

THE FRIENDS OF DICKINSON MEMORIAL LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT JANUARY 1, 2020-JANUARY 1, 2021

One year ago we had our annual meeting in conjunction with our Volunteer Appreciation event. We had a lovely brunch and music and lots of folks (about 50) visiting and celebrating the library. Little did anyone know at that time what was ahead of us. And then March came.

We all went into isolation and everything closed down. Unprecedented, the world changed.

And while the library had to close its doors, the service, support and warm wishes from the staff continued in very different ways. But we never lost our library- a refuge, a place of peace, and nurture.

The Friends didn't meet in March. The shock and anxiety -we didn't know what to do. We resumed meeting in April via Zoom and started to look at the question of- What can we do? How do we support the library during the pandemic ?

Mission Statement

The mission of the Friends is simply to support the Library and the staff. We do that through sponsoring programs, fundraising and advocacy. Some of this report is about both what we had to cancel or postpone, but also about the creative ways the Friends helped support the library.

The Board

The Board of Directors meet monthly and consist of 8 members. Our librarian Deb always participates in our meetings, but is not a voting member. Anyone who donates to the Friends is considered a "Friend" of the library. We have a large group of Friends/contributors.

The Board of Directors are always open to new Board members. There are 4 officers: President; Vice-President; Secretary and Treasurer. Officers serve 1 year terms and are elected at the Annual Meeting. We meet now on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, and typically do not meet in July.

Programs

For many years The Friends have provided a monthly stipend to the library for both Adult and Children's programming. In the summer we provide significant funding for the Summer Reading program.

This year, beginning in January the Friends embarked upon providing Adult programs, in addition to the programming provided by library staff. These included craft programs as well as other topics. Currently we are offering Zoom classes for Yoga, and then next month there is a Meditation series of 4 classes.

One of our Board members suggested the library purchase an on-line subscription to Creative Bug. A link is available for patrons to access a very large variety of classes resources, and projects through the Creative Bug website. Already this website is being very well utilized by our patrons.

ART WORK for Children's Room

The Children's room seemed in need of brightening up with more appropriate children centered art. This is a project we started in 2019 and to date 2 prints have been hung in the Children's Room.

In April we decided to commission artwork from a local Children's author/artist. We thought of art that would highlight the library and/or the local community and discussed how to include patrons in the project. We decided to meet with Astrid Shekels, a children's author/artist from Franklin County. We met with her this past summer, discussed the project and felt very comfortable with commissioning her. She will work with a group of young children to develop the painting. Matt will be helping with developing the focus groups with Astrid and the kids. The painting will be 16"x21" and a space in the Children's room has been selected for the piece. Most likely the project will not start until later this year when the library is able to open fully.

Events

We had to cancel a number of our annual events. There was no Dog Show this year, although we spent a lot of time discussing ways to do one virtually. That has been a popular event, giving dog lovers a chance to show off their dogs!

We couldn't have the Children's Holiday Bazaar because of the pandemic. In December 2019 we wrapped 500 gifts which children had

purchased. We brainstormed about how we could run the Bazaar safely but found there wasn't a safe way. So we substituted the "Holiday Take and Make Craft". This involved filling over 75 bags for kids to make card crafts. Lots of interesting craft materials were included and the kids also were able to return the cards to the library for mailing. The bags went very quickly and all reported it was a fun craft.

We continue to focus on what we could do under the pandemic restrictions. The idea of a Puzzle swap was discussed and we agreed to take on this project. Early on in the pandemic adult jigsaw puzzles were hard to purchase as they were sold out. Jigsaw puzzles are a great pandemic activity! So starting after Thanksgiving we collected puzzles from the community and received quite few. The first puzzle swap occurred on December 12 and we are planning monthly pick-up days during the winter.

The Friends purchased 200 recyclable book bags at the beginning of the year. The initial idea was that they would be provided to patrons on a "borrow or buy" basis. Patrons could purchase the bag for \$1 or use the bag and then return it. And then the pandemic came. So these bags ended up being used for the curbside pick-up of books.

Funding

The primary financial support for the Friends is obtained from our annual fundraising campaign. We have a very generous community and typically raise between \$2000-\$3000. Our fundraising campaign usually occurs in the Spring. This past spring we chose not to do fundraising as the financial stresses on families were so great. So we will resume fundraising this spring. In addition we sometimes earn funds from programs, eg. the Dog Show.

The Friends have a healthy balance in our account. Specific items we funded this year included:

- a monthly stipend to Library staff for programs- supplies, fees, snacks, etc.
- a \$1500 stipend for summer programming annually.
- maintenance of the copier, repairs, cartridges etc.
- technical support for the new library website.
- Museum passes. We recently renewed the MASS MOCA museum pass, which is the pass most utilized by our patrons. In addition we have passes to The Eric Carle Museum; The Clark; The Brattleboro Museum;

The USS Constitution Museum; and passes to Massachusetts Parks, Historic Deerfield and the Pioneer Valley Symphony.

In June we provided funding for 2 canopies for the area outside the library set up for people to utilize the internet. This is one of many examples of how Library staff accommodated the community. A comfortable area, under canopies, was set up in a safe way to allow an option for folks meeting others or using the Library internet. (Unfortunately the canopies were destroyed during a very bad storm but we'll be purchasing more!!)

The Friends of the Dickinson Memorial Library have been very fortunate in receiving a grant from the Tortuga Foundation. This is from an anonymous donor and has been \$5000 per year. We have received this for the last six years and this has greatly enhanced our ability to do programming.

Early in the pandemic our library along with many others in Franklin county supported the local newspaper by taking out some ads.

Summary

This past year has been like no other. As a community we've been isolated and have suffered many losses. And though the doors to the Library closed for awhile, the service and support didn't. The message from library staff all year has been - "We're here for all of you, we welcome you and will help you in any way." They started curbside pick-up very early on while other libraries were still closed. Bags of books are often visible on the library step waiting for pick-up. They provide kids with a monthly craft and programming on line.

We have the best Library and Library staff. And as the Board of Directors of the Friends we are proud to support them!

Respectfully submitted;

Friends of Dickinson Memorial Library Board of Directors

Jan Herlihy - President
Mary Bowen- Vice President
Laura Kaye- Secretary
Cynthia Durham- Treasurer
Lara Dubin

Barb King
Martha Lewin
Kackie St. Clair

Please note anyone wishing any additional information about the Friends can contact the library. We can provide more detailed financial information as well.