



Newsletter Vol. XLVIII No. 2 - Spring 2026

www.okfriends.net

Strengthening Libraries in Oklahoma through Friends of Libraries

Summer Reading and Learning

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Summer reading can have a significant impact on the community of readers. Recent reports show that reading scores for students continue to drop. Studies vary, but the consensus is that 20 percent of children lose up to two months of reading progress, if they don't read over the summer.

Friends groups can do so much to encourage reading: book giveaways, reading prizes, programs, Little Free Libraries, hands-on activities, family events, StoryWalk®, and more.

Help students return to school better prepared, more confident, and ready to succeed!

FOLIO's Annual Endowment Campaign

Spring is a wonderful time for personal renewal and for helping FOLIO increase our Endowment at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. The endowment began in 2009 with \$12,000. Since then, through generous contributions and matching grants from Kirkpatrick Family Fund (we receive \$2,000 when we raise \$6,000 every year), the endowment has grown to almost \$175,000. The interest from the endowment is now enough to fund our annual awards, grants, and scholarships, and we could increase those with an even larger endowment.

You will be receiving an email or letter soon, and you may send your donation with a check or you can make your donation online at www.okfriends.net. Your contribution is tax deductible. Please help FOLIO continue the important work of supporting Friends of the Library organizations throughout Oklahoma and library staff members pursuing advanced degrees in library science.

— Melinda Howard, FOLIO Endowment Chair

Freedom to Read, Freedom to Belong

The FOLIO Day session "Freedom to Read, Freedom to Belong" was presented by the Metropolitan Library System's Director of Collection Services and Development, Janeal Walker. She explained libraries' roles in our First Amendment's right to read the information of our choice and emphasized the sense of belonging that comes from that freedom. Ms. Walker elaborated on five points pertaining to intellectual freedom: why it matters, the library's role, the legal context, reconsideration, and Friends' role.

Freedom to read is a core value with First Amendment protection, and most libraries have policies supporting this value. Freedom to read leads to the freedom to belong, a value that grows from the safety and connectivity fostered by libraries. Libraries provide access to all kinds of materials, literally something to offend everyone. Collections are developed using professional criteria and community needs assessment.

The legal context for freedom to read stems from the Supreme Court Case, *Island Trees School District v. Pico* in 1982. The Court ruled that books cannot be removed from school libraries for political reasons and that the suppression of ideas is unconstitutional. The decision supports intellectual freedom and the tenet that libraries are content neutral.

The courts have seen an increase in cases involving libraries and the freedom to read. Federal Courts have been split on patrons' right to challenge items in libraries' collections with some decisions equating library collections with government documents. In Oklahoma, local school boards have authority over school libraries, not the State Department of Education. At this time, the Oklahoma Legislature has over 100 bills pertaining to library collections. While the majority of the bills will not advance or pass, the fallout could lead to soft censorship, which is quietly removing books to avoid controversy.

(continued on p. 4)

From the President. . .



Two years ago I wrote my first President's article for this newsletter, and here I am now writing my last one. It has been a great two years serving as your President. I have learned a lot, met new people, including several authors, and visited Friends' groups.

We had a great time in Tulsa for FOLIO Day at the OLA Conference on March 13. We had several Friends groups present. They shared what they were doing in their communities and how they were advocating for their libraries. It was encouraging to hear so many good reports from these active groups. We also heard some great presentations, which will be reported on in further detail in this newsletter. A highlight of the day was our author talk and book signing. Greg Shaw talked about his book ***Last One Walking: The Life of Cherokee Community Leader Charlie Soap***. His special guest was none other than Charlie Soap himself! It was great to hear from both of these men.

As summer is approaching, I hope each of you will be involved in Summer Reading programs within your library. The support of Friends' groups is so important to these special programs that keep children reading throughout the summer months. Early literacy has been a focus of FOLIO over the past few years, and we must continue to put an emphasis on these programs.

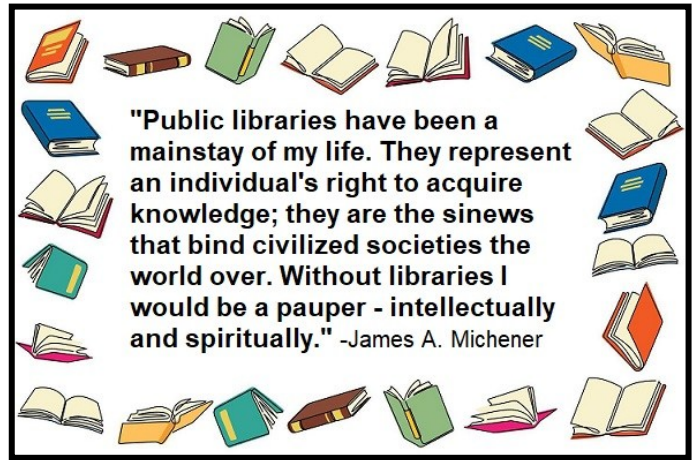
Thank you for allowing me to serve as your President; it has been a great experience!

Angie S. Lewis

FOLIO Board Actions

The FOLIO Board met on March 13, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency in Tulsa.

- The slate of officers was elected: President – Linda Pye; Vice President – Connie Armstrong; Secretary – Pauline Rodriguez-Atkins; and Treasurer – Candace Baird.
- President Angie Lewis expressed her gratitude. "It has been an honor for me to be a part of the FOLIO leadership and serve as President the past two years...Thank you to all these committee chairs for their tireless work, leadership, expertise, and enthusiasm for these projects and programs."
- FOLIO has over 9,000 Facebook followers for the first quarter of 2026. Followers are trending somewhat younger and more international.
- FOLIO materials have been passed to the OSU Archives for processing..



Welcome Cathy to FOLIO Board

Cathy Blackman was an Associate Professor/Librarian at Cameron University for 27 years before she began her retirement in July 2024. When she was first hired at the library in January 1997, she was the Head of Interlibrary Loan. A few years later, she added on



Head of Circulation to her duties. In 2004, she moved to Technical Services, becoming the Head Cataloger. As per her usual ability to add more duties to her plate, she became the Head of Acquisitions, too. During the full length of her tenure at Cameron, she shared the duties of Reference and Bibliographic Instruction with her fellow librarians.

She was an active member of the Oklahoma Library Association for all 27 years of her librarian career. She served on and led several committees and roundtables and gave many presentations at conferences and workshops. She was Program Chair for the 2015 Conference. Several OLA members have told her that she has the distinction of being the longest-serving OLA President because Covid happened while she was serving from 2020-2021, and the yearly conference had to be postponed.

As an OLA member, Cathy was able to serve the librarians who were serving their communities, schools, special libraries, and institutions of higher learning. Now as a FOLIO board member, she will have an opportunity to serve those librarians and their library patrons in a new way.

Cathy has a B.S. in Elementary Education and spent five years teaching in Memphis, TN. Her MLIS is from the University of Southern Mississippi. She also obtained a Master's degree in Behavioral Science at Cameron University.

Her other love outside of libraries is The Beatles. She volunteers as a moderator on a world-wide Beatles Forum.

Author Greg Shaw



Pictured left to right: Candace Baird, FOLIO Treasurer; Pauline Rodriguez-Atkins, FOLIO Secretary; Author Greg Shaw; Charlie Soap; and Angie S. Lewis, FOLIO President.

Greg Shaw was the featured author to speak at the FOLIO sponsored Author Program on FOLIO Day, March 13, at the Annual Oklahoma Library Association Conference in Tulsa. Shaw is the author of ***Last One Walking: The Life of Cherokee Community Leader Charlie Soap*** (University of Oklahoma Press, 2024) and has co-authored several other books. He is a journalist who worked for a Cherokee newspaper at one time which is when he met Charlie Soap, the husband of Wilma Mankiller (now deceased) who was the first woman elected to serve as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation. Charlie Soap and Tim Kelly directed the movie, ***The Cherokee Word for Water***, which featured Mankiller's project in Bell, Oklahoma.

Greg learned a lot from Charlie from driving around the various Cherokee communities together. He said the book was done by driving around in Charlie's old pickup, taking notes, and recording the stories. There were many days of interviews with Greg the reporter interviewing an elder. When he began writing the book, he found out that Wilma Mankiller had begun a book on Charlie Soap before she died. Finding that beginning helped him get started, and that part is included in the prologue.

Charlie Soap participated in the presentation by telling fascinating stories about his life and experiences. Through his stories, it was easy for the audience to learn more about Cherokee culture and life and gain a new appreciation for the community service by both Charlie and Wilma. When needs arose, they did not wait for something to happen or for someone else to take action. They did something about it.

There is a Cherokee word for helping each other out, "Gadugi". When someone was sick, maybe four or five people would come to help. Soap told a story about how the tribe had been asking the government for water for years, because the tribe couldn't afford it. Ross Swimmer, former Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, had the idea of using "Gadugi" to get water by building a water line. Wilma wrote a grant, and they used volunteer labor to build it. Men, women, and children helped. Then they built twenty-five new homes, remodeled older houses,

and built a community building. The only workers that were hired were an electrician, a carpenter, and a plumber. He said it was inspiring to see what happened when people came together.

Spirituality plays a role in Charlie's life as a community leader. After helping one family, Charlie's love and compassion for people led him to decide that with God's help he could help others. Charlie told the story of how the book got its name. It goes back to when he was a child and the family had to walk several miles to get groceries. Usually, he stayed with the family while walking, but one day he decided to play and thought he would catch up, but he didn't, and he got the name, Last One Walking.

Charlie has been awarded the DAR Service Award, and he and Greg will travel to Houston to receive the Award. The money from it will go to his favorite charity, a Day of Service on March 25, his birthday. A Day of Service is always organized on his birthday, and that celebration is the gift he wants.

Copies of the book were given to attendees who were encouraged to write reviews on Amazon. Charlie Soap is an excellent storyteller, and Greg Shaw does an excellent job of relaying the stories and describing Charlie as a community leader. If time had permitted, the audience could have listened to more stories.

- Linda Pye, FOLIO Vice President

Charlie Soap and Wilma Mankiller helped Cherokee people help themselves, and they helped to build empathy for poor people by building something tangible – community waterlines and housing.

For Cherokees water is not only life, it is sacred. It is healing. It nourishes the body and soul. As such, it is not just respected. It is revered.



Freedom to Read, Freedom to Belong

(Continued from p. 1)

Most libraries have reconsideration policies that follow set steps:

1. A patron raises a concern.
2. The staff provides a reconsideration form.
3. The staff reviews the material in question.
4. The library administration makes the final decision.

In making the final decision, library administration asks if the item meets the library's policy and if there is a demand for the item. The reconsideration policy should not be based on opinion. It should be transparent with consistency being the number one concern. A reconsideration policy must show respect for diverse views and safeguard intellectual freedom.

Friends groups can help libraries during challenging times by building support, advocating for libraries, fundraising to replace lost and stolen items, enhancing community belonging by helping to make the library a welcoming place, supporting library staff, and providing nongovernmental affirmation.

The session closed with ways to make a difference tomorrow, such as sharing a positive library story, inviting a new member, thanking a librarian, spotlighting a book, donating or funding one small thing, and practicing a 15-second story.

- Judy Haight, FOLIO Past President

FOLIO Best Friends 2025 Awards

At the FOLIO Annual Meeting on March 13 in Tulsa, board member and Best Friends Award Committee Chair, Melinda Howard, presented the 2025 Best Friends awards of \$1,000 each to two Friends of Libraries organizations.



Pictured are Diana Dunn from the Bartlesville Friends of the Library and Dr. Melinda Howard.

The 2025 Oklahoma Best Friends Award, which recognizes a Friends group in a city or town with a population in excess of 10,000, was presented to the Bartlesville Friends of the Library. Their Friends group donated \$6,500 to the library for the Summer Reading Program and a Lego contest. They also donated funds for materials for the library's Literacy Services, which provided tutoring to 59 Adult English Language learners and two Adult Basic Education Learners.

One English language learner from Russia was able to receive her citizenship. The Bartlesville Friends group operates a store in the library that sells used books and other items. It is open when the library is open and attracts approximately 200 patrons a month.



Pictured are Susan Rice and Jeanette Anderson from the Friends of the Pryor Creek Public Library and Dr. Melinda Howard. Photos by Eugene Earsom.

The John Harkey Best Friends Award, which recognizes a Friends group in a city or town with a population of less than 10,000, was awarded to the Friends of the Pryor Creek Public Library. Their murder mystery fundraiser in January provided enough support for 3,838 books to be sent through the Dolly Parton Imagination Library.

Other activities of this active group included a sponsorship of a Pryor City Council Candidate Forum and a Local Author Roundup, the passing out of library services information at a church-sponsored Single Mom's Day and the county Fun in the Sun Day, and helping with the library's Summer Reading Carnival and the Pryor Music Festival's children's activity area.

Now is the time for Friends organizations to start documenting their activities to apply for 2026 Best Friends Awards. The application can be found on the FOLIO website at: <https://okfriends.net/awards>

- Dr. Melinda Howard, Best Friends Committee Chair

Seeds for Success Grants

FOLIO celebrated the two-year anniversary of its Seeds for Success grants with two \$500 grants and two grants of 100 picture and board books.

The Seeds for Success grants were designed to promote early-childhood literacy, particularly in low-income populations, through the efforts of Friends groups in conjunction with their public libraries. This year the Friends of the Enid Library and the Friends of the Weatherford Public Library received \$500 grants, and the Friends of the Shattuck Library and the Friends of the Blanchard Public Library each received grants of 100 books.

The Weatherford Friends plan to use their grant to purchase new books for every PreK student at the Weatherford Early Childhood Center where a significant number of the students face economic hardship. The books will be distributed during National Library Week.



Pictured with Judy Haught is Shattuck Library Director Bryan Dyer.

The Friends of the Blanchard Public Library will use their grant of books to stock a Little Free Library in Lions Park. The library staff will hold story time in the park and will give a book to each child who participates.



Sarah Bruton (left), President of Friends of the Enid Public Library, was recognized by FOLIO at the Awards Program by Judy Haught.

The Enid Friends plan to create a Little Free Library that is child height. They will use part of their grant to stock this new little library. They will also use the grant to add children's books to their SOS Outreach Library, which serves the unhoused population. In addition, they intend to provide children's books for the large Marshallese population in Enid.

The Friends of the Shattuck Library specifically requested books to increase their bilingual section of the library. They received children's picture and board books in both English and Spanish. They will give books to children who are library patrons.



Pictured left to right: Becky Pauls, Blanchard branch manager; Judy Haught; and Brook Fischer, Children's Librarian

With the great need for early-childhood literacy resources, FOLIO appreciates the efforts of Friends groups to get books into the hands of young children.

- Judy Haught, Seeds for Success Committee Chair

The 2026 Born Norberg and Mary Lou Atkinson Staff Support Scholarship Recipients

Each year since 2006, FOLIO awards three \$1,000 scholarships to full or part-time employees of a library in Oklahoma who are in the process of furthering their education. The scholarships were awarded on March 13 during the FOLIO Annual Membership Meeting, held in conjunction with Oklahoma Library Association's Annual Conference.

This year, FOLIO received 27 applications, and the three deserving recipients of the 2026 scholarships are Nell Johnson, Millie Milburn, and Brooke Wells. Karen Neurohr, board member and Scholarship Committee Chair, awarded the certificates and checks.

Congratulations, Nell Johnson!



[Pictured left to right are Nell Johnson with Scholarship Committee Chair Dr. Karen Neurohr. Photo by Eugene Earsom.]

Nell Johnson works as a full-time Engagement Specialist III at the Bethany Public Library, Metropolitan Library System. She is pursuing a Master's in Library and Information Studies at the University of Oklahoma, and her primary area of interest is Public Librarianship.

Nell wrote in her essay, "I speak Spanish and am passionate about bringing Spanish-speaking library guests into programming and volunteering opportunities, expanding engagement with library service beyond short service interactions." She was recently featured in *The Oklahoman* to talk about libraries in the digital age.

Great Work, Millie!

Millie Millburn is a full-time Youth Associate at the Nathan Hale Library, Tulsa City-County Library System. She is working on a Master's in Library and Information Studies at the University of Oklahoma.



[Pictured left to right are Millie Milburn with Scholarship Committee Chair Dr. Karen Neurohr. Photo Earsom.]

Millie's primary area of interest is Youth Services and Middle and High School Librarianship. Millie wrote in her essay that she hopes "to continue to serve Tulsa as I deepen my programming and readers advisory skills in the community that raised me."

Best Wishes, Brooke!



Brooke Wells works full-time as a Pre-K through grade 12 School Librarian at Adair Public Schools. She is pursuing a Master of Science in Library Media/Information Technology at Northeastern State University. Her primary interest is school librarianship with an emphasis on literacy, student engagement, and collaboration with teachers. Brooke wrote in her essay that "One of my favorite moments is when a student eagerly comes in to check out a book they have been waiting for or returns one and excitedly shares what they read."

Dr. Melinda Howard,
Scholarship Committee

Need Help?

Call your FOLIO Ambassador.

FOLIO has Outreach Ambassadors who are ready and willing to talk or consult with your Friends' groups or your officers. We want to help you be successful and strengthen your library. Let us know how we can assist you.



Northeast

Candace Baird
NEAmbassador@okfriends.net

Northwest

Dr. Karen Neurohr
Linda Pye
NWAmbassador@okfriends.net

Southeast

Dr. Bill Hagen
SEAmbassador@okfriends.net

Southwest

Angie Lewis
Judy Haught
SWAmbassador@okfriends.net



- **Week of the Young Child - April 11-17, 2026**
- **D.E.A.R. - Drop Everything & Read - April 12, 2026**
- **National Library Week - April 19-25, 2026**
- **National Library Workers Day - April 22, 2026**
- **National Library Outreach Day - April 23, 2026**
- **Take Action for Libraries Day - April 24, 2026**
- **Preservation Week - April 26-May 2, 2026**
- **Library Day at the State Capitol - April 29, 2026**
- **Children's Book Week - May 4-10, 2026**
- **Oklahoma Book Awards - May 16, 2026**
- **Library Card Sign-Up Month - September**
- **Banned Books Week - Oct. 5-11, 2026**
- **TeenTober - October**
- **National Friends of Libraries Week - Oct. 18-24, 2026**

The time for you to renew or join is NOW!

Join FOLIO!

Great reasons to be a FOLIO member:

- To be inspired with new ideas, projects, and activities to promote your Friends group
- To encourage a vigorous Friends group in every library
- To be an advocate for libraries locally and statewide
- To ensure that Oklahoma libraries have the best educated staff
- To assist with starting or revitalizing a Friends group
- To network and share ideas for programming and fundraising
- To help bring new, progressive ideas to all libraries in the state

Contributions in addition to the minimum dues further support FOLIO's mission and are greatly appreciated. Your generous support helps FOLIO accomplish its mission: To strengthen libraries in Oklahoma through Friends of Libraries.

You may renew your membership and add an additional contribution online at

www.okfriends.net

or to pay by check, mail this form to FOLIO, Attn: Treasurer, PO Box 702585, Tulsa, OK 74170.

Basic dues are as follows:

- \$20 - Individual Membership
- \$25 - Friends Group Membership
- \$30 - Library Membership

Contributions above the minimum dues further support FOLIO's mission, are greatly appreciated, and are tax deductible as a charitable contribution.

Name: _____

(Name of Individual, Friends group, Library or Corporate Business)

Address: _____

City: _____

Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

(Please include this because we are transitioning to communicating by email only to save postage costs.)

FOLIO is a 501(c)(3) organization, tax ID 73-1053431. Dues are tax deductible to the extent of the law. Your personal information is not shared with third parties.

Dues Enclosed: _____

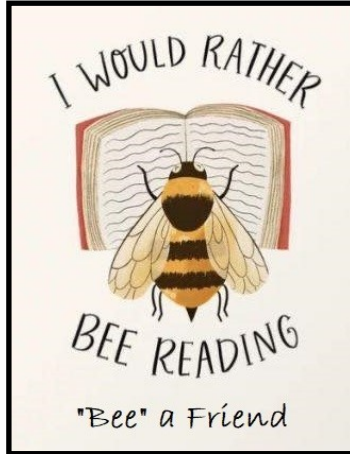
Gift Donation enclosed: _____

Designate gift for: __Additional Support __Endowment

FOLIO—We are Friends helping Friends!

P. O. Box 702585
Tulsa, OK 74170

Return Service Requested



Spotlight Your Work with *Focus*

Every day, FOLIO members are out in their communities raising funds, recruiting new supporters, and building connections that strengthen the mission. To help amplify that work, we've introduced a feature on our website called [Focus](https://okfriends.net/focus) (<https://okfriends.net/focus>), a dedicated web page where Friends groups can highlight their projects, campaigns, and outreach efforts.

Two Friends' groups are already using Focus to share their stories, and we'd love to see more voices added. A Focus page can feature:

- Fundraising initiatives
- Membership drives
- Community programs
- Special announcements or events
- Things we haven't thought of

It's your own space on our site, and you can link to it from emails, social media, printed materials, or anywhere you promote your work. Think of it as a simple landing page that helps you reach a wider audience.

If you're interested in creating your own Focus page, let us know at webmaster@okfriends.net. We're excited to help you share what you're doing!

- Kirk Baird,
FOLIO Webmaster

Meeker Celebrates 25th Anniversary

The Meeker Public Library held its 25th anniversary on February 14, 2026. So many local people have stated, "I didn't know Meeker had a library;" so the Library Friends had shirts printed. On the front the shirts had: "Meeker has a library?" And on the back was: "Yes, for 25 years." They had lots of fun wearing the shirts. Over 75 people signed the guest book. So many stories and memories were shared.



Four of the founders were able to attend the celebration. Left to right: Ida Smith, Terry Holland, Ella Mae Gallaway, and Cletta Kinnear

Yes, Meeker has had a library for 25 years.

- Donna Weber, President,
Meeker Friends

