The newsletter for Friends and the Foundation of the Cedar Rapids Public Library

Focus

Spring 2024

Mission

Friends supports the CRPL mission and vision and promotes literacy through community outreach.

Mission

The Foundation mobilizes community resources and relationships that empower our Library to deliver innovative programs and services.

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Cedar Rapids Public Library

Downtown Library • 450 5th Ave SE • Cedar Rapids • Iowa 52401
Ladd Library • 3750 Williams Blvd SW • Cedar Rapids • Iowa 52404
Letter from the Foundation

They say the days are long, and the years are short. I feel this both in watching my children grow and in our progress with the new Westside Library. In a sense, the Westside Library is a living thing; it’s the permanent library home that we’ve dreamed of over the years.

In 2019, Ladd Library’s expiring lease was a clear need with an uncertain path toward solution. When the estate gift from Nadine E. Sandberg was realized in 2020, that uncertainty faded and a dream for a new Library in the Westdale neighborhood began to grow.

In the beginning, we called this new facility with an adjacent park our “Big Dream.” In meetings with City officials, community leaders, donors, and stakeholders, we shared our vision for a campus and gathering space like no other in Cedar Rapids. Our Big Dream was to create a place where families could gather inside and outside, where celebrations and learning could take place, and where community could grow and thrive.

Generous financial investments from the City of Cedar Rapids and Linn County put our Big Dream one step closer to reality. This was the turning point where we began rephrasing our story. The end goal of our vision for a new Westside Library is to Inspire Big Dreams.

Libraries are connectors, safe spaces, information providers, and so much more to everyone in our community. Above all, libraries exist to lift up and support, and help grow and foster community members. We too have dreams, but we endeavor to Inspire Big Dreams in others.

It is in this spirit that we launched our Inspiring Big Dreams capital campaign for a new Westside Library. This is your opportunity, as a community, to inspire others to dream big too. We need your gifts to help make our Big Dream a reality.

The days are long and the years are short. Before you know it, we’ll be reading the Fall 2026 Focus newsletter celebrating the grand opening of our new Westside Library.

With gratitude,

Charity D. Tyler
Executive Director

Letter from Friends

Greetings, Friends!

This issue of our FOCUS newsletter is a testament to the importance of connections.

As FRIENDS’ board members and volunteers go about our day-to-day work receiving, sorting, and selling books, we are reminded how connected we really are.

From the 88-year old True Friend for whom reading is a joy to the two Kirkwood Community College students who chose book-related community impact projects: books are the connectors!

When we take advantage of the great programs provided by our library staff and piggy-back with themed pop-up book sales: books are the connectors!

And when we earn the support of so many community members like the employees of TrueNorth who made a major donation of books to FRIENDS: books are the connectors!

We truly appreciate being connected to our award-winning Cedar Rapids Public Library and its welcoming, do-anything-to-help, resourceful, and competent staff. And I can personally attest to the help they provide: staff members Heather and Tate pushed my car out of a snow bank in the library parking lot this past winter when I was stuck. How lucky I was to be connected to them!

FRIENDS of the Cedar Rapids Public Library could not exist without all our connections. Because of these connections, we’re well on our way to mustering support for our $250,000 pledge to the Westside Library campaign.

Thank you one and all.

Libby Slappey,
President
Focus on Foundation

Inspiring Big Dreams: Our Westside Library

In January, our Library Foundation launched its Inspiring Big Dreams Campaign for the Westside Library. More than 60 community leaders, library donors, and advocates attended the event at Ladd Library. Speakers included Library Director Dara Schmidt, Cedar Rapids Mayor Tiffany O’Donnell, and Linn County Supervisor Ben Rogers. Each spoke of the importance of libraries in a community, the importance of this library branch, and of the City and County’s investments in the project.

Inspiring Big Dreams Campaign Co-Chairs Libby Slappey and Lois Buntz shared updates on the campaign’s progress, including its $1.5 million challenge grant from Hall Perrine Foundation, and announcing more than 65% of total project funding secured. Friends Assistant Treasurer Nancy Sauerman also announced that Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library are making a $250,000 gift in support our new Westside Library.

“This is the public launch of our campaign,” said Libby Slappey. “This is the chance for everyone to be on board…Tell your friends; tell your family, your neighbors, and your coworkers to donate. This is a community effort for the most amazing resource in our community – our public library.”

How to learn more.
The Inspiring Big Dreams has a page on the Library's website: CRLibrary.org/BigDreams. On this page you can:

• Make a one-time gift.
• Download and return a pledge form to make a larger gift with payments over a period of time.
• Complete an online form to request a speaker for your church, book club, rotary, etc.
• Donors making gifts of $1,000 or more will be recognized on a donor wall in the new facility. Gifts of $15,000 or more have the option to be recognized elsewhere within the building or grounds of the new facility.

Please join our growing number of donors and help make our Westside Library a reality. Give to our Inspire Big Dreams campaign today.

The location of the new Library is just off the southeast corner of 20th Avenue SW and Edgewood Road SW (behind Aldi). This is within walking distance of the current Ladd Library. The site will include both the new library facility as well as a new city park to be developed by the City of Cedar Rapids. The new Westside Library Park Campus will be a destination for the entire community.

The design process for both the Library and the park is underway. The Library plans to break ground sometime this Fall with a projected opening date in late 2026.

The new Library will include:

• A square footage increase from Ladd Library’s 28,405 square feet to nearly 40,000 square feet. This means the new building will be approximately the same size as the first floor of the Downtown Library.
• Increased space for children’s learning, including a dedicated children’s programming room as well as zones for creative play, technology use, and motor skill development.
• Eleven study rooms, a large conference room, and a conference center with kitchenette, all available for public use.
• Outdoor reading courtyards and library lawn for gathering and programs.
• Additional and better-designed space for the Opportunity Center and Library partners to provide services.
• Increase accessibility for ease of use, as well as connections to walking trails and sidewalks for pedestrian traffic.
• More than 100,000 people visit Ladd Library each year. With increased space and resources, the Library expects that number to triple.

Thank you to those who have already invested in our Inspiring Big Dreams campaign for the Westside Library. Today, we need our community to join us and help make our big dream for the City’s west side a reality. Please visit CRLibrary.org/BigDreams, or reach out to the Library Foundation by emailing Foundation@CRLibrary.org or call Executive Director Charity Tyler at 319.739.0411.
Focus on Foundation

Literary Vines

“If you look the right way, you can see that the whole world is a garden.”
– Frances Hodgson Burnett

These beautiful words are from the classic novel, The Secret Garden, which follows the tale of a sour young girl, Mary Lennox, as she discovers a secret locked garden on the grounds of her uncle’s manor. This enchanting story was the inspiration behind the theme for this year’s Literary Vines.

The 5th Annual Literary Vines will be held on Friday, April 19, 6 to 8:30 pm at the Downtown Library. It features all the exciting ingredients that has made this event flourish since 2019: literature-inspired hors d’oeuvres paired with beer and wine selections, live music, a mobile auction, and the newest images of the Westside Library.

This year, we are thrilled to open the newly expanded 2nd Floor Maker Space for attendees to get a closer look at the emerging technology supported with donor dollars. Guests can explore the equipment – 3-D printers, a Glowforge, Cricut machines, and more – and learn more about their creative capabilities.

The Foundation is grateful that Literary Vines was selected by students in a course for The University of Iowa’s Event Management program. This team of students helps plan and execute our event. It unlocks real world experience and allows the students to apply skills and academic coursework to all areas of our event.

Proceeds from Literary Vines will support the Library Foundation and Foundation-funded Library programs including Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. It will be an evening of fun, philanthropy, and supporting early childhood literacy.

Our Library is a landscape to learn and grow, just as the secret garden is for Mary and her cousin Colin. Join us for Literary Vines and learn how our Library feeds that growth for our community.

Tickets are on sale through April 12: bit.ly/LitVines2024.

Special thanks to our 2024 Literary Vines sponsors

Auction Sponsor
Linn Area Credit Union

Partner Sponsor
KING’S MATERIAL INC.

Author Sponsors
OPN ARCHITECTS

Focus on Foundation

Celebrate Summer Reading

Join the Library and the Foundation to celebrate the love of reading all summer long with our Summer Reading Challenge. Enjoy special events for all ages, log reading minutes and earn badges, and visit the library for special rewards.

The Summer Reading Challenge is for everyone! Register in person or online at CRLibrary.org/summer. Pick up your free Summer Reading Kit at the Library, then read and log 600 minutes between June 1 and July 27. Log your reading minutes in the Beanstack app or in person at the library.

Explore a variety of special events and programs for all ages at the Library throughout the summer. Everything kicks off with a Giant Game Party on Saturday, June 1, 10 am-noon, at Ladd Library, complete with an inflatable obstacle course, big blue blocks, Giant Jenga and Twister, and a supersized story time at 10 am with Clifford the Big Red Dog.

The Library will bring a variety of family friendly performers in again this summer, including a magic show, exotic animal encounter, dinosaur encounter, children’s musician Tom Pease, and more. There will also be programs for teens and adults, including Maker Spaces craft and technology activities, a special summer camp for adults series, movie screenings, and more.

The Library’s Mobile Technology Lab will also be rolling out again, bringing story time and fun and educational activities to area parks alongside the City’s Rollin’ RecMobile all summer long.

At the end of the summer, we’re bringing back a fan favorite with a Ren Faire End of Summer Reading Party. See sword fights and artisans, play fun games, and make medieval crafts at the Downtown Library on Saturday, July 27, 10 am-1 pm. Costumes encouraged.

These are just a few of the many programs for all ages the Library has planned! Visit CRLibrary.org/summer for the full calendar.

Dreams capital campaign.

The Foundation’s Library Champion program recognizes businesses and organizations who support our Library Foundation with a gift of $500 or more. Thank you to all of our 2023–24 Library Champions!* ‘Denotes a gift to the Inspiring Big Dreams capital campaign.

Alliant Energy Foundation*
Area Ambulance Service
Bankers Trust
BankIowa*
Benchmark, Inc.*
Bradley & Riley, PC*
Cargill, Inc.
Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust*
Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque
Dakota Red Corporation*
Daybreak Rotary*
Farmers State Bank
Giacotto Foundation*

GreatAmerica Financial Services
GreenState Credit Union*
HDR Engineering*
Hills Bank*
ImOn Communications*
International Paper
King’s Material*
Knutson Construction
Linn Area Credit Union
Local Union Community Charities*
New Leader Manufacturing*
O’Hearn Bank*
OPN Architects
Paulson Electric*
Rayser Holdings
Riverside Casino
Shuttleworth & Ingersoll*
Skogman Companies*
Sunrise Builders
Theens Home Farm & Auto
Transamerica Foundation*
Tricon Construction
TrueNorth Legacy Foundation*
UFG Foundation*
Van Meter
World Class Industries*

* Denotes a gift to the Inspiring Big Dreams capital campaign.

Daybreak Rotary*
Farmers State Bank
Giacotto Foundation*

GreatAmerica Financial Services
GreenState Credit Union*
HDR Engineering*
Hills Bank*
ImOn Communications*
International Paper
King’s Material*
Knutson Construction
Linn Area Credit Union
Local Union Community Charities*
New Leader Manufacturing*
O’Hearn Bank*
OPN Architects
Paulson Electric*
Rayser Holdings
Riverside Casino
Shuttleworth & Ingersoll*
Skogman Companies*
Sunrise Builders
Theens Home Farm & Auto
Transamerica Foundation*
Tricon Construction
TrueNorth Legacy Foundation*
UFG Foundation*
Van Meter
World Class Industries*
It pays to have True Friends

When the Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library’s board of directors made the ambitious pledge of $250,000 to the Westside Library campaign, we knew it was a bold move. After all, selling used books for $1, $2, and $3 requires a lot of book sorting and even more book selling to reach that goal. Enter, True Friends.

Over the past year our membership drive has resulted in amazing gifts from our True Friends – those community members who are proud, contributing, members of Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library.

We thank you for partnering with us to support the Big Dreams campaign through your new and renewed membership in Friends.

Become a True Friend today by logging onto: http://bit.ly/3K2dEMz or by mailing a check to Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library, 450 Fifth Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, IA 52401. All gifts are tax-deductible.

Crowdsourcing: It can be more than money

When Library Trustee Elisabeth Hepworth contacted Friends about TrueNorth’s Community Outreach program, a used book drive to benefit Friends of the CRPL was proposed as a potential crowdsourcing project for TrueNorth employees.

Without hesitation Friends said an immediate YES, with the special request that children’s books be emphasized. The program was proposed as a potential crowdsourcing project for TrueNorth employees.

Within weeks, TrueNorth amassed dozens – no, hundreds – of books to pass on to Friends of the Library. Elisabeth and colleague Ali Palmersheim arrived at the library with an entire vehicle load of great books including plenty for children.

Crowdsourcing truly pays dividends, particularly when they are books!
Focus on Friends

Friends get creative with pop-up sales

Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library got creative in February and March, hosting two pop-up sales to coincide with community events offered at the downtown library. The Romance Sale in February was held the same day as the Romance Lovers program, hosted by the CRPL staff. In addition to meeting a local romance author, patrons could pick up some amazing deals on romance books. The timing was good and Friends raised over $500 with the sale. Kudos to Hy-Vee for providing decorations.

In March Friends created a second pop-up sale in partnership with the very successful Community Music Day (CMD). The 3rd Annual CMD featured events and programs for all ages, including stories, music classes, an instrument petting zoo and small and large group performances. Friends’ volunteers stocked the sale with a great assortment of books and music to catch the attention of the local music lovers and made over $200 for Friends of the Library.

Book Sale Co-Chairs Cindy Monroe and Joni Sohl made these great events happen. Cindy noted, “We love to partner with the library programming staff. They are pros at bringing in great authors and they’re super creative in planning great programs.” These collaborative efforts provide another way to introduce Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library to new folks and sell more books. Watch for more themed pop-up sales in the months to come.

Books as the common denominator

For Fasseri Doumbia, it’s a long way from the Ivory Coast to Kirkwood College in Cedar Rapids. Likewise for Beyda Ortiz from Colombia. They made the trek as participants in the Community College Initiative (CCI) Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Through this program, participants from around the world have the opportunity to study at community colleges in the U.S. for one academic year.

The CCI Program encourages students to undertake a Community Impact Project in their host community. As part of their leadership development and cultural exchange experience they must identify and address a specific need or issue within the community.

Fass chose to focus on his immediate community – Kirkwood students in Washington Hall – and organized a book fair to distribute science and business-related books, along with books of general interest.

Beyda addressed a need at the Kirkwood Courts Apartments where she saw the need for a designated space for children in the Club House. She chose to set up a reading corner for young children, knowing books would help improve language proficiency through reading.

Because CCI policies do not allow fundraising, the students must execute their projects without money. Both Fass and Beyda sought a partnership with Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library, asking for book donations. Friends’ outreach program was happy to assist and provided the students with boxes of quality, used books.

A classic win-win!

Volunteer Focus: Katie Adams

When she’s not at home making soap for her small business Cedar Witch Goods or baking sourdough bread for her family, Katie Adams can be found in the Friends’ sorting room organizing and shelving books on religion, the occult, new age, mythology, and health & fitness. These are all genres in which Katie has a “casual interest.”

Her career in graphic design took a detour when she sought out additional creative ways to spend her time. As a blogger who bought natural beauty products on Etsy, she pondered, “Hey, maybe making soap is something I should do.” And the rest is history. She learned to make soap from a hobby farmer she knew, who fixed her up with some starter items, and she was off and running. She learned where to source granular lye, a critical component in soap production and she learned how to saponify – to hydrolyze a fat with alkali to form a soap and glycerol. (Yes, that’s how soap is made!)

Fast forward to March 2024 when Katie was honored as 2024 Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year and the next NewBo City Market Shopkeeper. This honor entitles Katie to one year of free rent as a shopkeeper at NewBo City Market.

Congratulations to sorting room volunteer, Katie Adams.

Timing is everything, even in death

When Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Louise Glück died on October 13, 2023, the cracker-jack volunteers in the sorting room sprang into action, recalling there were some Glück poetry books in the Friends’ inventory. In fact, there were four different volumes and all were autographed by Ms. Glück. Quick research revealed the dollar value of the books and they were immediately listed on Amazon through the Friends’ selling portal. In less than 24 hours the first sold – The Triumph of Achilles, for $200. Paying attention pays.
Focus
Cedar Rapids Public Library Foundation
Friends of the Cedar Rapids Public Library
450 5th Ave. SE
Cedar Rapids, IA 52401

Return Service Requested

Literary Vines Fundraiser
Friday, April 19
Downtown Library
6 – 8:30 PM
Buy tickets: bit.ly/LitVines2024

Van Vechten Society Brunch
Sunday, September 22
Downtown Library
10 am to Noon
Invitations to Follow

Farmers Market Sales
Downtown Library Plaza
- Saturday, May 25
- Saturday, June 1
- Saturday, June 15
- Saturday, July 6
- Saturday, July 20
- Saturday, August 3
- Saturday, August 17

Big Fall Book Sale
November 1 – 3
Downtown Library

Very Cherry Book Sale
Saturday, December 7
Cherry Building
329 10th Avenue SE

Non-profit
U.S. Postage Paid
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Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401