

Friends of the Falls of Schuylkill Library

3501 Midvale Avenue
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19129-1498

(215) 685-2093

June 2009

Dear Friends:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of the Friends of Falls of Schuylkill Library to thank you for all the help and support you have provided during the past year and to bring you up to date on what has been accomplished as a result. I also want to share with you some of our concerns about the library's future.

First, thank you for being a member. In these difficult times, when libraries are playing an ever-increasing role in the community, the support you provide becomes even more crucial. Over the years, the Friends of Falls of Schuylkill Library have been able to augment services not provided for in the city budget; your membership helps us to continue those services.

Thank you as well for your support of such fund-raising efforts as the book cart in the library, the book sale in November, the greens sale in December, and the spring sale in May. This year, those four activities, plus membership dues, have yielded over \$17,000, a wonderful testimony to the importance you place on the library and its role in the community.

We also want to thank you for your contributions in time. You have helped in so many important ways--donating books and baked goods, setting up and working at the sales (and cleaning up afterwards), maintaining the library garden, putting mailings together, and, most importantly, encouraging your friends to become Friends.

This year your support enabled us to make significant investments in preserving the fabric of our building. Although the care of any library facility is normally the responsibility of the main branch, with 54 libraries needing attention and a decreasing budget with which to do the work--a situation exacerbated by the city's current financial crisis--much needed repairs have been deferred, with unfortunate results. For years, the Falls of Schuylkill library roof has leaked, causing considerable damage to the interior ceiling and walls. At times, rain dripped into the central circulation desk area, requiring that buckets be placed to catch the falling water. With your help, we were able to:

- Hire our own contractors to repair the roof and to replaster and paint the interior walls (the reason for the two-week closure in April), thus preventing further damage to the building.
- Arrange for the cleaning of the two large leaded glass windows, allowing more light into the library

- Install a third outside entrance railing to provide greater pedestrian safety (a new interior railing inside the entrance vestibule will be installed shortly).
- Respond to a request from the children's librarian for larger bookcases to accommodate the very large picture books in the children's collection. We retrofitted the existing bookcases--a step that was considerably less expensive than the purchase of new bookshelves and aesthetically more pleasing.

In addition to protecting our historic library, these improvements also enhance the atmosphere for our patrons and the hardworking staff. I might add that such preventive care also may help to ensure that our library will not be in the position of other Carnegie libraries, which are considered more expensive to maintain than modern library buildings and therefore are often candidates for closure.

It does not appear now, however, that any library closings are being considered. I recently received a letter from Amy Dougherty, Executive Director of the Friends of the Free Library, which was sent shortly after the library's FY 2010 budget testimony to City Council. Although Mayor Nutter and the library administration have backed away from the *permanent* closure of eleven branches--or any branches--it is clear that the city's financial difficulties will continue to have a deleterious effect on the library's budget beyond what has already been experienced.

At the request of Mayor Nutter, all agency directors, including the library, were asked to develop two plans (A & B) for library service, depending on revenues and the approved FY2010 city budget.

According to Ms. Dougherty, under Plan A, all branches, including the three regional libraries, would have five full days of service per week, ending the unscheduled closings that occurred this spring. The options are either Monday through Friday, or Tuesday through Saturday, with half of the branches on a Monday-Friday Schedule and the other half on a Tuesday-Saturday schedule. Based on location, branches would be paired so that communities are provided with Saturday service close to where they reside.

Plan B is the worst case scenario in the event that the Mayor's revenue enhancement strategies are not approved. It would require all cities agencies, the library included, to make drastic cost-saving service cutbacks. If this occurs, all library branches would go to half-day service, five days per week.

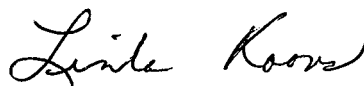
Because of the great uncertainties facing our library, your support is even more important. I encourage you to continue your membership in the Friends and to ask others to join. I also ask you to consider volunteering to work on one or more of our fund-raising efforts, to help with the library garden or with mailings, or to consider becoming a chair or officer of the Friends. This fall we will be electing three officers--Vice-President, Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary. After years of dedicated service to the Friends, Johan Joseph Chrol has stepped down as Recording Secretary and Chair of the Legislative Committee, and there is a possibility that a second incumbent may decide not to run for office again. If you would be interested in serving on the

Board, or would like to nominate someone, please send your suggestions in an envelope addressed to me and leave with Marianne Banbor in the Library, or contact me by mail: lcbkoons@verizon.net. I also would like to encourage you--and hope you will encourage others--to make greater use of our library. Marianne tells me that our circulation is down this year and for the first time in a long while we trail the Andorra, Chestnut Hill, and Lovett (Mt. Airy) libraries.

Finally, I should let you know that the Board has been discussing the need to develop a comprehensive financial plan for our support of the library. In that regard, we intend to conduct a survey about the kinds of programs and services the Friends think we should be supporting, as well as possible longer-term projects we might consider funding. If you are interested in helping us plan and distribute this survey, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Again, we thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Linda Koons".

Linda Koons, President
Friends of Falls of Schuylkill Library

Falls Library Summer Calendar

For adults:

Wed. June 17 7 p.m. Biography: Bridging *Belles Lettres* and History led by Mr. Jeffery Hayes. A discussion of Mari Sandoz's *Crazy Horse, Strange Man of the Oglalas*. Mr. Hayes requests that participants read the book in advance to fully enjoy the discussion. Copies of the book are available at the library.

Mon. June 22 7 p.m. A Journey through Rajasthan, India: Rajputs and Forts, Camels and Pilgrims, a travelogue with Stan Diamond

Wed. June 24, 6:30 p.m. Poetry Open Mic led by East Falls poet, Courtney Bambrick. The next East Falls Open will feature Alla Vilnanskaya & Sydney Coffin. Please bring poems (yours or another poet's) that have to do with music/favorite songs.

Mon. June 29, 7 p.m. Falls Library Book Group discusses *Run* by Ann Patchett. Discussion will be led by Joan McIlvaine. Please call Marianne at the branch for more information.

Mon. July 6, 7 p.m. Classics Book Group discusses Oscar Wilde's *Picture of Dorian Gray*

Mon. July 27, 1:30 to 7 Red Cross Blood Drive Please call the library @ 215-685-2093 to make an appointment to donate blood. Each pint of blood may save a life in your own community.

And for teenagers:

Teen Summer Reading at Falls Library Something fun to do each week at the library all summer long. Please call Maggie McGinn at the branch for more information. 215-685-2093