow more time to ensure that all are in good working order.

"Overall, the experience was fun for the girls," she said, "and they learned some sewing basics this summer while spending time at the cool Pentwater Library!" Anyone interested in learning more about how to assemble a sewing workshop at their library should contact the Pentwater Friends through their website.

Celebrations

Friends of Shelby Area District Library Celebrate 30 Years with a Garden Party



Editor's Note: There are a lot of creative ways for a Friends group to celebrate a special anniversary. Here's how one of our members, the Friends of Shelby Area District Library, made its 30th anniversary memorable for its volunteers and community. If you have a big anniversary celebration coming up, let us know so we can share it with other members.

The Friends of the Shelby Area District Library (SADL) have supported their library since 1995 with activities and fundraisers that have helped make the Shelby Library a truly treasured asset to the community. This year the Friends decided to throw a party to applaud and celebrate the many volunteers who have helped out over the last 30 years.

Sending out invitations, hiring a caterer, finding just the right live music to enhance their Garden Party theme, the Friends of SADL were pleased to welcome more than 60 guests to the Shelby Library grounds on August 2.

"We couldn't have wished for better weather to celebrate in the gorgeous library garden," said Cindy McKinnon, president of Friends of SADL. "Local artist Mariah Vandersluys displayed six lovely flower-themed paintings that seemed to mirror the flowers blooming that day," she added.

"Volunteers erected a large tent and two banners, arranged flowers brought in from their own gardens, created two displays showcasing the many events sponsored by the Friends, moved chairs and tables with bright coverings. It was all hands on deck!"

Guests enjoyed a delicious spread prepared by caterer Joanne Clark while listening to local musicians Becky and Steve Lawwill who humorously named themselves "The Duo Decibel System" for the day! Professional photographer Matt Ferguson documented the event with photos.

McKinnon addressed those in attendance to thank the Friends of SADL Board and other volunteers who helped plan the party. She acknowledged the many past and present Friends who gathered to celebrate years of volunteering to help the library. Mary Ellen Heyde and Library Board President Amanda Mazur joined McKinnon to recognize library director Tiffany Haight for her 25 years of service.

FOML President Joe David extended congratulations to the SADL Friends on behalf of FOML. "It's clear from the planning and participation in this celebration that the Friends volunteers, library staff, and community members care deeply about each other and the welfare of their library," he said. "We wish them continued success."

Get Featured

Attention all Friends of the Library groups! Your hard work deserves recognition, and The Friends of Michigan Libraries newsletter wants to feature you! Send us images and a short article highlighting a project you're proud of, and we'll showcase it in our newsletter. Let's celebrate the incredible efforts of Friends of the library groups across Michigan and inspire others with your accomplishments. Email us today to be part of our next issue!

