

FRIENDS APPROVE PROJECTS WORTH \$17,700 TO SUPPORT LIBRARY

by Larry E. Eckholt

Taking advantage of a unique process giving them a voice in how their donations are used, contributors to the Iowa City Public Library Friends Foundation have selected five projects totaling \$17,700 to benefit the Library during the next fiscal year.

Ballots were sent to all 1,127 of the Library's donor households listing seven Library staff-recommended projects totaling \$29,000. Voters could choose as many items as they wanted, as long as the total did not exceed the friends allocation. Results of the voting were announced at the May 24 annual meeting of the Friends Committee of the Foundation.

Projects approved for funding area:

- ✓ Overall support for this summer's six-week "Be a Library Animal" children's reading program — \$3,200.
- ✓ Three new public catalog terminals to enhance public use of the Library's computerized catalog and other electronic services — \$3,000.
- ✓ Funds to hire a part-time staff member to develop and provide training to increase public and staff understanding of access to information through electronic sources — \$6,000.
- ✓ Funds to purchase a new catalog terminal for use by low-vision and blind users of the computerized catalog — \$5,000.

And a \$500 allocation to provide ongoing annual support of the Art Purchase Prize Competition through which original art works by area artists are acquired for the Library's Art-to-Go program.

The ICPL Friends Committee was created in 1992 after the merger of the former Friends of the Library organization and the ICPL Foundation. The Friends Committee, composed of 13 volunteers, coordinates most of the Library's volunteer-led special projects, such as used book sales.

Each year, the former Friends group would allocate a certain amount of money--generated through membership dues and book sale proceeds--to support Library projects. Friends members were polled to determine which staff-approved projects would be funded.

Following the merger, there are no longer Friends membership dues because anyone who contributes to the Friends Foundation is considered a "friend" of the Library. In order to continue the spirit of the former Friends organization, the new bylaws of the Friends Foundation require that \$8 of every contribution to the Library be transferred to the Friends Committee which, in turn, oversees how the funds are used to support the Library.

In the past, Friends chose from a much longer list--with as many as 20 relatively inexpensive items to consider. This year, at the suggestion of Library Director Lolly Eggers, the library staff recommended more expensive projects that otherwise would not be funded through the Library's general operating budget.

"This is a unique way for contributors to the Library to have a voice in how their gifts are used to support it," said Kay Loeffelholz, outgoing president of the Friends Committee. "Each year we look forward to the recommendations of the staff and to see how our personal choices fare among those of other contributors."

