

## **Safford Friends of the Library 2024 Annual Report**

2024 was another busy year for the Friends, sponsoring programs, conducting fundraisers, and actively supporting our library. Follow is a summary of the highlights of the year.

### **Membership**

We ended our year with 121 members current on dues. This rendered a 2024 income of \$1210.00. We continue to sustain long-term memberships while attracting new members to the roster.

### **Donations with Membership Renewals**

A subtle way of bringing income to the organization is through added donations with renewal of memberships. We are pleased to smile that extra smile when a membership renewal is accompanied by an added donation. 46 members were thoughtful enough to add that extra kindness. This represents 38% of our membership. In 2024 this brought \$3220 to the Friends! Donations ranged from \$5.00 to \$1000. Thank you, all!

### **Friends' Night Out**

Friends' Night Out, our monthly adult programming, hosted seven presentations in 2024. This year's roster offered programs focused on history, economics and the arts. In January, we kicked it off with *Agriculture and Water in the Gila Valley* with Justin Layton. February brought Freeport McMoran's presentation of *Copper Mining in the Gila Valley*. In March, we recognized Women's History Month with Bonnie Briscoe and Paulette LeBlanc and their presentation, *A Woman's Place is in the White House*. May focused on oral history with *Record Your Story* with Charles Maxwell. It wouldn't be September without special observance of *Constitution Day* led by the Daughters of the American Revolution. In October, we brought Jay Cravath from Arizona Speaks to Graham County for *Songs and Stories of Arizona's Waterways*. And, we rounded off the informative year with a presentation of the art and literature of *Yuyi Morales* as presented by our library staff. We feel these programs are appreciated by our community, as we have many returnees each month.

### **Art Exhibit**

The library hosted a beautiful art exhibit of children's author/illustrator, Yuyi Morales, from October – December. Because some of the pieces were originals and worth a considerable amount of money, the exhibit's public hours required human coverage. Eleven volunteers stepped up to the plate: Nancy Schauman, Kris Sheryl, AnnJi Craig-Wooten, Sheila Hartner, Ellen Schmidt, Paula and Raymond Price, Linda Curtis, Crystal Penrod and Paulette LeBlanc. Thank you for spending the quiet hours in the Program Room to keep the display accessible to the public.

## Other Programs

The **Open Book Club** continues to meet. It is so good to see familiar and new faces at our monthly sessions. We enjoy the uniqueness of the group because we don't assign a book. Each member reads independently and reports on their latest "reads" to promote the book, magazine, or brochure and tease others to pick it up. It's a marvelous way to open your eyes to different types of literature. In February, we did break from tradition and welcomed our snowbird-author, Joyce Benvenuto, to host a presentation of her recent publication, *Passage, with Frequent Stops*. Because membership is fluid, citizens of Graham County are welcome to join at any time.

Through our relationship with **Gila Valley Arts Council** since 2017, we continue to host afternoon performances for our patrons. In 2024, we hosted a mariachi troupe, Mariachi Garibaldi; Quarteto Neuvo, a classical, folk, Latin, Jazz group; and Chen and Galbraith, featuring classical guitar and a Chinese pipa. On a related note, the library staff recognized their collaboration with GVAC through a nomination for international recognition with the I Partner with My Public Library Program. GVAC was proud and pleased to receive Honorable Mention for this prestigious recognition. This award underscores the importance of partnerships to any organization.

Over the past three years, the library has hosted an **Early Literacy Concert Series** which brings a children's author/entertainer to our preschool through second grade population in both counties. In 2024, they brought Nathalia to the valley. The Friends are thrilled to partner with Graham and Greenlee School Superintendents, Gila Valley Arts Council, First Things First and private donors to support this exciting experience for our young audience. The concert series has been dubbed "The Kinder-Stock of the Gila Valley." It is a joy to watch it grow each year. All Friends-supported programs are valuable to the fabric of our library. We are proud to be a part of the adventure.

## The Pink Jar

The Pink Jar (which really isn't pink) is ever-present in the library. It also finds its way into Friends-sponsored events. It is a very quiet way of soliciting loose change from community members. During 2024, we received \$117.00 from donations in the jar.

## See's Candy Drive

Chocolate rules! We hosted our 8th See's Candy Drive this year. It is a scary proposition to invest \$18,000+ in product. It's an annual nail biter! This year brought the added stress of a delayed arrival of our order from See's and a shorter window of opportunity for sales between holidays. In spite of this, as of December 31<sup>st</sup> we realized a profit of \$3246.24, with more to come from discounted sales. Our retail location, Ginaveve's Marketplace on Main St, Safford, is ideal for this fundraiser. It truly is the go-to place for See's in Graham County. Thanks to board

members who greeted the arrival of the candy, set up the display at Ginaveve's, and hauled the remainder to storage at Victoria Silva's house. Thank you for the hospitality, Victoria! And, kudos to Sam Jones who worked with Paulette to refill the inventory throughout the month. The heavy lifting was most appreciated. Thanks to ALL who supported the See's Candy Drive through their purchases. And, special thanks to John and Jenny Howard for entering this special partnership. This is a win-win for the Friends AND for Ginaveve's. Also, a special thank you to member, Cheryl Soto, of Safford Valley Cotton Growers. The Gin has long been a great location for selling our candy bars and lollipops. It should be noted that profit from the See's Candy Drive is earmarked toward the Friends' Endowment Fund.

### **Reserve Fund**

During 2024, we continued to build our Reserve Fund. This is a wonderful partnership with Arizona Community Foundation. This investment fund is earmarked for library emergencies. It is basically described as our "Savings Account" and can be accessed, as needed. On a quarterly basis, when the balance reaches at least \$25,000.00, any amount over that is automatically moved to the Endowment Fund. This account is currently standing at \$26,345.59.

### **Endowment Fund**

The Safford Library Endowment Fund continues to grow. Some See's Candy Drive profit goes into it. Personal donations specifically supporting the endowment are deposited there. It is currently reporting a balance of \$105,454. This Community Foundation fund is designed to secure the future of our library. Thank you ALL who continue to support the journey!

### **Newsletter**

We continue to receive compliments on our newsletter. People often remark that they enjoy the content and photos. It actually gets read! They appreciate the hard-copy format of the newsletter. Kudos to Annji Craig-Wooten for her dedication to our newsletter! She is vigilant on every step of the process. Thanks, Annji.

### **Technology/Social Media**

The Friends maintain a website at [saffordlibraryfriends.org](http://saffordlibraryfriends.org). We now have a new look, thanks to Chip Cheney, our webmaster. The website is the perfect location for All-Things-Friends. And, of course, the library is vigilant about advertising our events and fundraisers through their social media.

### **Coin Boxes**

Our clear, plastic coin boxes are placed in various businesses from January through March each year. During 2024, we took in \$380.00 in loose change to add to our treasury. Special thanks to Mt. Graham Market and Jobi's Convenience Store for their willingness to place coin boxes on their counters. We are always on the lookout for handy locations.

## The Friends' Corner

The Friends Corner is now a multipurpose space. Its front room sports turquoise walls and a vinyl floor. It was the perfect location for hosting a silent auction, the Spring Bling Fling, a “tiny art” display and Santa Claus during the Christmas extravaganza. Our back room can serve as a small meeting space and a storage room for Friends activities. We enjoy maintaining this permanent location for a variety of events.

## Note Cards

In 2024, we continued partnering with numerous local businesses to feature our notecards. This is a wonderful way to raise visibility for the Friends and to showcase our products. A pat on the back to our retail locations: 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Florist, Ginaveve's Market Place, and the Graham County Chamber of Commerce. Sales brought \$129.50 to our treasury.

## Special Donations

Our special donations this year came from Friends. We were pleasantly surprised with significant donations from members who choose to remain anonymous. SAGLIF is also appreciative of the quiet gifts from its own board members throughout the year. Each year we develop an annual report of board members' donations. In 2024, it totaled \$2275 and 1113 volunteer hours. The value of a volunteer hour in Arizona is \$32.07, as reported by Independent Sector (April 2024). This translates to a value of nearly \$36,000.

A surprise this year came from Southwestern Power Group and RioSol. The Friends were pleased to accept a check for \$1000.00 from local representative Nancy Jean Welker in support of our Radio Auction. It is a compliment to see the commitment of this company to the Friends. Thank you,

For a number of years, **Freeport McMoran** has sponsored an Employee Payroll Deduction Program in which FMI matches donations from their employees to non-profits on an approved list. Our library AND the Friends are BOTH on the list. In 2024, the Friends received \$12,687.62. What a generous addition to our treasury! Thanks to all employees who have opted to choose our non-profit.

## Empie Raffle

Through the ongoing generosity of Ann Empie Groves, we were able to host a raffle for a Hal Empie signed, numbered, framed limited edition lithograph, *Ladder to Heaven*. Our profit was \$1106.81. Congrats to our winner, Lesley Talley! And, thanks to all who participated. We value your support.

## Jerry's Dine Out

Our seventh dine-out experience rendered \$527.80. We are grateful to everyone who took time in their day to stop by for beverages and meals. Take-out orders were also brisk! Jerry's Foundation sponsors these Dine Out opportunities as a way for non-profits to secure 25% of

sales from a full day of business. This is another win-win situation. The Friends are very grateful for their support and for their fine and friendly service. We are looking forward to our return to Jerry's in the fall.

### **Radio Auction**

For the fourth consecutive year, Paul David pulled off a very successful radio auction. What a unique fundraiser! Through his partnership with Reed Richins, David Bell and the staff of Double R Communications, lots of recruitment of inventory from local businesses, organizations and individuals, and lots of advertising, Paul, again, achieved our fundraising success story of the year. Once all bills were paid, the 3-hour auction rendered a profit of \$8625. We are the envy of every non-profit in the valley. Thanks, Paul! Your creative thinking and persistence throughout the entire 4-month process culminated in a lucrative experience.

### **Bake Sale**

What do you need to conduct a successful bake sale which brings in a profit of \$1000.00? Eighteen incredible bakers, a WIDE assortment of goodies and many customers!!! Our holiday bake sale is a one-day enjoyable operation. This year we featured everything from fudge to pies to cookies. We even went gluten free! There was something for everyone. Thanks to all volunteers who provided our delicious inventory, our salespeople and to our generous shoppers. Even Santa stopped by to shop! Special kudos to Retha Russell who helped to plate the large assortment of treats. Great teamwork!

### **Book Sales**

Our used books sales corner is a constant, evolving location for some great deals. We continue to appreciate the work of volunteer, Kris Sheryl. She keeps things current! Our sales in 2024 brought in \$1397.75. Thanks to those who shopped and those who donated. The library staff gladly accepts all donated books at the circulation desk. Check out your inventory for potential discards!

\*\*\*\*\*

This report started with the statement, "2024 was another busy year for the Friends." That is an understatement. We managed to offer a wide variety of fundraisers and programs. The grand total of profit from our fundraisers alone (the radio auction, See's Candy Drive, Jerry's Dine-Out, holiday bake sale, raffle, etc.) was \$14,505.85. We have our board, our 120+ Friends, and our community members to thank for this. Thanks to everyone who attended our events and programs, volunteered and/or spent money at our fundraisers, and served as overall cheerleaders for our work. Last, but not least, a big shout-out to our incredible library staff who supported us throughout the year. The Friends are so fortunate to say we couldn't ask for better partners. Best on the planet!

Respectfully submitted,  
Paulette C LeBlanc, SAGLIF President  
1/29/25