



**Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries  
PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT  
June 2023**

## **The Friends**

The Friends of the Dartmouth Libraries (FODL) raises funds for and works to benefit the Library and the Dartmouth community by sponsoring and coordinating a wide range of educational, cultural, social, health and well-being programs for all demographics – from infants to seniors.

FODL continues to fulfill its mission to “focus attention on Library resources, services, facilities and needs, and to provide community support of the Library.” FODL’s purpose is charitable, and its mission is accomplished entirely through the efforts of volunteers.

## **Year in Review**

This was a year of transition, looking back on the past and ahead to the future.

### **50+ Years**

A chance discussion between two local women revealed that one was FODL’s current president and the other was FODL’s *first* president a half century earlier -- Nancy Manley of Alderbrook Farm fame!

With a trove of documents she’d preserved, Nancy filled in many historical blanks. Though FODL was not formally incorporated until 1989, it had been active and impactful for two decades prior. At an Afternoon Tea attended by lifetime FODL members and long-time supporters, Nancy explained that the Friends formed to save the Russells Mills Library from closure in 1970, keeping it open for two more generations to enjoy. You can read more in the Friends’ first and most fascinating Annual Report [here](#).

### **Library Leadership Change**

In November of 2022, Lynne Antunes announced she’d retire after 45 years at the Library, including more than a decade as Director. Lynn earned the respect and trust of her staff, leading her team through several challenges, including the pandemic, and developing a strong and stable foundation as her legacy – including the beautiful North Branch.

When the Trustees prepared to find Lynne’s successor, the Friends requested and received a position on the Search Committee. In thinking through the type of person who could most effectively build on Lynn’s legacy, the Friends defined our vision for a preferred candidate:

- A future-focused innovator able to anticipate and implement new ways for the Library to add value.
- A community connector whose outreach could inform and engage others and expand the library’s value to the community.
- A resourceful leader who could leverage FODL’s support and funding to help achieve these goals.

We could not be happier with the selection of Dina St. Pierre who assumed the role of Library Director in mid-May. She clearly matches our hoped-for vision, and we look forward to a very productive working relationship!

### **Reaching a Membership Record**

Dina comes to the Library at a time when our membership ranks are higher than ever. This year, we hit a record of 300 active members! This is another legacy left by someone retiring this year – Leah Macomber, who is retiring from the Board after leading our Membership function since 2015. During that time, Leah increased active membership by over 50%, computerized our membership files, and instituted standard, repeatable processes that help keep our members informed and engaged and will help FODL continue to build membership.

We thank Leah sincerely for the difference she has made, and also extend our appreciation to Sarah Van Vleck, another experienced professional who has taken on this critically important role.

### **A Better Business-As-Usual**

This year we emerged from the pandemic stronger than ever. This is exemplified by our new service: [AuthorsLive](#). Knowing the pandemic had increased user comfort level with online events, we launched a pilot test of this service in July of 2022, allowing Dartmouth residents to participate in live online interviews with bestselling authors and national thought leaders. To date, there have been 33 AuthorsLive events. For each event, on average, about 5 Dartmouth residents participate live and more than 100 watch the recording.

Conversely this year, when the Molly Little Winter Art Film Series returned *in-person* for the first time in 3 years, we wondered: will anyone come? We were thrilled to welcome more than 50 attendees! And we're grateful to new Board member Margaret Hollister who has taken on this annual event from recent board retirees Mary Ellis and Kathy Clear.

And this year our Children's programming got a significant boost, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor. This special funding allowed us to significantly enhance and expand FODL sponsorship for the Library's increasingly popular school vacation programs, including bringing in "Chain Reactions" - a fun, hands-on STEM workshop where children learned how to build their own Rube Goldberg machines!



### **Library Funding Support**

The Friends provide financial support for select library programs and resources. The Director of Libraries and Chairman of the Library Board of Trustees attend FODL Board meetings to discuss Library activities and needs, share future plans, and identify specific support requests from FODL.

This year, the FODL Board provided funding for many regular Library programs and resources:

- **Children and Teen Programs** - This year, FODL funded both virtual and in-person programs that attracted significant levels of participation.
  - The 2022 Summer Reading Program ("Read Beyond the Beaten Path") encompassed a variety of experiences such as performers, arts & crafts, stories and songs, and STEAM activities. Summer program participants numbered over 500 children accompanied by nearly 400 adults – more than double the participation last year!
  - In October, the Pumpkin Decorating Party drew in 25 children between both libraries. In December, 26 children came to Southworth for the Deck Our Halls with Holiday Fun event

accompanied by 26 adults. Also in December, the Holiday/Winter Cupcake Decorating Competition at the North Branch drew in 15 participants with more wanting to join next year.

- The library was also the place to be for February and April School Vacation with a number of FODL-supported programs. Kids built Rube Goldberg machines in a hands-on STEAM workshop, learned about Arthropods and Koko the Owl, did crafts, and experienced the joy of reading with an interactive story time and circus show. Attendance broke records, especially for Koko the Owl and the hands-on STEAM workshop, Chain Reactions.
- **Museum and Park Passes** – FODL’s regular annual funding of free or discounted admission passes was enhanced this year to include the availability of passes at the North Branch, in addition to Southworth. Library patrons used 490 passes this year, an increase of 25% over last year.
- **Patron Select Program** – This funding allows the Library to acquire additional copies of popular book titles to meet patron demand.
- **Movie Licenses** –Each year, FODL provides the funding to renew the Library’s movie licenses which allows public showing of popular movies for children and adults.
- **AuthorsLive** – Pending approval by the Board at the June meeting, the pilot of this new service is expected to continue for another year to give the new Library Director time to evaluate it.
- **Staff Appreciation** – On behalf of the public, every year FODL expresses appreciation for the staff’s cooperation, enthusiasm, and support with a luncheon and/or gift certificates.

In addition to our regularly funded programs and resources, special FODL funding was allocated for the following purchases this year:

- New shelving for the North Branch continuing book sale was purchased and installed after being approved last year. The shelving provides a better aesthetic and expands capacity, providing library patrons with a greater selection of low-cost, good-condition donated books.
- A new Display Case was purchased for Southworth Library to replace an older one in poor condition situated outside of the Children’s Room.

### **FODL Sponsored Events**

FODL offered a combination of virtual and in-person events this year, maintaining good attendance levels and positive feedback from community members.

- In June, more than 20 whimsy-lovers came to the North Branch to hear local author Frederick Thurber and illustrator Amy Thurber describe their quest to find a voice for the characters in the audio version of their book, *In the Wake of the Willows*, a sequel to the classic *The Wind in the Willows* that is set on several local landmarks.
- In July, the Friends celebrated its 50+ year anniversary with an Afternoon Tea for lifetime members and donors. Attendees learned about the Friends’ origin from its first President, Nancy Manley, who described the 1970 inception of the “Friends of the Dartmouth Library at Russells Mills” and their subsequent rebranding and expansion to support all of the Dartmouth Libraries.

- In August, researcher Nicholas Sullivan, author of *The Blue Revolution: Hunting, Harvesting, and Farming Seafood in the Information Age*, gave an informative overview of how technology is quickly changing the fishing and maritime industries. Mr. Sullivan highlighted New Bedford's "Codfather" as the epitome of the old-fashioned industry that is being modernized to protect habitat and fish stocks and improve quality and choice as people consume more seafood than ever before.
- In September, visitors to the North Branch viewed an inspiring exhibit about Dartmouth's Cape Verdean Community. Based on oral histories conducted by and with local Cape Verdean community members, *Our Town / Nha Vida* highlighted residents' lived experiences, showcasing their stories, photographs, documents, and voices. Read about the opening night celebration [here](#).
- In November, more than 50 people came to see local author Erin McHugh, who gained national attention for her book, *Pickleball Is Life: The Complete Guide to Feeding Your Obsession*. Erin shared her love for the fastest-growing sport in the country, tracing its quirky origins to its modern-day cult following, and highlighting the rules and the fun of the game for an eager audience.
- In December, more than 70 people joined a virtual presentation by Jana Milbocker of Enchanted Gardens. Jana took the audience on a holiday-themed tour of magnificently decorated conservatories and mansions and beautifully lit gardens, including Winterthur, Blithewold, Longwood Gardens and several Newport Mansions.
- In January, while New Year's resolutions were still fresh, the Friends invited popular speaker and obesity specialist Dr. Kevin Gendreau back for an encore and update. Dr. Gendreau shared his uniquely personal and professional guidance about weight loss, educating audience members about metabolic health, how it's measured, and its impact on weight and quality of life. As always, Dr. Gendreau was informative, inspiring, and very, very funny!
- In February, the Molly Little Winter Art Film series returned for its first in-person appearance in 3 years! This year's focus was on Leonardo da Vinci and the Italian High Renaissance. The class, produced by The Great Courses and taught by Professor George R. Bent from Washington and Lee University, got rave reviews, drawing an average of nearly 50 attendees per session.
- Also in February, the Friends coordinated a public reception to celebrate the retirement of long-time Library Director Lynne Antunes. An appreciative crowd of roughly 40 people gathered at Southworth Library to thank Lynne for her years of service and wish her well on her next chapter.
- In March, we tried our hand at a "hybrid" (both in-person and online) event. Those who attended "The Nature of the Maya World" in person thoroughly enjoyed Joy Marzolf's wonderfully entertaining and informative talk accentuated by her beautiful photography, audio recordings, and naturalist insights. However, connectivity issues did not afford online participants the same enjoyment. An upgrade to Southworth's wifi network this year should prevent a recurrence!
- In April, Nick Wildman - the new Executive Director of the Dartmouth National Resources Trust (DNRT) - spoke to residents about the non-profit's mission to preserve and protect Dartmouth's natural resources. In addition to discussing DNRT's history and programs, Nick spoke about the



organization's impact, showing a diagram of the historical housing plans that would've destroyed Destruction Brook Woods, if it was not protected. Read coverage of the event [here](#).

- In May, more than 60 people came to the North Branch to learn how to take better photographs with various makes and models of smartphones. Local nature photographer Greg Stone provided practical tips and discussed the concepts and tools to use for better photographs of people, pets, sports, and travel.

### **Financial Management**

This past fiscal year (1/1/22 – 12/31/22) brought a return to financial normalcy after the pandemic. The continuing book sales as well as the larger Fall and Spring book sales all brought in their usual amounts. Membership was up and several donations were gratefully received.

Spending was also consistent with pre-pandemic levels, with some increase to support the North library, particularly providing patrons there with access to the museum and park passes previously available only at Southworth.

### **In Conclusion**

We are an entirely volunteer-driven organization, so our activities and accomplishments are the direct result of individuals giving their time, knowledge, and skills to benefit our libraries and community. Our members and donors provide the financial support that makes our work possible. We thank those who contribute to our work and look forward to finding new ways to add value in the year to come.

Respectfully submitted,

Marcy Wintrub  
June 13, 2023

### **FODL Board of Directors:**

Marcy Wintrub, President  
Anne Heller, Vice President  
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Lorraine Carey  
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