

History of the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County

At the first meeting of the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County on February 1, 1996, about 20 interested residents met at the Mountain Regional Library to discuss goals and what kind of assistance could be made to the two libraries. From that small beginning we now have over 300 members and have given thousands of dollars to the Library to purchase books and equipment for use by those who live in Towns County.

In 1996, the first year of the Friends, we gave the libraries \$1,000 for non-fiction children's books, large print books and books on tape. A book on genealogy and plastic magazine covers were also purchased. This money was from the first Book/Bake Sale, which was held in August in the Old Hiwassee Bank Building. Other projects for this first year were assistance in the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Mountain Regional Library and the Christmas Ornament Tree.

In February of 1997, the Friends gave \$1,500 to the Libraries, with this money coming from the drive to have memberships listed as Founding Members for 1996 in the community. Thirty-seven individual/family memberships, four patrons and two donors were listed. 1997 saw more community work as the Friends worked with the Union County Friends in April with a Bake Sale to benefit the libraries of both counties. Genealogy assistance from the Friends was made available on several Saturdays at the Mountain Regional Library and was well attended for a short time. In August the second Book/Bake Sale was held at the Mountain Regional Library with wonderful community response. \$1,500 was given to the Mountain Regional Library. On December 12 the Friends sponsored the 51st Anniversary celebration for the Library with Dr. Bettie Sellers, poet laureate of Georgia, reading Christmas poetry. The Christmas Ornament Tree was continued with \$400 for to the Libraries.

In 1998 the Friends, in cooperation with several Master Gardeners, planned and planted an herb garden for the enjoyment and education of area residents. The Third Annual Book/Bake Sale was a great success and \$1,200 was raised with this effort. This year the Friends held a raffle for a Russian Nesting Santa, Russian Nesting Woman Dolls and a Russian lacquered box.

In 1999 the Friends held an Open House for Writers from the area attending and meeting with other writers and the general public. The Friends sponsored this event and provided refreshments. Another Book/Bake Sale benefited the Libraries.

The first FOLTC newsletter was sent to all members in January 2000. In April the local Brownie Troop worked on badges by planting flowers at the Mountain Regional Library. The Friends provided funds and members assisted with the planting. A check for \$2,000 was given to the Libraries with the proceeds of the annual Book/Bake Sale and membership dues. Eloise Wolfersteig, daughter of Mrs. Louise Smith, donated her mother's collection of Music CDs to the Friends to start a Library CD collection. It is hoped others will add to this collection.

From 2001 to 2004 Annual Book/Bake Sales continued. The support of the community by donating and purchasing books resulted in further proceeds for the Libraries. In 2003 the Friends established an "Adoptions" Program in which individuals may "adopt" an author and purchase his/her books for the libraries. This can be a continuing adoption or for a specified period of time. An individual may opt to purchase periodicals in lieu of books by a chosen author. The Friends sponsored a several raffles this year. Alan MacDougall donated a beautiful stained glass patriotic heart. Not to be outdone by her husband, Ursula MacDougall contributed an American flag quilted wall hanging. The Friends donated funds for work on the storage room at the Towns County Library.

Our local poets were honored with an Open House during National Poetry Month with readings at the Library on April 24, 2004. About 35 people attended this event. In July the Friends were presented with a unique Civil War

replica quilt called "A Tribute to Jane" hand made by Ethelwyn Bowen. Following an unsuccessful listing on e-Bay, John Bowen purchased his mother's quilt with an amount even higher than its appraised evaluation. This amount was given to the Mountain Regional Library for the purchase of books. The annual Book/Bake Sale was again a tremendous success thanks to all the volunteers and the support of the community. At the sale, a 11 x 14 in. photo collage donated, by Heirloom Images of Blairsville, was sold at raffle.

2004 saw the start of the "Book Bunch", a group of readers who meet at the Mountain Regional Library on the third Wednesday of each month. Of the books read so far, the favorite was The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini. Pennyne Loftin is in charge and members of the group lead the discussion each month.

The Friends of the Libraries of Towns County organization has grown from 40 plus dedicated Founding Members in 1996 to over 300 members. We have contributed over \$35,000 to the Mountain Regional Library and the Towns County Library. This money has resulted from our Annual Book/Bake Sales, memberships, donations and raffles. This money has been designated primarily for the purchase books, but funds have also been allocated for magazines, magazine covers, shelving, summer reading programs for children, herb and annual gardens, carpeting for the Towns County Library and a railing for the meeting room at the Mountain Regional Library. FOLTC has assisted with the Open House to celebrate and 50th and 51st Anniversaries of the Library, held open houses for the writers and poets of the area, sponsored the Christmas Ornament Tree, founded the "Adoptions" program for books and magazines, assisted with the Genealogy program and established a library music and audio book CD collection.

It would not be possible to list all the many members who have worked so hard to make The Friends of the Libraries of Towns County a community success. The presidents deserve mention and they are in order of service: Doris Tilly, Roberta Young, Roy Hyink, Max Barlow and Jan Roberts. Special credit is due to the late Bob Bowen who enabled us to have status as a Federal Tax Free organization. In 2004, in appreciation for her many contributions to the Friends of the Libraries, Ethelwyn Bowen was designated the first honorary Life Membership in the FOLTC. Most of all the Friends of the Libraries of Towns County have had a wonderful response from the community in their endeavors. Our library is here for all, throughout a person's lifetime. We shall continue to raise funds to purchase materials needed by the Library, to provide support for expanding library programs, to encourage more memberships, gifts, memorials and endowments and to work for legislative appropriations.

Good Libraries Need Good Friends

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Doris L. Tilly, Founding President