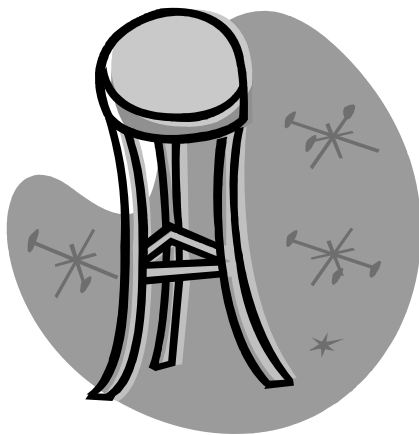




Friends in Bruce County - importance of a three-legged stool



Three speakers representing Bruce County spoke to the Saturday delegates during Friends' Day at the Ontario Library Association Super-conference. Marzio Appolloni, CEO of Bruce County Library System, Lynn Sawatsky, President Friends of the Wiaraton Library and Suzan Fawcett, Past Treasurer Friends of the Chesley shared the podium.

The three demonstrated characteristics of their relationship that have contributed to their success – a pragmatic relationship, open communication and mutual respect.

That's not to say there are not challenges. Marzio described the relationship as a three legged stool – representing the Library Board, Branch Library Staff and the Friends. Each leg has a role or the stool fails.

Library
Board

Branch
Staff

Friends

Bruce County - Friends groups in nine branch libraries

- Wiaraton Branch Friends
- Chesley Branch Friends
- Mildmay Branch Friends
- Tobermory Branch Friends
- Lion's Head Branch Friends
- Southampton Branch Friends
- Paisley Branch Friends
- Tara Branch Friends
- Sauble Beach Branch Friends

friend

1 a : one attached to another by affection or esteem

b : acquaintance

2 a : one that is not hostile

b : one that is of the same nation, party, or group

3 : one that favors or promotes something (as a charity)

4 : a favored companion

(Webster's Dictionary)



Trillium Grant for flooring, Port Elgin

“The Friends find that a minor effort can have a high impact on the community. Philosophy of serving communities is the principle.” (Suzan Fawcett)



New Wiaraton Branch



New standard signs



Bruce County Friends – Opportunities and Challenges

Bruce Country has 18 branches throughout the county, and nine of those branches have a Friends group. Each Friends group is branch-based, has an arms-length relationship with the Library Board and uses infrastructure provided by the library.

Marzio listed some challenges:

Communications - There must be open communication and ongoing education.

Roles - Each has to understand their roles, and avoid an intrusion beyond their role.

Geography - A drive from one end of the county to the other can be two hours long. Weather can add to the travel time.

Demographics - Not all branch libraries have Friends groups, and some don't want them. Some branches have volunteers. Make it attractive to draw in younger members.

Branch focus – there are 18 branch locations, but not all branches have a Friends group. There is a lack of a global view and sometimes wider initiatives suffer.

“I think the Friends have a wonderful opportunity to feel the pulse of the community and find out how much the library means to them,” said Lynn Sawatsky. The Friends in Wiarton want to work with the library and further its importance in the community.

Fundraising and programming activities include a mail-out campaign, a “Wake up Your Garden” luncheon, a March Break program, an Easter Egg hunt, a short story contest, book clubs, an annual book sale and a newsletter. A pot-luck luncheon for the new council included a library tour, and was a successful lobbying effort.

Suzan Fawcett rounded out the presentation by describing other factors in the Friends relationship. "Friends groups can put you on the map," she said. Libraries get free skills, knowledge, time and enthusiasm from their Friends.

Friends have a chance to influence policy. Suzan noted that Friends are volunteers, not employees. She also noted that Friends, as volunteers, can say “No”.

She emphasized the arms-length relationship by describing conflict of interest situations to be avoided – staff cannot lead Friends, an employee or their spouse should not be on the Board.

Visit our conference website for a link to the full-text PowerPoint file of Marzio's presentation: <http://www.friendsoflibraries.ca/Confe.html>