

fact sheet #17

for Friends and Foundations

GETTING AND KEEPING MEMBERS

There are basically two types of Friends members – “contributing members” who faithfully write a check every year because they want to support the library; and “active members” who serve on the executive board and/or are willing to volunteer for committee assignments and other Friends’ projects. Both types of members are important – “contributors” because their money helps you help the library, and “active members” because they help with the work and leadership of the group.

1. Define your mission and why people should join. Then be sure you make the case for support at every opportunity – during your membership drive, the Friends book sale, and all Friends events and programs.
2. Set your dues so that membership is available in a number of classes, from a minimum (for seniors and students) to increasingly higher patron levels.
3. Design an attractive brochure that gives members an idea of the group’s purpose, and offers ways for them to become involved. Use social media to increase your reach. List the types of committees and volunteer opportunities you have and be sure to call if they indicate interest. These new “active members” can become future executive board members keeping your group dynamic and fresh.
4. Be sure that all programs you sponsor include an opportunity for the audience to become members of the Friends. These programs should entertain, educate, and stimulate the audience. Provide hospitality at every function, so that members and non-members are made to feel welcome.
5. Have membership brochures available at the check-out desks of libraries, book sales and every other Friends function. Keep the community aware by notifying the media about the Friends’ events and by posting information on your website, Facebook, and Twitter.
6. Membership benefits can include special ticket prices for events sponsored by the Friends and a preview night “for members only” at the book sale. A newsletter for members should be published a minimum of twice a year; quarterly is better, and monthly is best.
7. Be prompt in sending out renewal notices. Let members know how their dues help the library and what the Friends have accomplished during the year.

continued

8. Solicit the business community to join. Have a special membership category for them and list their names so they receive recognition.
9. See United for Libraries' Toolkit "Libraries Need Friends: A Toolkit to Create Friends Groups or to Revitalize the One You Have," in the Friends and Foundations Zone at www.ala.org/united. For additional ideas, read *Even More Great Ideas for Libraries and Friends*, see the Toolkit "Tapping Into the Biggest and Most Active Group of Volunteers in Town: The Baby Boomers," or view the webcast series "Baby Boomer Volunteers for Libraries and Friends," all available from United for Libraries.

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