

President's Greetings

Public and private libraries have been important in my life since my earliest years. I've used libraries in my professional life for research, analysis and planning, and in my private life to enjoy adventure and excitement through novels and stories that took me all over the world. But my fondest library memories revolve around "story time" at our library in West Hartford, Connecticut, when I was very young.

Even today, excitement surges in me when I remember our young, beautiful children's librarian dressed as a witch—not a scary one, but like an angel in a black cape with a peaked hat on her russet curls—intoning a Halloween story for those of us gathered around her on the carpet. We heard, too, the story of Dick and Jane who took all kinds of food out of their mother's refrigerator, set up their own grocery store and sold the food. The hutzpah of those two famous characters so entranced me that I had to find their story for myself on the library shelves and read it over and over again.

A recent study of storytelling in contemporary hunter-gather tribes* reported in the journal Nature Communication reveals that storytelling has even wider benefits than entrancing children. Storytellers in these tribes tell tales that "emphasize the value of gender equality, friendship and the social acceptance of difference." Further, "the research established that individuals who live in camps with a greater proportion of skilled storytellers cooperate more readily with one another and are therefore more successful in their foraging."

Our Freedom Library storytelling programs, then, have genuine potential for encouraging these positive social attitudes in children who attend. Let us as Friends do all we can to support these opportunities in the coming New Year!

Florence Pritchard.

*Cited by Stephen Greenblatt in "Why Holiday Stories Matter." NYT, 12/20/17

Focus on Freedom

Early in January, our wonderful library supervisor, Mary Butler, will move forward in her career by becoming a supervisor in one of the eight public libraries in Loudoun County, Virginia. I interviewed Mary to celebrate where she has been with us and where she is going to serve next.

F.P. What are some of the most pleasurable experiences you've had at Freedom Public Library?

M.B. Watching the Freedom staff rise to the occasion and maintain their humor and professional attitudes when we have large crowds visit; creating a balanced schedule for my staff with reliable vacations; getting to know the Friends as they volunteered to help the library with special projects--all have given me a great deal of pleasure.

F.P. What have you learned at Freedom that will help you as a branch manager in your new position?

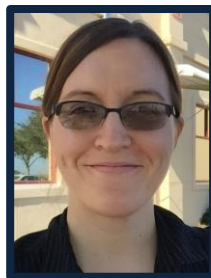
M.B. Never be afraid to admit you've been wrong. That helps you start making things better that much faster.

F.P. What do you see as a key challenge in your new position?

M.B. Learning the unique needs of the Loudoun County system--keeping my eyes and ears open for helpful information.

F.P. What special experiences do you hope for as a new Virginian?

M.B. One of my first goals is to drive to Washington D.C. to see the cherry blossoms in the spring. I've always loved the idea of walking under rows of cherry trees as a soft "snow" of petals falls around me. Uh-oh! my romantic streak is showing.



**Thank you, Mary, for all you have done
We wish you well!**

On the Horizon

The metaphor of Janus, the two-headed god who looks on both past and future, proves meaningful again as the Freedom Friends plot a course for continued growth and development. Three areas call on us to plot wisely, to consider what has gone before us and what rises up to meet us. They are membership, governance and expanded fundraising.

Our membership now exceeds 200 thanks to remarkable 2016 and 2017 campaigns. Many new members are already deeply involved in Friends work. But we cannot simply congratulate ourselves here. We must continue to weave the unique talents, passions and ideas of these and future new members brightly and clearly into our Friends group fabric.

Our governance structure is an experiment in non-profit operation. It now includes an executive board and is organized around the belief that the board can envision long term goals while approval and implementation of those goals rests with our active membership. Can this two-part structure in fact wed vision with energy so that the Friends fulfill their mission? Here, our Governance and Management Assessment Committee will be vital.

We have agreed to mount a Friends campaign to raise \$200,000 by the year 2020. This money could equip the long hoped-for library expansion. If that does not occur, it would be used to enhance the existing building in significant ways as we did with the portable computer classroom purchase. To raise this money—which will be totally separate from funds for our regular operations—we must create a 2020 Task Force and a fundraising plan that will guide us in enlisting our larger community in a successful outcome. We have begun by earmarking \$50,000 of our own funds for the campaign and are beginning to identify task force members who have strong community connections. "Confidence" and "wisdom" will be our watchwords!