



Friends CONNECT

www.FriendsKyLibraries.org

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Fall 2015

**FRIENDS
OF KENTUCKY
LIBRARIES, INC**

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Our Mission

- to advocate for public libraries on the local, state, and national level
- to provide support for the formation and success of local Friends chapters.

SAVE THE DATE and WEAR YELLOW - February 4, Library Legislative Day by Mary Lynn Collins

The 2016 Regular Session of the General Assembly is set to begin January 5. Friends of Kentucky Libraries (FKL) will be following proposed legislation relating to public libraries. "Like" us on Facebook to follow updates.

One very important advocacy day of the 2016 Session is **Library Legislative Day -- Thursday, February 4**. Please save this date and join us in Frankfort to show support for libraries.



On February 4, FKL and library supporters will gather in Room 111 of the Capital Annex. Library delegations will visit their legislators throughout the day. At 12:00 noon library supporters will gather in the Capitol Rotunda for a Rally for Libraries. This is one of the most important library advocacy events in Kentucky and we hope that each Friends of the Library chapter will send representatives. We cannot stress enough how important it is to have Friends—as well as trustees and library staff—in the delegation visiting a legislator. It sends a clear message that your community values libraries.

Remember to wear yellow—as you will easily be identified as a library supporter. FKL will be there with yellow M&M's that say "Support Libraries" which will be given to each legislator.

An orientation session will be held on Wednesday, February 3 at the Best Western Parkside Inn on 80 Chenault Road in Frankfort. This is a great opportunity to get up-to-date information about the session and issues relating to public libraries. Please consider attending this orientation.

If you have any questions about the session or Library Legislative Day, please contact us at info@FriendsKyLibraries.org. Hope to see you in Frankfort for Library Legislative Day among all the yellow!!

IMPORTANT and GOOD NEWS

Just as we were finishing up this newsletter, we have received important and good news for Kentucky libraries and the citizens of Kentucky concerning the lawsuits against Campbell County Public Library and Kenton County Public Library. These lawsuits, which related to tax rates, had grave implications not just for those two libraries—but most of the libraries in the Commonwealth.

On Thursday, December 10, 2015, the Kentucky Supreme Court denied review of the Kentucky Court of Appeals decision which reversed the circuit court decisions. This means the ruling by the Court of Appeals, which was in favor of the libraries, stands. The decision means that our libraries will not have to significantly reduce their tax rates and services. Also, no library will be closing its doors.

The Friends of Kentucky Libraries want to thank again library trustees and our lawyers Mark Overstreet and Virginia Snell for their work in helping to draft the Amicus Brief that was filed on behalf of the Kentucky Library Association, the Kentucky Public Library Association, the General Federation of Women's Clubs Kentucky, the American Library Association, and the Friends of Kentucky Libraries.



Looking Back—Looking Forward

By Mary Lynn Collins, President



I have served for over two years as the President of the Friends of Kentucky Libraries and it has been a most interesting time! Friends of Library members are in and out of our public libraries every day, working to raise money, assisting in programs, and advocating for libraries. I have been privileged to meet many of those Friends during my tenure as President and I am more convinced than ever that Friends are a critical resource for libraries.

We have in the last two years helped a number of Friends groups get off the ground and provided grants to these groups to help offset the cost of obtaining 501 (c)(3) federal tax exempt status. We have supported efforts of the Sister Library Project by providing annual grants to one of the Sister partnerships each year. We have provided important networking and learning opportunities through our annual meetings and have recognized at those meetings significant efforts made by chapters and individuals.

We have worked tirelessly on advocacy. We continue to encourage Friends chapters and libraries to host Meet and Greets with elected officials. We have supported the efforts of the Kentucky Public Library Association's Advocacy Committee during the state Library Legislative Day each year—bringing our yellow legislative M&Ms with us to Frankfort! We have helped defeat legislation that would harm libraries and we have helped gain state funding for library construction. We have sent a Friends representative each year with a Kentucky delegation to National Library Legislative Day in Washington DC. There we visited with each of our Kentucky senators and congressmen and their staffs, telling them about our needs and concerns—and leaving them, too, a small packet of those yellow M&Ms that say “Support Libraries.”

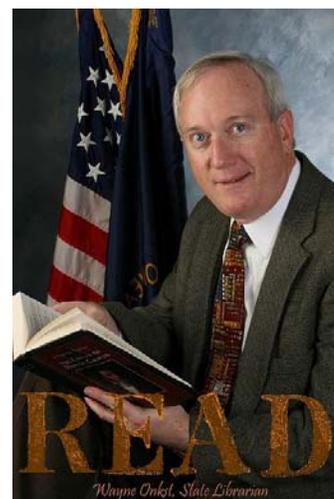
Last year, we worked with libraries across the state and gathered over 20,000 signatures on the Declaration for the Right to Libraries. Yes, we had over 20,000 citizens in this state sign this declaration in support of our public libraries! And we were pleased that the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and all the state constitutional officers signed the petition as well.

Much of my time as President was spent on addressing the library lawsuits filed against the public libraries of Campbell County and Kenton County regarding the way tax rates are set. These lawsuits threatened not only Campbell and Kenton County libraries—but most of the public libraries in the state. The Friends of Kentucky Libraries stepped up during this crisis and obtained legal counsel to help craft an Amicus Brief in the lawsuits. I still remember with great joy the morning we got the word that the Kentucky Court of Appeals found in favor of libraries. And it is with great joy that I was recently able to post the news on the Friends of the Library Facebook that the Supreme Court has decided not to review the decision and the lawsuits are over! Our Facebook received a record number of likes on that post!

Thank You Friend

As Wayne Onkst, state librarian and commissioner for the past nine years retires, Friends of Kentucky Libraries extends their sincere appreciation for his support, encouragement and guidance. It was under his leadership in 2009 that FKL was organized. He continued to play an important role as an advisor to the FKL Board of Directors.

A sincere thank you, friend!



Thank You President Collins By Carol Baughman

There is an old fashioned term—"library minded"—that describes a person who not only uses a library but who understands the public library's importance in its community and who supports improvements to that library. There is perhaps no one in Kentucky more "library minded" than Mary Lynn Collins, outgoing president of *Friends of Kentucky Libraries*. Mary Lynn has served Paul Sawyer Public Library in Frankfort as a member of its Friends board, as co-manager of the Friends' bookstore, and as a member and president of the library's board of trustees.

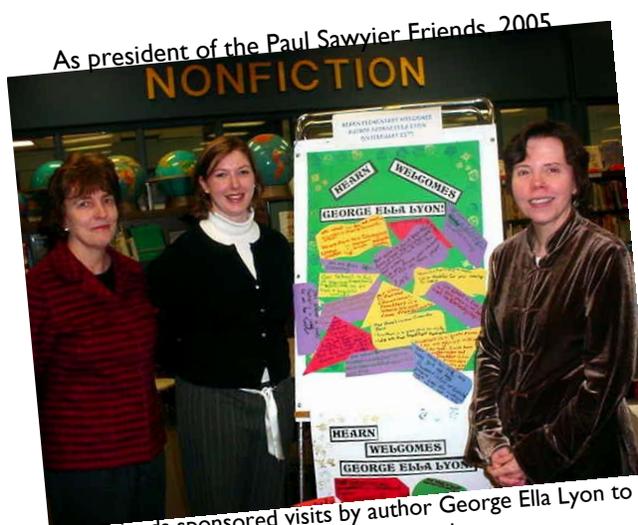
It was, however, at her day job as a capital construction analyst for the Kentucky Legislative Research Commission that she began to think about the impact citizen advocates could have on public library legislative efforts. She watched and participated in Library Legislative Days as directors and trustees from across Kentucky came to Frankfort to talk with their representatives. And then she overheard a legislator say something like this, "Those library directors are just looking for raises." It was at this point that Mary Lynn started thinking about organizing a statewide group to speak for the concerns of library users, a group that could give a voice to citizen advocates on both the local and state levels.

After a little research, Mary Lynn discovered that there had been such an organization since the middle of the last century, that it had been active intermittently over the years, and that it was presently inactive. She enlisted a group of people to reactivate the group, and in spring of 2010 a reorganizational meeting of *Friends of Kentucky Libraries* was held at the Scott County Public Library.

The success of this recent incarnation of *Friends of Kentucky Libraries* is well known across the state, and Mary Lynn's hard work is responsible for much of it. She has made many library minded friends in her travels to help with the organization of new Friends groups, to award grants, to attend Meet and Greet sessions. She has been a voice of library users on the Kentucky Public Library Association Advocacy Committee and has attended National Library Legislative Day. In 2014 she received the White House Conference on Library and Information Services Taskforce Award from the American Library Association. She is an indefatigable advocate, and the public libraries of Kentucky have been lucky to have her.

There is good news. Mary Lynn is not going away. She will remain on the *Friends of Kentucky Libraries* Board. She will continue to be a key monitor of the legislative process during the upcoming session, and she will share updates and critical alerts for action by library advocates across the state. She is currently one of the organizers of Library Legislative Day to be held in Frankfort in February.

All library minded people in Kentucky join in thanking Mary Lynn Collins for her years of service and her unflinching dedication to the cause of good public libraries for all Kentucky's citizens.



The Friends sponsored visits by author George Ella Lyon to local elementary schools



Kentucky First Lady Jane Beshear presents the KY Friends of the Libraries Proclamation signed by Gov. Beshear

Annual Meeting Review & Awards

The Friends of Kentucky Libraries held their annual state meeting Saturday, November 14, 2015 at the Capital Plaza Hotel in conjunction with the Kentucky Book Fair. Over fifty friends of libraries, representing 17 local friends' chapters, attended the meeting.

After welcoming comments by President Mary Lynn Collins and legislative updates from State Librarian Wayne Onkst and Lisa Rice representing the Kentucky Public Library Association Advocacy Committee, attendees participated in open discussion on friends as library advocates. The discussion was led by Ruthie Maslin, Director of the Madison County Public Library.

The highlight of the meeting was lunch speaker Sallie Bingham, author, playwright, poet, teacher, feminist activist, philanthropist and library supporter. Bingham did a reading from her recently published book, *The Blue Box: Three Lives in Letters*.



Following the luncheon awards were presented. The 2015 Outstanding Library Advocacy Award went to Wayne Onkst, state librarian, Kentucky Department for Libraries and Archives. Onkst was recognized for his strong leadership and support not only to libraries across the state but to the Friends of Kentucky Libraries. Onkst began his library career early as a teenager working in his hometown public library. His career includes twenty years as an adult reference librarian at the Kenton County Public Library before becoming the Director in 1999. He was appointed state librarian in 2006. His appointment came during a time of cutbacks and hardships for libraries throughout the state. Onkst's continual positive attitude and commitment to advocacy has led the charge to bringing better library services and facilities to our Kentucky communities during difficult times.

The 2015 Outstanding Friends Chapter Award went to the Laurel County Public Library Friends of the Library for their efforts in the areas of advocacy, funding, and programming. This group's advocacy efforts include sponsoring a Legislative Meet and Greet where they are able to connect with local legislators. They were successful in showing that their patrons and community residents feel libraries are important to the success of a community by gathering 867 signatures for the Declaration for the Rights to Libraries. The friends also support their library financially by supporting numerous programs for children and adults that are suggested by the library staff. Whether it is supplying LEGOs for the popular LEGO club, providing prize money for contests, or partial assistance for professional performances, the Friends are there. Advocacy goes beyond the library doors, and the Friends of Laurel County Public Library have reached out to the community by supplying donated books and magazines to such groups as the Homeless Shelter in London and the Cumberland Valley Domestic Violence Services Center. This group of dynamic and motivated individuals is not only growing in numbers (219 members with 357 volunteer hours) but believe that together they can make a difference.



(cont.)

(Awards, cont.)



The 2015 Outstanding Individual Award went to Susie Thurman from the Henderson County Friends of the Library. Thurman stepped up in 1999 when no one else would to lead the friends as President, a position she held until 2014. Thurman's leadership and concern for children brought the focus of the friends to fundraising, providing extras for the children's department. Bake sales, Halloween costume photography, as well as sales from T-shirts, personal pocket planners, desk calendars, book bags, puzzles and games were all part of fund raising. Membership drives and receptions were successful as Thurman was always able to bring in interesting speakers and notable authors. In the words of Marlas Crafton, FOL member, "Maintaining a superior public library is important to education and to the community's quality of life; knowing its history adds even more. Susie deserves recognition not only for working tirelessly helping others experience and appreciate the library, but also for her teaching us about Henderson's place in history."

The afternoon concluded with roundtable discussions on the topics of how to recruit and retain Friends members, books sales, fundraising other than book sales, and what to do with the money Friends raise.

A Special Thanks to Our
Sponsors for the 2015
Annual Meeting



&



Meet and Greet Updates 2015 by Linda Stith

Thanks to the many libraries and Friends chapters who held Meet and Greets (M&Gs) during the past few months. The hard work and creativity of library advocates was on display!

Here are only a few examples:

- Hancock County once again combined the popular "Taste of Hancock County" with its M&G. This program featured artists, authors, delicious food and woodcrafters and was a significant "community spirit" event.
- Daviess County's Friends of the Library created attractive promotional pieces for their October M&G including one that gave 3 easy steps toward becoming a library advocate.
- Pulaski County's M&G was held in conjunction with the unveiling of a beautiful "Bremen Town Musicians" sculpture.
- McLean County honored the middle school football team and proved that the library values community successes in every endeavor. Attendance was spectacular!
- After Calloway County's Candidates Night, Kentucky Forward's Online Newspaper featured an article by Constance Alexander describing the event and using this headline "Libraries are the homes that welcome us - and create a common ground!" So much food for thought!

This is a sampling of 2015 successes. With 2016 almost upon us, FKL repeats the call for M&G's and contacting legislators and policy makers on behalf of our valuable community resource.



Rep. Kay at Paul Sawyer's very successful Meet and Greet held Nov 12. At least 50 to 60 people were in attendance



New Officers for Friends of Kentucky Libraries

President	Judy Burdine
Vice President	Lois Schultz
Treasurer	Carol Baughman
Secretary	Susan Phelps
New Board Members	Elaine Wilson and Linda Barnett

Meet our New Board Members



Elaine is the Director of Cultural Diversity for the Somerset Community College in Somerset, KY. She has an undergraduate degree from the University of Kentucky, and a master's degree from Case Western Reserve University. She served on the Pulaski County Public Library Board for several years. She is also the immediate past president of the University of Kentucky Alumni Association National Board of Directors. Currently, she serves as a member of the State Advisory Council on Libraries, the Somerset Independent Schools Board of Education, Secretary of the Kentucky Humanities Council Board, the Board of the Hospice of Lake Cumberland, and the University of Kentucky College of Social Work Advisory Board.

Linda Barnett is retired from South Kentucky Rural Electric Cooperative Corporation in Albany. She currently serves as a trustee at the Clinton County Public Library. Linda is a member of the Clinton County Women's Club and enjoys history.



Welcome!

NEWS FROM THE FIELD



Left to Right: Gail Wilson, Friends of the Russell County Public Library Board Member; David Voils, Russell County Public Library Board of Trustees President; John Edmonds, Friends Secretary; Marisa Ramsey, Friends President; Judy Burdine, President-Elect of FKL; Tracy Wariner, Friends Vice President; Jerry Claunch, Friends Treasurer

Russell County Grant

Friends of Kentucky Libraries encourage all Friends local chapters to incorporate as nonprofit organizations and obtain federal tax-exempt status. Filing fees associated with applying for this status can be a burden. Friends of Kentucky Libraries award non-competitive grants of \$400 to each chapter that has been awarded tax-exempt status. Application information is available at www.friendskylibraries.org/grants.html

Congratulations to Russell County for obtaining this status!

From the Editor

We want to hear from you! “News from the Field” will highlight Friends’ chapters across the state. Please submit articles about what your Friends group is doing to make a difference in your community. It’s really ok to “Toot Your Own Horn” while sharing. You could be making a difference in another community by sharing your success through this newsletter.

We are now on Twitter
(@KYLlibFriends) as
well as

Facebook. Follow us
for the latest library
news, including up-
dates on the 2015 regular session
of the Kentucky General
Assembly.



Find us on
Facebook

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For a membership application, visit www.FriendsKyLibraries.org.
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