

**Will Richter**

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**From:** MN Library Friends <info@mnlibraryfriends.org>  
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**To:** Marcia Anderson  
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## 2021 National Friends of Libraries Week

National Friends of Libraries Week is fast approaching! Mark your calendars for **October 17-23, 2021**.

What *is* Friends of Libraries Week? It might be best described as a yearly celebration of all that Friends do for their libraries and communities. United for Libraries, the Friends arm of the American Library Association, first conceptualized it as a springboard for fundraising campaigns, membership recruitment, and general Friends recognition.



There is no wrong way to celebrate. Creative examples include:

- ✓ a large-scale and themed "coupon" giveaway in Escanaba, Michigan, which induced hundreds of residents to visit a Friends book sale for the very first time;
- ✓ a Pirate's Treasure Party in Conroe, Texas (where, spoiler alert, the "pirates" declared the library's collections as the town's most prized treasure);

✓ a “gnomination” campaign in Mansfield, Texas, where Friends encouraged friends and neighbors to join the ranks with a membership information packet delivered to their doorstep - with a garden gnome as its courier and paperweight!



Each of these projects, and dozens more besides, have won one of United for Libraries’ annual Friends of Libraries Week Awards. It comes with a cash prize and major national kudos. [Click here](#) to learn more about the 2021 awards cycle, and be sure to get your bid in by the **December 3** deadline.

Not ready to try something on quite this scale? Don’t worry. United for Libraries has a wide variety of replicable ideas, templates, and other resources [on their website](#) for you to peruse. Happy planning!

## **Evy Nordley Spotlight #4: Grand Rapids**

As you already know if you follow MALF with any regularity, our fall extravaganza **SATURDAY SPLASH** is fast approaching! (Have you [reserved your seat](#) yet?)



Among other highlights, we will take the opportunity to profile each of this year’s four impressive Evy Nordley Award candidates. We recently profiled [Austin](#), [Cook](#), and [Detroit Lakes](#). Rounding out our list is:

### **Grand Rapids Area Library Friends | Holiday Notecard Fundraiser**

Grand Rapids Area Library is among the handful in Minnesota that boasts a permanent Friends bookstore on site. Ordinarily, this year-round stream of income is the Friends’ “golden goose,” with proceeds bankrolling much of what the organization does for the Library. When the pandemic brought an abrupt and protracted halt to sales, however, the board realized they needed to think beyond their comfort zone.



Ironically, the Friends did not have to travel or look far for their Big Idea; all they had to do was step outside the Library. Grand Rapids Area Library’s exterior façade is graced by a

massive mural of a chickadee. It is one of several naturescapes by Carlton County artist Adam Swanson that can be found in and around Grand Rapids.

In January 2020, a Friends task force approached Mr. Swanson about profiling his iconic work on a series of Friends-branded notecards. He agreed to this novel partnership, and under generous terms; for every \$20 box that the group sold, he would take a \$4.50 commission.



Even with this green light, the Friends faced a number of choices and challenges. First, which of the decorated artist's works would they profile? They ultimately decided to double down on the Northland theme, which is a favorite of Swanson's. In addition to the famous library chickadee, each packet of eight cards features a wolf, black bear, moose, and other animals native to the area.

When it came to printing, organizers opted to keep their money local and partner with a Grand Rapids vendor. They recouped some of these higher production costs by securing clever in-kind donations, such as transparent corsage bags from the local florist to "box" the card sets.



Promotion and distribution proved the biggest puzzlers of all, given the Library's prolonged closure. As a workaround, volunteers secured permission to conduct sales out of the building's drive-up window. They then spread the news as widely as possible, including with a front-page mention in the *Grand Rapids Herald-Review*.

Grand Rapids Area Friends hit their production targets in time to roll out the new fundraiser for the 2020 holiday season. In all, they netted an impressive \$2,500 – not bad for a "Plan B" fundraiser. They hope to build on this debut effort in advance of the 2021 holiday season.

## **COVID-19 Grant Recipient Spotlight, Pt. 4**

Earlier this summer, MALF named the ten recipients of the third and final round of the organization's [COVID-19 Grant Response Program](#). Over the last few newsletters, we've

profiled each of these worthy Friends and projects. Last but not least:

### **Friends of the Rochester Public Library**

According to the 2020 Census, the City of Rochester is one of the fastest growing communities in Minnesota. It's population ticked up more than 13,000 in just the last decade, and that steady pace is forecasted to continue. Rochester's growth and diversification underscores the local library's need to invest continually in outreach efforts. As any library budget manager can attest, that goal is easier said than done, given resource limitations. Fortunately for Rochester Public Library, staff have a financial partner in Friends of the Rochester Public Library. *Unfortunately* for them all, COVID-19 deprived the Friends of their chief source of revenue – an auditorium-scale book sale each quarter. As a temporary stopgap, the Friends have applied their MALF grant to continue their financial commitment to the Library's robust community outreach.



### **Friends of the Pelican Rapids Library**

Libraries routinely coordinate summer reading programs. Arts and crafts activities are an equally (if not more!) popular way to keep children engaged during those long summer months, when they are most in need of fun and enriching pastimes. Earlier this year, the Pelican Rapids Library found a way to combine the two. With backing from their Friends, staff crafted weekly take-home kits. Each was based around a literary theme, and included age-appropriate books and interactive activities. The Friends of Pelican Rapids Library used their COVID-19 Grant Response Program grant to purchase inexpensive backpacks in bulk, taking care of the project's largest line item expense. They used the remainder to defray book and supplies costs.



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