

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE FRIENDS

As president of the Friends of the Wareham Free Library, Inc., I would like to correct some recent misinformation being spread about our fund-raising activities.

For over 30 years, this dedicated group of volunteers has raised money to be used for the library at 59 Marion Road. Recently, we were asked to accept donations for a Paddlethon from a group of library supporters who were upset that the library had cut back its hours and services. The Community Supporters of Wareham are sponsoring Dick Wheeler, a 78 year old world class kayaker who is currently paddling 1000 miles along our coastline for donations and pledges to be used to help support the library's drastic budget cut.

In an October 16th edition of the Wareham Observer, Robert Slager claimed that the Paddlethon efforts won't restore the library's budget and said, "It's going to the Friends of the Library which financially supports Spinney." And that week at the Board of Selectmen's meeting, Jane Donahue advised that people should make their checks out to the town of Wareham, instead of to the Friends, as she herself did. As Dick is closing in on the 500 mile mark, the pledges have dwindled because of this false or confusing information. Imagine being on the cold, wet, windy waters at this time of year paddling for 6 hours a day, only to learn your efforts may not be worth it!

I absolutely guarantee that all money raised in this Paddlethon will go towards purchasing books and library materials for the library. A separate checking account will hold these funds and careful records, as always, will be kept. But money raised in this way cannot be used to replace the town's municipal appropriation requirement for certification.

You may have also heard that the Friends have \$700,000 and won't spend it on the library. I'm not sure how this number was determined by people who don't have current access to our bank accounts, but let me explain about our funds. In 2005, the Friends were given the old Spinney Memorial building in Onset. Previously used as a library, the Friends agreed to raise funds and turn it into a branch of the main library. Money raised for Spinney is kept in a separate bank from our general fund. In addition, money is raised separately for this project. We have held several Scoops for Spinney, three Art and Cool Stuff Spinney Auctions, a Spinney Viking Cruise, Spinney paperwhite sale, and are selling bricks for the Spinney Courtyard. For the holidays, we will be selling seashell ornaments for Spinney. When we approached individuals and businesses for donations, we specifically stated the funds would be used for Spinney. We have never deceived the public in any of our fund-raising efforts, and we never will.

There are laws that govern fund-raising for non-profits; you cannot raise money for one cause, and simply use it for another. In the same October 16<sup>th</sup> edition of the Wareham Observer Mr. Slager is quoted as saying that all we need to do is "write a \$600,000 check to the town treasurer for the specific purpose of augmenting the library budget." And Selectman Eckstrom is quoted in the same issue as saying, "When we have over \$700,000 sitting in an account for a branch library . . . we need to open up the purse

strings.” Not one, but three lawyers cautioned me that if the Friends used the money raised for the Spinney project on the main library, it would be an act of fraud and conversion. Furthermore, the Friends could face legal action and have its Certificate of Solicitation withdrawn by the state. People who gave money to the Spinney project did not intend that money to be used to pay the heat and electricity for the main library. Obviously, the Friends will not commit an illegal act. But we will continue to raise money for both the main library and for the Spinney project.

You might also wonder why we would continue to work on building a branch library in this difficult fiscal time. We will be breaking ground on this project soon. Our contractor has begun the permitting process with the town. There are five main reasons why we are going to build the Spinney branch library: 1) We signed a binding donation agreement with the town of Wareham signed by the board of selectmen including Selectmen Eckstrom and Savaugau stating that we will build this building and turn it over to the town within seven years. 2) The town meeting voters agreed to spend \$121,000 of CPC funds with a Historical Preservation agreement signed by the Historical Commission requiring the building be renovated and turned into a public library. 3) We have raised money with the promise to the donors that we will use those funds to build a Spinney branch library and are legally required to spend the money as promised. 4) We have already downsized the project once because of the cost of building materials and labor. If we continue to wait, we will get even less building for the money we have already raised. 5) A library provides literacy and education for citizens of all ages and economic status, increases property values and demonstrates that this is a town that values its citizens.

I hope this letter clarifies some of the false statements and misinformation that has been put out to the public. By the way, no one has asked me personally for the facts in the matter. But we all know that an informed opinion is backed by facts.

Finally, please consider supporting Dick Wheeler in his paddling efforts. Click on the Pledge button on the Paddlethon’s web page [www.warehampaddle.wordpress.com](http://www.warehampaddle.wordpress.com). You can also learn more about how the Friends use its funds on that site. All of the money raised for this event will be used for the main library, and the Friends are proud to be the recipients of the donations and pledges.

Sincerely,  
Nora Bicki  
President