

The Casket

Public encouraged to support library

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Fundraising chair Edward Langille (left) and Friends of Antigonish Library (FOAL) board chair Len MacDonald (right) met with librarian Kristel Fleuren-Hunter to launch the group's annual fundraiser for The People's Place. The campaign lasts until the end of the month and seeks to raise \$7,500. PHOTO: Submitted

The Friends of Antigonish Library (FOAL) has launched their second annual fundraising campaign. FOAL supports the People's Place Library through advocacy and fundraising for collections. The campaign will run through the month of April and seeks to raise \$7,500.

Librarian Kristel Fleuren-Hunter noted libraries across the province continue to struggle and support from the community is crucial.

“The Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library Board has recently initiated a campaign to let our library patrons know about the state of library funding,” Fleuren-Hunter said. “Approximately 70 per cent of library funding comes from the province and covers, among other things, collections and staffing. The remainder of the budget comes from the municipalities (which cover buildings and maintenance) and board-generated fundraising.

“While not a long-term solution to library funding, the work of FOAL generates much-needed and much-appreciated funds to enable the People's Place to boost its collection, offer welcoming spaces and support programs. In addition to countless books, FOAL support has enabled the People's Place to purchase new chairs in the youth room, a new rocking chair in the children's room, a Little Bits kit that was used for the Techie Tuesday programs during March Break, and much more. The People's Place would certainly not be the place it is today without the support of its friends.”

Fundraising chair Edward Langille said the community recognizes the importance of the library.

“Antigonish is known province wide for its unrivaled sense of community spirit,” Langille said. “Support for the public library demonstrates the willingness of town and county alike to bring together people of all ages and backgrounds in a space designed to enhance both private study and public interaction. The library is our ‘town hall’.”

Fleuren-Hunter said libraries have changed a great deal over the years and provide services that couldn't have been imagined a few decades ago.

“Many critics say that libraries are no longer relevant- that everything is on the Internet and people can download books to their devices. However modern libraries are more than just storehouses of books and have increasingly become known as community centres and technology hubs.”

More than 560 people visited the People's Place per day during the month of March and an average of 97 people per day used the public access computers during this same time period.

“Needless to say, libraries are very busy places and the demand for books and other items, Internet access, programs, and services is steady. Sadly, library funding has not increased to meet these needs. Seven years of static funding with no promise of an increase in the near future has made it difficult for libraries to keep up with demand much less offer new services. “

FOAL board chair Len MacDonald said that to keep People's Place “one of the great public spaces in Canada,” it needs the support of the community.

“If everyone gives just a little, we can continue to provide a warm and welcoming place to all of our citizens.”

To celebrate what the library has to offer an appreciation event will be held April 16 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The event will be a friendly, fun, and educational time for all ages. It will include books, live music, art, technology, light refreshments and activities highlighting library services. People will be encouraged, in various fun and creative ways, to express their appreciation for their libraries.

“This is about library underfunding and we know people do care,” Library board member and Antigonish County councillor Mary MacLellan said. “But they need to show their support for this invaluable public service. Join us at the People’s Place on Saturday, April 16.”

Tax deductible donations can be made to Pictou Antigonish Regional Library, and can be dropped off at the library or mailed to: People’s Place Library, 283 Main Street, Antigonish, N.S. B2G 2C3. Donating online is also an option via the Pictou-Antigonish Regional Library website. Look for the ‘donate’ button on the top right hand corner of the library homepage www.parl.ns.ca