Interesting things happen, as we saw at the recent Friends Sharing with Friends meeting at the Christa McAuliffe Library in Framingham. The morning began with an opportunity to network as the staff prepared for the presentations.

After a warm welcome by Danielle Barney - Framingham Branch Librarian and enjoyment of refreshments provided by the Friends of the Framingham Library, the meeting got underway with presentations by the first two speakers, Mary Ann Cluggish, Library commissioner and Greg Pronevitz, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Library System.

**THE PRESENTATIONS**

Mary Ann Cluggish emphasized the need for advocacy at not only the local town level but at the state level, especially as the budgets are being prepared. At the time of the meeting, the Governor and the House had delivered their versions of the budget and it was in the hands of the Senate Ways and Means Committee.

Library funding has been severely cut at the state level since its high in 2001, resulting in reductions in the services that can be provided to local libraries. While all services have been affected, Mary Ann cited the cuts to library networks as something that would be very obvious to local libraries as their fees to participate in the interlibrary loan program may need to be raised. She also had information for the attendees on the direct state aid to libraries that each of their communities receive. She noted that library funding is a mere .06% of the state budget, and that 96% of state funding to the MBLC goes right back out to local libraries. AND the good news she had was that members of the Friends and other library supporters can have an impact if they let their legislators know that they want library funding to be a priority. The most effective advocacy is person to person. Library supporters need to know their elected officials include them in information about the library and its importance in the community. If you can’t be there in person, phone calls followed by personal notes and then e-mails can also be used. She said that the first thing most representatives and senators do when they reach their office is ask how many calls and messages have been received and what issues people are concerned about. There are 60,000 members of Friends groups in Massachusetts. If even 10% of those members contacted their legislators, it would be a tsunami.
For those people who are hesitant to call their representative, Mary Ann said the chance that you will actually talk to them is very low. You will most likely reach an assistant or an intern and all you have to do is tell that person who you are and request that they ask their senator or representative to make library funding a priority. She finished her presentation by having everyone present get out their phones and connect to Massachusetts Library Association Engage. [http://www.cqrcengage.com/alama](http://www.cqrcengage.com/alama)

When they did, they were able to sign up to join mailing lists to insure that they were aware of when support was needed. The site also offers a lookup for your representatives if you don’t know who they are. So - if you are reading this and you haven’t signed up, you can do that **RIGHT NOW**. While you are encouraged to work with the representatives of your district, you can also send your message to any of the committee members, senators and representatives and to the Governor as the budget passes through the many steps to completion.

**Greg Pronevitz** is the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Library System (**MLS**) that is a state-supported collaborative based in Marlborough and Northampton that is responsible for physical delivery of items to libraries. 15,000,000 items are shipped each year at a cost of about .29 per item, which is very cost-effective. They are also responsible for the on-line newspapers, magazines and journals. About 60% of the use of these resources is in school libraries. The MLS is also responsible for training and consulting for library staff members. They are funded through the Board of Library Commissioners. Being a man of action, Greg completed his presentation by having attendees write a postcard to their Senators asking that library funding be made a priority.

He also suggested that you make it a point to meet your legislators, that you take photos when they come to any of your events or meetings and that you post them on social media so that everyone can see that they support the library.
The final presentation was by Matthew Perry, the Outreach Coordinator for the MBLC. He shared the process that he and his colleagues use in creating programs and provided information on how Friends groups can use this process. His presentation, called Getting Your Friends Group Noticed - The Art of the Integrated Campaign, took us through the steps they use that begin with the definition of their project. They include details like materials to be created, dates to be met, audience to be addressed, platforms to be used, goals and how the results will be measured.

In explaining the process he talked about some of the campaigns that he has worked with including summer reading, What’s Your Four (a focused summer reading program), the Common wealth catalog, e-book promotions, a Valentine’s day promotion called Library lovers and a Selfie Campaign (take a photo of yourself at your library and post it on social media).

Then he introduced us to the MBLC News Room which is full of materials that can be used by local Friends groups and libraries. Matthew also had suggestions on using social media. Make it colorful, use graphics, get your local celebrities (maybe the police or fire chief) to get their photos taken reading, post consistently and with a reason and post frequently. He also suggested that a private social media group might be useful for internal communication.
AND NOW FROM THE FRIENDS...

One of the most useful segments of the Friends Sharing events is the actual sharing by the members attending the event - not only successes and programs that have worked for them but issues and questions.

The Waltham Friends are dealing with a collapse of the Friends board due to illnesses that left the only officer available the secretary - who is now the President. She talked about how they are rebuilding, which she described as a 4 step process:

Storming (oh no what will we ever do?)
Forming (beginning to create a structure with some controls in place)
Norming - working with the new structure and checking it’s progress
Performing - Working efficiently with the new structure

But in the midst of their struggles they have had some successes. They are proud of their Watch, Read, Listen program that highlights a single book in all its forms with The Jungle Book as an example. (Graphic novel, movie, book on CD, etc.)

The Leominster Library has had a success with a volunteer appreciation tea that is held on a Sunday afternoon and provides a small gift for the volunteers in addition to a lovely tea.

The Friends of the Rockport Library had an especially successful book sale in April with a number of books the library staff had culled. They also have both a Friends and a Staff appreciation event.

The Canton Friends have a successful writing program called Canton Writes that invites residents to write fiction, non-fiction or poetry. There are categories for adults and students. Awards are presented at a big event when winners get to read their work. The local paper prints a winner each week. One of the prizes is a bag to fill for free at the next book sale and the kids who win are especially excited to fill their bags.

The Friends of the Boylston Library are very excited that they will reopen their library after renovations (especially excited about the toilets) on Memorial Day.

Friends of the Robbins Library in Arlington work with their local garden club to hold a Books in Bloom where florists and gardeners are encouraged to create a display that relates to a specific book. At their most recent event, the creators were encouraged to write a brief explanation of how they felt the display related. They hold a Friday night event that raises money for both the library and the garden club. On the question front, their library has recently reactivated the Library Foundation for fund raising and it has created some confusion in the community on how the fund raising targets are divided.
The Franklin Library Friends are beginning a program using the sale of bricks to raise funds for their renovated library and they hope it will lead to a stronger relationship with the library.

Working with other organizations in town is one of the most successful efforts the Friends of the Ashland Library have undertaken. They have worked with the Board of Selectmen, the schools, and the organization concerned with substance abuse among other groups.

Echoing that sentiment, the Norfolk Friends have support from the entire town for their book sale - which is large and successful. It is held in the DPW garage (turned over to them for a week) and Boy Scouts and other community groups help with the heavy lifting. One of the questions they raised was around a dealer who wants to come before the sale to choose the more expensive books and sell them on-line. They wondered if this would cause other dealers - who provide a major portion of their profit - to stop coming to the sale. Generated lots of discussion with both pros and cons. Erin suggested that this would be an excellent question to raise on the Friends ListServ.

The Friends of the Scituate Library have a new challenge. With the renovation of the library, they will have a dedicated book sale space to replace their book sales on the lawn. Several of the groups at the meeting have experience with this kind of book sale and could provide feedback.

The Charlton Friends are getting a group restarted. They are looking into making their group a 501c3 but are concerned because they have been told they need to provide personal social security numbers to make this happen.

Most of the Friends groups represented are 501c3 organizations and did not face that requirement but Erin thought it might be a new IRS issue. This is an issue raised that needs more information since it will certainly be of interest to newly formed groups. One library dealt with this by providing Officer insurance.

Charlton also had a very successful magic show and craft fair and have a book room all year with no annual book sales which works well for them.

A question was raised on how to get more people involved in the Friends - always an issue. Suggestions included offering discounts at the book sale for new members, getting involved in town day, marching in town parades, having a table at the Farmers Market and seeing if your Town Manager might help recruit by including information about the Friends in his communications.

The Friends of the Snow Library, Orleans have a vacation destination condition at their library with the population of the town quadrupling in the summer. Programs planned in the summer are especially weather dependent - sunny days mean everyone goes to the beach - not the library. They have a long-standing and very ambitious lifetime learning program with classes every day of the week. They march in the 4th of July parade with a big banner and - after learning that book distribution doesn’t work well - handed out certificates to kids who can redeem them at the book sale. They have both a volunteer recognition event and a major donor party (major donor being defined as $100 or more). Both of these are held in the non-summer season.

Framingham Friends have a town with a very diverse population and one of their successful efforts has been a Break for Books when people attending the intermediate ESL program are invited to choose a book at a coffee break as they finish their class.

Would you like to be more involved the Massachusetts Friends of the Library? Board members are always welcome. Contact Alice Welch at alicewelch@verizon.net for more information.
One of the benefits of attending the Friends events is that you get an opportunity to explore another library. The Christa McAuliffe branch of the Framingham Library has been open for about a year. It is a lovely building with a wall celebrating Christa McAuliffe.

It also offers an opportunity to see programs that the library provides. One of the displays was for their basket raffle fund-raiser which is their 8th annual raffle supporting their adult tutoring program. Because it takes place at the main library and the branch as well as the Morse Library in Natick, they had a big poster with photos of all the baskets as well as a number of the baskets on display.
“Who Can A Friend Turn To?”
Resources for Library Friends

Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC)  http://www.mass.gov/mblc
98 North Washington Street, Suite 401, Boston, MA 02114
Phone: 617-725-1860  or  (in state) 800-952-7403  Fax: 617-725-0140

Erin Williams Hart  (ex. 232)
Trustee/Friends Information Specialist
erin.williamshart@state.ma.us

MBLC’s Trustees and Friends page:  http://mblc.state.ma.us/advisory/trustees/index.php
MBLC’s Friends Resource Guide:  http://guides.mblc.state.ma.us/friends

Massachusetts Friends of Libraries (MFOL)  https://massfol.wordpress.com/
https://www.facebook.com/mfolnews

Alice Welch, President
Phone: 978-534-2934  Email: alicewelch@verizon.net

Friends Discussion email list:  friends@mblc.state.ma.us
(Sign up here: http://mblc.state.ma.us/sympa/info/friends)

Massachusetts Library Association  http://www.masslib.org/
PO Box 21 · Seekonk MA 02771
Phone: 781-698-7764
Email: manager@masslib.org

United for Libraries  http://www.ala.org/united/
(The American Library Association’s division for Trustees, Friends & Foundations)
109 S. 13th Street, Suite 117B, Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (800) 545-2433, ext. 2161
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