Ten Things I Know To Be True
About Library Friends Membership and Fundraising

by Melissa Brechon

Melissa Brechon is the former Director of Carver County Library, an independent county library system in central Minnesota. She is currently a consultant with Library Strategies, the consulting arm of the Friends of the St. Paul Public Library, and an adjunct faculty member at St. Catherine’s University. Brechon is adept in community needs assessment, and has facilitated a number of master plans and staffing studies. Her other consulting specialties include strategic planning, board development, and operational procedures. She has extensive experience working with Friends organizations and other fundraising initiatives.

Brechon led MALF’s 2014 fall workshop series, Strengthening Libraries Together. “Ten Things I Know” was her keynote lecture.

1. FOCUS ON SUPPORTING THE LIBRARY AND ALL ELSE WILL FOLLOW
   Understand the library’s role in the community, and be able to talk about that role to everyone.

2. IT’S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
   Be friendly. Volunteers are motivated by being social and working together.

3. FRIENDS ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE LIBRARY AND THE COMMUNITY
   Your knowledge of the community and connections are extraordinarily important to library good will, advocacy and fundraising. Do not underestimate your position.

4. YOU DON’T NEED ALL OF THE ANSWERS TO MOVE FORWARD
   Friends need to be nimble, be tuned into changes in your community, and respond as appropriate. Be adaptive, take risks, make mistakes, and move forward.

5. ENGAGE IN CREATIVE WAYS OF FUNDRAISING
   Look around the community and watch how other nonprofits are raising money. Utilize Minnesota Give to the Max Day, look to electronic fundraising and crowdsourcing (for special projects).

6. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION IS CRITICAL
   Have a unifying message that makes clear to everyone in the community what programs and services the library offers and how relevant and needed these services are to everyone. Work on a message and use it on social media and in conversation.
7. **WHINING GETS YOU NOWHERE...AND ITS SO DARN ANNOYING**  
The message from the Friends in good times *AND* bad should always be positive. There will never be enough... find solutions, develop partnerships and be creative in fundraising.

8. **THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**  
Friends of the Library groups that thrive have partners and collaborators everywhere - both public and private, and they speak a unified voice that gets attention.

9. **YOU CAN’T SAY “THANK YOU” TOO OFTEN**  
After articulating a unified message for the Friends, these are the most important two words in your vocabulary.

10. **SOMETIMES ALL YOU NEED TO DO IS ASK!**  
Very few people will join the Friends without being personally asked. Ask at all your events. Ask for volunteers to do specific tasks but do it via phone or personally.