

2009 Annual Report to the Friends of the Jacaranda Public Library, Inc.

Submitted by Greg Carlson, Library Manager
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President Forbush, Board Members, and Friends:

Frances T. Bourne Jacaranda Public Library enters calendar year 2010 with challenges created by staff attrition and budget cuts, but also significant internal and external resources to address them. The Friends are a strategic partner in providing library service excellence to the public and a key player in achieving library goals and objectives. A review of 2009 activities and outcomes clearly demonstrates the Friends' role in supplementing county general revenue funds and providing important volunteer recognition opportunities. Continued Friends financial support, especially for capital replacement and equipment purchases, will help blunt the weak economy's impact.

Staffing

The library lost 3.5 full-time equivalent positions during calendar year 2009. Customer service reps (CSR) Lois Capaci and Marcy Caldwell retired, as did half-time youth department program specialist Maryann Gawle. CSR Jenny Krause chose not to return from maternity leave and resigned. During the fall, Peg Mendon, half-time CSR, was transferred to Jacaranda from Venice PL to shore up circulation, leaving a net loss of three employees.

We have taken several steps to compensate for staff attrition. For example, everyone is participating in systematic cross training. Circ staff members have trained capable volunteers to provide expanded customer service at the desk. The workroom floor plan was re-imagined and reconfigured to improve staff coordination and workflow. Moving the majority of customers from mediated check-out to self-check kiosks has reduced clerical transaction frequency. The youth department consolidated its programming to make better use of time and resources. The library system reduced hours in the fall, a change that resulted in five fewer public hours at JPL.

The library system management team is preparing a comprehensive staffing plan for county executives and elected officials review. My colleagues and I are assessing everything from job descriptions, to service levels, to statistical trends in circulation and door counts to optimize our human resources. I will keep the board informed of developments.

Programs

The Friends continued a long tradition of program support, especially for our youngest customers. During the three months of the youth summer reading program alone the Friends spent \$1,400 on supplies, program costs, hospitality items, and other expenses. I reported the aforementioned figure to Friends Alliance, which will in turn report Friends summer reading contributions throughout the system to the Gulf Coast Community Foundation. You may recall that the Foundation provided funds in concert with Friends group commitments. Young adult and adult programming likewise benefited from Friends assistance. Hospitality funds set tables at art receptions and other public events with welcoming food and beverages.

Equipment

Every four years, the county information technology division (IT) “refreshes”—replaces—staff and public computers and monitors so that hardware stays apace with software, internet, and operating system innovations. The Jacaranda Friends became the first group in the system to refresh its library lab desktop computers in 2009. Leveraging the county 113 account and resulting state contract discounts the board saved \$3,000 over retail. Lab computers operate independent of IT support, saving the library thousands of dollars in overhead. According to Andrea Ginsky, SCLS manager of public services, the Jacaranda lab configuration will be a model for other libraries and FOLs as they contemplate similar lab upgrades.

The Friends also outfitted the youth department with a self-contained AWE instructional game computer and supported annual software upgrade charges. The machine is tamper-proof, engaging, and a big attraction for pre-school children.

A factor librarians must consider when Friends groups wish to underwrite technology is ongoing costs. Computers, A/V projectors,

printers, and the like need service/maintenance contracts, parts replacements, upgrades, etc. The Jacaranda Friends appreciate that even the best equipment breaks down and becomes obsolete, and that the library depends on the Friends to continue supporting these investments once made. We are grateful to the board for embracing this important point.

Volunteers

Volunteers are our greatest defense against eroding service levels. Recruitment, retention, and recognition must work together for us to claim a volunteer program, versus simply using volunteers. In 2009, the Friends again sponsored breakfast with the library manager, the annual volunteer appreciation luncheon, the summer ice cream social, and Thanksgiving cards (we did not buy cards this year as we had enough extras from previous years to cover). All of these appreciation efforts were resounding successes based on volunteers' own feedback. Our volunteer loyalty as measured by length of tenure and consistent return of seasonal volunteers is robust. Friends efforts are a major factor in creating a favorable and sustaining volunteer climate.

Both bookstore and library volunteers participate in the county's online registration and hours tracking database. Thank you to Ann McCarthy for coordinating these changes in the bookstore.

Collections

The Friends have adopted The Teaching Company's "Great Courses" series as an annual gift to library collections. Besides expanding our choices for the popular Thursday afternoon lecture series these multimedia kits serve as superb lifelong learning resources. In 2010, the library is requesting \$5,000 from the Friends to replace lost capital books and furniture funds from the library's gift account.

"Lost" is not quite accurate. All eight libraries turned over gift account capital dollars to library administration to replenish the system's collection development budget. The system sacrificed book money in the last two budget cycles to help achieve targeted reductions. By providing access to Friends funds for capital purchases library staff can prioritize its collection and furnishing

deficits and act on them accordingly. In particular, the damaged table in the conference room begs for removal and replacement.

Fundraising

Friends bookshop sales generate nearly all of the Friends revenue. The operation also gives the Friends both community visibility and membership recruitment opportunities. I have seen people line up at the library entrance on book bag sales days. Many of these shoppers browsed circulating collections, too. The symbiosis between library and bookshop is obvious.

While the Board was not keen on a large-scale fundraising effort in 2009 I encourage members to consider developing supplemental revenue streams in 2010. The Chuck Loring workshop scheduled for Friday, December 4 will cover fundraising effectiveness and perhaps suggestions to get started for boards with limited experience, time, or expertise in this area. I welcome the chance to brainstorm Friends fundraising ideas in 2010.

Library Performance

I have attached a spreadsheet that summarizes selective Jacaranda Library performance indicators for October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009.

Miscellaneous

For a glimpse into how Jacaranda served the community in 2009 I will mention representative accomplishments from a variety of perspectives.

AARP tax assistance volunteers served 2,400 clients last season. The local coordinator told me that it was the busiest two-day AARP site on the southwest coast, and perhaps the busiest of its kind anywhere in Florida. We also dispensed flu shots through a third party contracting with the Sarasota County Health Department.

Jacaranda PL began serving coffee as part of a library system pilot. Evidence from customer surveys thus far indicates that the public will support coffee in the library, even if there is a charge.

The sixth annual low vision fair attracted close to 150 attendees. It continues to be well received by both the disability community and exhibitors.

Jacaranda staff members all participated in weeding activities during 2009. There are several benefits to systematic weeding, including elimination of obsolete information (superseded health and law books, for example), less crowding on shelves, improved shelf order and browsing, identification of subject matter gaps, etc. The work will continue in 2010.

Jacaranda's chess club received a nice article in the newspaper and will soon be featured on a national "gaming in libraries" podcast.

Speaking of gaming, Jacaranda partnered with Parks and Recreation colleagues to host three one-week teen gaming camps in the computer lab.

Tamar and Greg had an article on sustainability accepted for *Interface*, an online newsletter published by the Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies, a division of the American Library Association.

The youth department exported its *Baby Rhyme and Sign Time* program, which drew participants from as far away as Lakewood Ranch, to Gulf Gate PL. Sheila, Nancy, and Karen contributed to a comprehensive system youth strategic plan and have taken ownership of selected implementation assignments.

Jacaranda PL was the first in the system to hire an AARP "tech coach" volunteer through the federal Reinvestment and Recovery Act (the "stimulus"). Bob Douglas works 18 hours-per-week helping customers negotiate computers and printers, offering individualized internet and e-government orientation, assisting customers to use self-check machines, walking customers to the stacks or catalogs to find items, and the like. In the last month we also contracted with Jobs, Etc. for a volunteer seeking on-the-job experience.

Conclusion

On behalf of the Jacaranda staff, volunteers, and customers I wish to thank the Friends and its leadership for steadfast support and advocacy in 2009. It gives me comfort that the Friends stand with us in flush times and lean. I am available to answer your questions, explain my requests, or otherwise provide information that helps the board discharge its duties.