

PRESS RELEASE

Friends of WRL Honored with Award

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (Oct. 6, 2022) – The Virginia Library Association has honored the Friends of Williamsburg Regional Library Foundation (Friends of WRL) with its 2022 Friends of the Library Award.

The award is given annually to a Friends group in recognition of distinguished service to libraries or a library in Virginia. The Friends of WRL has supported the Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL) since 1964. Consisting of a seventeen-person volunteer board, the Friends of WRL made it possible for WRL to provide excellent public service through a combination of successful fundraising in the community and generous support of the library.

“The Friends of WRL Foundation is honored to receive this award from the VLA,” said Friends of WRL President Sam Sadler. “We strive, through our fundraising and advocacy efforts, to ensure excellence in library programs and services both now and for generations to come.”

As a result of individual and business donors and ongoing book sales from its popular Book Nooks inside both library buildings, Friends of WRL raised over \$335,000 last year to help fund collections, programs, and services. The Book Nooks alone have raised over \$1 million over the last 10 years for the library.



Families in the Kiwanis Kids Ideas Studio in the James City County Library, funded by Friends of WRL. Photo available upon request.

Friends of WRL support has made possible more than twenty programs in 2021 including the library's Learning to Go collection of activities and hands-on learning; the Dewey Decibel concert series, which offers the public access to performances by renowned musicians at a very low cost; new Rigamajig building kits in the Children's sections at both libraries; outreach STEAM Saturday programming for children and families in the underserved Grove community; continuation of the Wi-Fi Hspot lending program; a new Maker Space so users can access creative tools and technology; WRL's annual One Book One Community read program, in partnership with The College of William & Mary's Swem Libraries; and youth and adult summer reading programs to support literacy.

Raising funds for WRL's innovative Kiwanis Kids Idea Studio is another example of the work the Friends of WRL does connecting the community to the library. As part of the Friends' large fundraising campaign, a Board member (and Kiwanian) helped forge a new partnership among all three local Kiwanis clubs in the area to support this exciting library project, a groundbreaking take on a children's library that integrates the existing collection of books, DVDs, and other materials seamlessly with children's museum-style interactive elements. The clubs, which had never worked together on a project before, joined together to pledge funds for the Idea Studio. In all, the Friends of WRL helped raise \$250,000 for the project from across the community.

On top of its regular grant funding to the library, the Friends of WRL also approved a \$30,000 disbursement from their endowment in 2022 to fund the purchase of multiple copies of digital materials to reduce wait times for library users. Due to the trend towards interest in digital materials that was significantly amplified by the pandemic, checkouts and demand for digital materials skyrocketed beyond WRL's ability to meet them. The Friends decision to provide funding for multiple copies of digital materials means library patrons can read what they want, when they want.

"The Friends of WRL Foundation has been and continues to be a vigorous supporter of library programs and services," said Library Director Betsy Fowler. "Their support is what transforms this library system from good to great and enables WRL to provide an exceptional level of service to the public."

For more information about the Friends of WRL, visit wrl.org/give. For more information about the awards given by the VLA, visit vla.org/vla-awards.

*The **Williamsburg Regional Library (WRL)** is an award-winning regional library system that consists of the Williamsburg Library on Scotland St. in Williamsburg, the James City County Library on Croaker Rd. in James City County, the Stryker Center on N. Boundary St. in Williamsburg, and its Mobile Library Services vehicles. The WRL service area includes the City of Williamsburg, James City County, and York County.*

*The **Friends of Williamsburg Regional Library Foundation** strengthens a treasured cornerstone of our community. As an independent nonprofit, the Friends raises funds to support the Williamsburg Regional Library. The library's budget funds day-to-day needs, such as salaries, maintenance, and programming.*

But the Friends allow the library to dream big – igniting ambition, backing innovative initiatives that otherwise would be out of reach, and opening a world of discovery for everyone in the Historic Triangle. Modern libraries are much more than books and story time. The Friends help Williamsburg Regional Library stand as a leader among them.

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