



# FRIENDS' NEWS

Friends of the Surprise Libraries

June 2013

## BOOK SALES SOAR

During the first five months of 2013 book sales soared in Friends' Place – marking the first major results of President Alyson Cline's (Aly) year long overhaul of the bookstore.

The initial figures for the year are impressive. Sales jumped from \$36,000 year before last to \$44,000 last year and to an expected \$50,000 this year.

From January through May, the store has taken in \$23,835 compared to \$17,342 during the same time last year – a 37 percent increase. At the same time Friends racked up 31 days in which bookstore sales topped \$200. There were only 13 such days in the first five months of 2012.

This sales boom was hardly a surprise to the officers of Friends of the Surprise Libraries. This record-breaking spring was planned to happen as part of Aly's crusade to reorganize the used book store – from increasing the shelf space to vastly increasing the Volunteer sales staff.

The goal: to make it, as much as possible, like a local commercial bookstore.

She began by redesigning the lobby of the Surprise Regional Library – home to the Friends' Place since 2003. Along with the Board, added seventeen new bookcases and used them to form shopper corridors through the store which, at the same time, created a series of open spaces.

"We put more books in easy reach of the public, took hundreds of books out of storage and accommodated many new books donated by the Library." Aly's team expanded hardback fiction and gave it the entire Northwest corner of the store, making it a central focus.

At least once a week, Aly and Gary (Treasurer) dash into the store and begin moving armloads of books from one shelf to another, establishing special sales and carting fresh stock from the storeroom. At the same time groups of books are often moved back into storage.

"Some people believe that we should be able to pull books off the shelf when they have been there too long. And we used to mark the date a book was shelved – allowing us to pull it after a period of time. The way the store is organized now, we can shift the inventory anytime we like."

Cont. on pg. 8

### A MESSAGE FROM

### THE PRESIDENT,

### ALYSON CLINE

When people think of recycling, they usually think about paper, plastic, soda cans and glass bottles. Friends' Place is recycling at its finest. Books and Magazines from local residents donated to Friends are then organized, labeled and sold to residents and visitors: providing a low cost source of reading material for people. Our recent reorganization added 17 bookcases to our area, bringing more items out for people to select. But the Heart of the Organizations is our volunteers who help with the process and provide a smile to all who come into the library. Our board is equally important since they distribute the money we collect to libraries and literacy programs within Surprise. If you have donated items, your time, are a member or have purchased something; thanks for making Friends' Place a "Bookstore with a Heart." –

ALY

# Volunteers

## **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR - Glenn Whitman**

One day last winter Volunteer Honoree Glenn Whitman discovered an aged Martin Luther Bible among books donated to Friends. It was tattered from centuries of use, but Glenn noted “that you could feel the history clinging to it.” Several days later, following hours of research, he had discovered the German book’s publishing history and its probable sale value – from \$400 to \$600.

The Bible, written in old German and printed on a historical press, soon became the “star” of Whitman’s growing treasure chest of rare and collectable books which he has researched, priced and assembled on special shelves in the Friends’ lobby.



In the two years since he became the

organization’s guru of rare books, he has spent almost all of his spare time herding the growing collection toward marketability. “He’s done a tremendous job for us in this area,” says Friends President Alyson Cline.

‘And all the while he’s continued serving as a Volunteer and Member of the Board as well. For those reasons he was the obvious choice for Volunteer of the Year.’

Since he became the go-to guy on the question of rare books, Glenn has haunted the internet. He started out with quite an armload to begin with – but soon found the books’ histories and estimates of their worth.

“I found that we have some really old books that are worth quite a lot,” he said. “But I also discovered that we don’t have a viable outlet for most of them. And we found out quickly that the walk-in trade wasn’t interested.

Glenn even set up a special table at the front of Friends’ Place and arranged the old volumes decorously enough to appeal to those coming in the front door. The antiques were literally the first thing customers saw.

The display drew a lot of attention, a lot of conversations, and a lot of questions but very few sales.

“I see them as old and treasured friends and have worked hard to find them loving homes. But you have to match up the right book with the right customer – the customer that’s already looking for it and who is willing to pay worthy prices. Reaching these customers is our problem. I don’t know what the answer would be, perhaps finding a bookstore that would sell them on consignment or maybe we should turn to any number of advertising methods.”

Cont. on pg. 7

# Volunteers

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT VOLUNTEER - GLORIA SPANNAGEL

In the twelve years since Gloria Spannagel joined Friends, she has worn all of the power hats – President (twice), Recording Secretary, and Treasure, as a decade long Board Member.

An energetic former Teacher and School Librarian, Gloria ran the Friends' Place bookstore for four years. She designed the



original merchandise layout. During her tenure, the lobby grew from a single stack of books and some "National Geographic" magazines to the thousands that are now jammed in the store.

"Pat Hitchcock, a longtime board member, was actually the one who began setting it up," Gloria said. "Then she left for the summer, handed it off to me and never took it back."

Gloria hit the ground running, and for four years turned her position as Book Coordinator into

a vocation.

In fact, she worked so long and hard, former President Jean Duncan recalls, "She accomplished so much that we used to joke about her sleeping in the backroom. She was always there."

Gloria came to Surprise from Littleton, Colorado, where she had been a Teacher and Elementary School Librarian from 1958 to 2000. "I had graduated from college at Illinois State University, moved to suburban Denver and never went back."

"I came here as a widow and Friends soon filled a hole in my life," she recalled.

"When I settled in Surprise in 2000 I was looking for a friends group since there had been such a good one for the Littleton Library."

She soon found what she wanted in the two-year-old Friends of the Surprise Library – then serving the small Hollyhock Library in the City's old downtown complex. And, like other members of the organization, Gloria served as an advisor to the City on matters concerning the future Regional Library. The needs of the Regional Library guided the future of Friends.

Just ahead lay the big job of establishing a bookstore in the as yet unconstructed facility.

When the library was completed in 2002 and Gloria began her era as Book Coordinator – she was the first to organize the books into categories – in a wide range: from hot new mystery novels to political biographies and from a treasure trove of children's books to an entire book shelf of spiritual volumes.

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## A BRIEF HISTORY OF FRIENDS' PLACE

The bustling Friends' Place Bookstore in the lobby of the Surprise Regional Library was a fortunate afterthought. When Friends' Officers toured the new \$5 million plus facility on opening day in 2002, they found that, promises aside, no place had been allocated for the permanent used book sale they had been planning for four years.

"We were crushed," recalled longtime board member Pat Hitchcock, who, along with other Friends members had been officially advising both the City and Maricopa County during the drive to construct the Library.

Realizing the oversight, officials of Maricopa County and of Surprise, rushed to carve out a space for what would be the major fund raiser for scores of library projects.



First, they offered to squeeze the used book shop into a small space behind the water fountain and a large bank of drink machines. "Can you imagine us in that space," Pat said. "We would have been hidden away from view."

Then Friends was offered a somewhat claustrophobic kiosk – much like the single person sales devices that fill the open space in most modern shopping malls.

"I couldn't imagine that we could mount an effective sale in that exotic installation"

Pat said, they reached the point of perusing kiosk catalogues before the idea was scratched.

Even then, Friends was planning a generous store with room for the avalanche of books they expected from area donors. Their three outdoor book sales had convinced them that the books were out there and that there were people ready to hand them over.

Both sides reached a brief impasse – until Friends' President Jack Hitchcock toured the new Library during dedication festivities.

At one point, he found himself in the large, empty lobby that fronts the Library. He was chatting with Harry Courtwright, County Director of Libraries. Looking around the generous L-shaped space, Jack had a brainstorm. "What about this"? Jack asked Courtwright. "Let us set up here."

While Courtwright admitted that it might be a good idea, he immediately referred to matter to the City. "They own the library's physical plant," he said. "It's their permission you will need."

Several days later, Jack approached Mark Coronado, director of the Parks and Recreation Board. Mark, it turned out, was as enthusiastic as Jack. "He agreed that it was a good idea," Jack recalled.

“Let us help you in any way we can,” said Coronado, pledging further that the City would pay for bookcases and other necessities it would take to open Friends’ Place.

Past President Jean Duncan recalls that, “Their oversight was a blessing in disguise. The foyer turned out to be perfect, and, later, we were so glad we didn’t get a room. When we figured out that we were going to be in that long hallway, Jack, Pat and I went up to Lowes and purchased a desk and two shelves – which the City paid for.’

In the beginning, Friends’ Place was all but lost in the large lobby. “We had a small pile of children’s books, some novels (very few), a huge pile of “National Geographic” magazines and a big stack of long playing records that would not sell” Pat recalled. (Actually, the magazines were snapped up within days – and became the inspiration for the highly profitable periodical sales on special carts in the lobby.)

From that day on, however, anyone entering the library was obliged to pass through the heart of the bookstore.

Friends had been organized just four years earlier by Surprise civic leader Barbara Maule, who was Chairman of the Surprise Library Planning Committee. Because only the small Hollyhock Library in Old Town existed at the time, the group’s title was Friends of the Surprise Library.

But the new group already had a two-fold purpose. First, they raised money through small book sales to pay for “extra needs” of Hollyhock. And second, they were designated to advise both the City and the County in the planning and construction of the looming Regional Library.

Jean Duncan, Friends’ first Membership Chairman, recalls that the organization began meeting every month with City officials and the architects. “They shared the plan with us and asked for our input,” Jean recalled. “We had already taken bus tours of several County libraries to prepare for the planning sessions.”

Jean remembers one meeting at which the architects wanted to have a little open alcove outside where people could sit and read. Friends’ officers reminded the panel of the summer heat and the little nook disappeared from the plans.

By 2001, Jack was serving on the Surprise Parks and Recreation Planning Board as a representative of the now fast growing Friends of the Libraries. As such, he provided further liaison with the leaders who were structuring the Regional Library.

Along with Jean and other advisors, Jack recommended that the City and Country build a 30,000 square-foot facility to anticipate the needs of the exploding Surprise – whose population jumped from a little more than 30,000 residents in 2000 to 117,000 in 2010.

“But they were set on building the present 20,000 square-foot library.”

Jean Duncan recalls: “And no matter how many times we said they needed the larger space, it didn’t make any difference.”



## LIBRARY VIEW:

### By Mary Melby Manager, Surprise Regional Library

I am very happy to tell you a little about the library in each newsletter. Many of the Friends are faithful library users, but even some of our most regular customers are not aware of the many resources we have to offer, and all free of charge.

I would like to feature one of our electronic resources: Zinio gives library customers access to full, digital copies of magazines. Do you love magazines, but hate the price tag? The library has your ticket to free magazines with Zinio. With almost 400 titles available titles available, you can choose from many of the most popular magazines on the newsstand. Titles such as Marie Claire, Saveur, Men's Health, Newsweek, Science, the Nation, and the New York Review of Books are yours to download. The choice of magazines covers many subject areas of interest.



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## *“Glenn”, continued from page 2*

The little feedback Glenn has received about the special books has focused on price. “Some come in and say, ‘this book is just not worth the price you have on it.’” Glenn, armed with his months of research can confidently reply, “Well, somebody is paying that much.”

Others slam him for selling the valuable books “well under price.” “But I take this with a grain of salt. I do know the correct prices”, from exhaustive internet research.

Glenn became enamored of Friends’ Place when he ambled in six years ago and began combing the shelves looking for Stephen King novels – particularly volumes in the author’s “Black Tower” series.

The shelves were empty of this hot title.

But he mentioned his quest to the Volunteer behind the desk.

“Just wait a minute,” she said, “I think we may have some of those in the back.” The volunteer popped back out with three ‘Black Watch’ books in her hand. “I said, ‘How much are these. \$6?’ “

“Nope,” said the Volunteer. “Two bucks.”

“I was hooked. Good books like that at a more than reasonable price and located in the lobby of the Library. What else could you ask for?”

Glenn, with his blustery voice and a sense of humor he shares with everyone, became a regular at Friends’ Place – so much so that he was asked if he would consider becoming a Volunteer.

“I started the next Thursday, and have been there ever since.

Not long after his fresh, strong approach to selling saw him take a seat on the Board.

Friends’ book expert moved to Surprise from a small town in Washington. He had just retired after 35 years as an Art Teacher.

“I loved that job,” he said. “It was like play, play, play all the time.

Glenn is also a member of the “Knights of Columbus.”

(Glenn has been off since March following major surgery but promises to be back shortly.)

## *“Gloria”, continued from page 3*

She laid out the books with the customer in mind, making the different genres “easy to find.”

But she soon found out that this wasn’t enough. It was going to take more than the key position in the lobby to bring in the expected hordes of donors and customers.

“People would walk right through at first,” Gloria noted. And those who slowly caught on would stop at the desk and say, ‘you know, I had no idea there was a bookstore out here.’ “ So Friends organized a publicity campaign to wake up the public and inform them that there was a place where they could donate their used books rather than throwing them away. At the same time our campaign showed that there was a viable bookstore in the front of the Library.

Torrents of donors and shoppers were soon attracted by the articles in local papers.

Gloria was gratified by the response. “It’s important to me that these good books aren’t pitched into dumpsters. They’re given to us instead so that somebody else can have them. I think this form of recycling is wonderful.”

Through it all, she has remained a weekly Volunteer. “It’s one of the things that keeps me going. It’s fun meeting all the people. They stop and chat with you and tell you a little bit about their lives. That’s why most of our Volunteers stay on – the contact with other people.”

“When you live by yourself as I do, that contact is so important. After all, you can’t just play cards for the rest of your life although some people do.”

Gloria also volunteered at Del Webb Banner Hospital for six years. “I worked in the emergency room which was really exciting.”

Of all her Friends jobs, she “really liked being Treasurer the most. That’s because the job is kind of cut and dry. I’m an introvert, and it gave me a chance to work alone – with just the spread sheets.”

Gloria’s most enduring legacy is bound to be the School Library Grants which the organization began giving in 2002. “I initiated the grants to the Surprise School Libraries and remained in charge of these programs until two years ago.”

The first \$2,000 grants went to three carefully selected Elementary Schools.

“The next year we expanded to five Grade Schools, and added a High School which received a \$4,000 grant. It grew from there.

In 2012 Friends of the Surprise Libraries donated \$14,000 to six school libraries thanks to proceeds from book sales, bringing the total donated to \$89,000.

*“Book Sales Soar”,  
continued from page 1*

Volunteers have noted that Aly appears to know the stock like the back of her hand and can move and highlight non-sellers to give them new life.

This wholesale shifting and sorting has already produced results. When slow-moving genre’s such as “self-help” and “spiritual-religious” were highlighted, empty spots began appearing daily. She also put these volumes on sale, temporarily chopping the price from a dollar to fifty cents and further offering them as “buy one; get one free.”

“We’re applying the marketing skills I learned from working in banks for more than 30 years,” Aly said.

With financial leadership as a base, Gary, who spent over 30 years in banking, as an executive, created a bank of knowledge when he traced day-to-day sales back to the first year the bookstore operated – 2002.

“This gave us a powerful tool,” Aly noted. “Now we can anticipate and maneuver the sales trends based on experience.”

“I had 35 years in banking,” Aly recalled. “And, before that, I worked for the Broadway. There I did marketing on jeans, shirts and a whole series of products. It was there that I first learned the philosophy of pricing and of moving the products to achieve higher sales.”

“And this, in turn, gets people to look at things they might have passed over before. “

Aly’s background in retail banking included stints at Security Pacific National Bank, First Interstate Bank and Wells Fargo. She has a Business Management Certificate from UCLA.

Gary held leadership positions at Security Pacific National Bank and Bank of America. He was an internal credit auditor and project manager for mergers, acquisitions and divestitures at Bank of America.

As important as these marketing theories have been, the backbone of Aly’s plan involved a pumped up Volunteer sales force; a force that is better trained and more carefully guided than before. Using a barrage of publicity, a swanky new online website and word-of-mouth, she increased the Volunteer sales staff from 35 two years ago to more than 60 today.

“Using daily sales information we started increasing staffing on the biggest sale days.” Now these prime days all have two Volunteers on duty, one to man the desk and the other to deal with the floor, helping customers and shelving and rearranging the stock,” Aly said.

Having more sales people has hiked the Volunteer hours to 300 a month breaking all previous records. In February, for instance, 55 Volunteers, the most in history, put in 379 hours, also a record.

Friends Vice President, Diane Barish, who officially tracks the hours, found a direct correlation between the increased number of Volunteers and increases in sales.



Fueling these successes was an agreement between Friends and the Surprise Regional Library in May, 2012. For the first time in the ten year history of Friends' Place, the library began donating shelves of "retired" best sellers to the used book stock. This allowed the organization to increase its "new book" inventory where buyers now pay \$3 for books published after 2008 -- still far lower than any comparable library in Arizona or any used bookstore. Surprise Library's Manager, Mary Melby explained the decision: "we were not giving you the withdrawn best-sellers because Friends of the Surprise Libraries had not made itself a part of the umbrella of Friends of the Maricopa Libraries. (Friends decided in 1998 to function as an independent entity.)

But, as the City of Surprise reached a fifty percent takeover of the expenses of the Regional Library, Melby was freed up to donate the books instead of shredding them as they had done for ten years.

"We formerly paid a recycling company to come in and shred the books in order to recycle their paper content," Melby continued. "Now we only shred the books that are literally falling apart.

Profits from the successful overhaul will allow Friends to increase its grants to the Surprise Library, the Hollyhock Library and to School Libraries in the area.

Reaction has been favorable to the revamped store.

Recently, a chatty customer approached Board Member Pat Hitchcock and gestured toward the bookstore surrounding her: "This is wonderful. It's just like a bookstore. Pat took the announcement as a "welcome

compliment."

"Friends' Place has changed from being a more casual, laid back store to a high powered institution based upon results."

Pat continued, "I give Aly a lot of credit; she's real savvy in the business world. She changed those shelves, and it's made a big difference."

Jean Duncan, former Friends President and a founding member, added, "There are several things Aly has done this year to benefit the organization. First, she has moved us into the information age. And, second, she's made us more money."

## ***VOLUNTEERS SHINE***

Friends Vice President Diane Barish discovered that Volunteers worked record number of hours during the first five months of this year.

Here are the stats:

- January, 365 volunteer hours.
- February, 379 volunteer hours compared with 120 hours in 2012.
- March, 392 volunteer hours compared to 142 hours in 2012.
- April, 390 volunteer hours compared to 175 hours in 2012.
- May, 416 volunteer hours.

## TIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

*Past President (three terms) Jean Duncan offers this issue's tips for Volunteers:*

- Carefully read all of the directories President Alyson Cline sends out regarding price changes and on reorganization of the bookstore.
- When you are sorting books, look at the book very carefully to see what category it should be placed in.
- If a book is exceptional, otherwise known as a "coffee table book," make certain that it gets in the special cart set aside for such items. It should ordinarily be priced higher. Use your own judgment.
- Greet people and talk to them. I usually say, 'Where are you from?.' They love that.
- While putting books on the shelf, glance and see if all the books by one author can be shelved together – this makes it so much easier for the customer.
- If people have trouble finding books they want, help them look for them. I will even go into storage and look for a specific item.
- When the requested book isn't there, tell them: "We don't have it now, but keep checking back because it might come in.
- Talk to people. If they have suggestions, write them down and get them to a Board Member. That way we have some feedback from the public.



## BATTER UP!

Dozens of spring training visitors detoured through Friends' Place and helped to make March a record-breaking month.

Though there was no way of keeping track of this influx, chatty volunteers detected a steady stream of baseball tourists crowding the lobby.

Many of them left with armloads of books to read during the season's down time.

Volunteers also discovered that the bookstore was on the San Francisco List – a guide to Surprise attractions. And there were unproven rumors that Friends' Place was on at least one other list.

Perhaps this explains why sales expanded in March to \$5,065 – a 44 percent increase over last year. The average monthly sales in 2013 was \$4,767.

***Friends of the Surprise Libraries***  
***Surprise, Arizona***