

The Creston Friends of the Library: A History

On behalf of the library trustees, our capital campaign committee, and the library staff, I'd like to thank each of you for coming today, and I hope that you enjoy the food, festivities, and fellowship that we've prepared. As you know, we're here to commemorate your Twentieth Anniversary, and the best way I know of adding value to that experience is to give a brief history of the **CFOL**, and to conclude with a few remarks on what I believe is the importance of the friends to insuring the future of a public library in the Creston area.

Well, what about the history of your organization? I should first apologize in advance for any errors made, and I trust that those of you who know better will be quick to correct me.

The first mention of the **CFOL** is in the March 1996 library board meeting minutes, and it's in those minutes from the late 90s that we can see the origins of the group. "A Friends of the Library group is in the making, with (board member Don) Hall offering to assist in its beginnings," wrote secretary Kris Kerrigan: "Various corporation

representatives, bankers, and an attorney have been asked to serve on the start-up committee.” In June 1996, she recorded that “the Friends of the Library met to get acquainted and to discuss and develop their bylaws...” and would meet again that month. In the 1997 minutes are several passing references to the friends, and in April 1998, the minutes noted that a “reorganization” of the **FOL** would be attempted, and that the friends would need their own bank account. Not long after that, longtime library director Carol Stanger resigned for the job at Atlantic, which may have helped the friends off to a fresh start.

It was in 1999, under the tenures of librarians Sonya Breen and Diana Dillinger that the first reports of constructive activities by the friends appear. That year, they footed the bill for a survey on library use published in the **CNA**, and in 2000 the friends had a float in the Balloon Days Parade, and began their tradition of serving cider and donuts in the Depot during the Christmas parade. By that time, the friends met monthly, initially in the council chambers and then at the congregate meal site.

In July 2000, officers were nominated, and the first president was Lynne Schlaht, Vice-president was Bonnie Tighe, Joan Luttge was secretary and DeeAnn Stults was treasurer. Individual memberships were \$5 annually, and \$10 for families, and in 2000 the friends boasted 100 members, with Petznick's recognized as the first lifetime member on the basis of a \$1000 donation to the group.

Perhaps most importantly, to establish the non-profit basis of the group (so donations to the friends would be unquestionably tax-deductible), the officers secured recognition by the IRS as 501(c)3 organization in August 2000, and that December filed their articles of incorporation with the Iowa Secretary of State.

What's remarkable to me is that the most successful fundraising events the friends do today have their origins in the year 2000. The Valentine's Day cookie bouquets, the Balloon Days book sale, and the Scholastic Book sale all began that year and have continued for seventeen years running. That's an impressive record of continuity, and

the dedication of your officers and members is commendable in that respect.

The friends have used those fundraisers to build their financial assets since 2000, and in April of this year, donated \$10,000 to our capital campaign for building an addition to the library at our current location. To me, that is very significant, because I believe that if our projected addition becomes a reality it will be because the friends play a leading part in making it happen. So while we are here today to reflect on the longevity of the **CFOL**, and to remember past associations, friendships, and community bonds that were made over two decades, I urge you—as its friends--to imagine a bigger role in insuring that the Creston public library, whatever from it takes, is able to serve the community effectively.

Accordingly, there are tremendous opportunities for community leadership available to friends members, for board members and members alike. As our capital campaign committee moves forward this fall, asking for support from area individuals and businesses, we need

more than a little help from our friends to spread the buzz about these beautiful plans to double the size of our library and restore it as a hub of community activity! Join our committee, host an event, plant a yard-sign in your yard, and if you can afford to give, I don't know of a better local cause that directly supports the quality of life in our area!

The mission of the **CFOL**, according to the by-laws, is to “promote public use of the Creston Public Library and appreciation of its value as a cultural and educational asset to the community, to establish closer relations between the Creston Public Library and the people it serves; to promote informed interest in its functions, resources, services, and needs; to stimulate gifts, endowments and bequests to the library; and to support the development of a program for the extension and improvement of the Library’s resources and services.” Lynne, Karen, Kay, Emily, and so many others present here today have given the community this tremendous gift—an organization that enables the citizens of the Creston area to support their public library in ways that are outside its city and county budget. So thank you for what you do,

and for me personally, it is a privilege to serve a community of such fine folks, and an even greater honor to have the support of an organization devoted to the success of our public library.

Before I stop, I should mention our next event, which is the Graceland Cemetery Walk on September 23 -