

FRIENDS OF THE PAMLICO COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY ANNUAL REPORT – 2025



Annual Report – 2025

Friends of the Pamlico County Public Library January 1, 2025 through December 31, 2025

The Pamlico County library construction project was finished this year. The original target date was March, but unusual wet weather and a last-minute mechanical issue delayed completion until June. Despite the adjustment, a “soft opening” occurred on May 12, 2025.

The opening involved a month-long relocation effort organized and supervised by Sidney Phibbons and her library staff. The inventory of thirty thousand volumes and assorted library materials were packed in several hundred boxes and filled the auditorium. All the material was purged, organized and packed by staff and volunteers including members of the High School NJROTC. It took several weeks, long hours and strong backs.

The library was officially dedicated to the community and especially the children of Pamlico County in a public ceremony on June 13, 2025. NC State Senator Norman Sanderson; County Commissioners Ed Riggs, Doug Brinson, Candy Bohmert, Thomas Mills; County Manager Mark Brewington; and, approximately 125 local community residents attended. The Gospel Ensemble and Friends entertained the audience along with Mr. Dupree on keyboards and Fred Reed on congas and flute. Deacon William Nathaniel Carmen from Greenhill Missionary Baptist Church, Bayboro provided the blessing.

Grateful support came from Heart Works who provided additional parking space and bus transportation to the library for guests while two off-duty officers from Pamlico County Sheriff's department assisted with traffic control. Duke Energy provided funds to facilitate the opening ceremonies and the ceremonial cake was shared with all.

This mid-year event culminated a seven-year quest for a stand-alone public library and community center in Pamlico County. The final contractual work with Waters Contracting Company and Walker Group Architecture was officially completed on September 12, 2025. As intended, the facility was deeded to Pamlico County on September 16, 2025 and recorded on September 19, 2025. Subsequently, a 25-year lease (June 30, 2050) was initiated between Pamlico County and Craven-Pamlico Regional Library (CPRL) on September 19, 2025 allowing the facility to operate as a library and community center.

The Friends and CPRL used grants, private donations and additional reserve funds to purchase furnishings, bookshelves and assorted incidentals for the Children's Room (\$72,000) and the Business Center. CPRL funded half of the Children's Room and facilitated the furnishings for the Young Adult (YA) area by repositioning equipment and furniture from the Havelock library. This latter initiative saved an estimated \$36,700 and the FOL appreciate CPRL's active support.

Elsewhere, the FOL received a \$11,000 grant from the Howard H. Bate Foundation for the Business Center. The Bate grant was written by CPRL and was coupled with a Truist Bank grant award of \$22,000 written by Mary Hiatt. Imagine Pamlico Inc, a 501(c)(3) charitable non-profit

organization, donated twenty-four tables for the library auditorium. And, an anonymous donor provided \$30,000 for the circulation desk which was designed and constructed by Creative Kitchen & Bath of Merritt, NC.

A breakdown of funding for the new library project is appended to the annual report and reflects diverse funding participation. The total project cost was \$3,076,184 with government grants providing 65% of the funding. The remaining \$785,000 was collected through donations from various entities to include 28.6% by private grants, 10.9% from local businesses and groups, and 60.5% from individual FOL members and friends. This remarkable achievement occurred in a low-wealth county spanning a multiyear Covid-19 pandemic environment.

FOL continued to pursue funding to address enhanced functionality and aesthetics for the new facility. Plans include a back-up generator, a digital sign, the adult and children's garden areas, and the possible refurbishment of the existing public bathroom not addressed in the initial design.

Happily, Rachel Tipton, owner of Harbourside Gardens in Stonewall, prepared and implemented the foundation planting for the grand opening and submitted a detailed plan for the children and adult garden areas. She focused on creating a senses-appealing environment for both gardens while donating in-kind services and advice over several years. This generous offer will provide the library valuable maintenance services and serve as a teaching element for community volunteers.

The Friends' leadership stayed constant throughout this period. Bonnie Cap, continued as the FOL President; Mary Hiatt, Vice President; Jessie Aldridge, Secretary; Eileen Bell, Assistant Secretary; and Rich and Carolyn Bartz, Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer respectively. The four trustees are Dr. Joshua Rose, Dr. Sue Lee, Sheila Cantine and Jim Kellenberger. At the annual meeting, Pam Soderholm was approved as the new Treasurer, replacing the Bartz family duo and their fourteen-year service. Pam monitored the treasurer activities throughout the year and will fit in seamlessly. Rachel Hall-Schlachto was approved as an additional FOL Director.

The ninth \$1,000 Marybelle Hollowell scholarship was awarded to Kristen Powell who will attend NC Central University. Jeannie DeStafano chaired the selection committee and presented the award at the annual high school award ceremony in May. The scholarship amount was increased and approved at the annual meeting to be \$1,500 for the 2026 school year.

Book donations were postponed to allow the relocation and repair of the conex storage facility. As such, the Internet Book Sale (IBS) team stopped processing book donations and shifted their efforts to packing and moving the inventory to the new library. IBS activities are shared by many volunteers, but the stalwarts are Debbie Favinger, Carolyn Stark and Evie Henderson while Carolyn Bartz managed the sale of select books on Amazon. Sadly, we recognize the untimely passing of Debby Favinger. She was a wonderful FOL volunteer and mainstay in the community; we'll miss her dearly. Karen Kinslaw joined the IBS team and will help us get back to normal operations in 2026. Karen spent her time this fall in purging, cataloging, and organizing the 10,000-volume inventory. The first book sale after the renovation of the storage facility occurred in late November and future sales will be scheduled once a month thereafter.

Meanwhile, Mary Hiatt tirelessly organized and staffed various FOL activities. Mary organized and promoted monthly book sales using the Library Book Storage facility (i.e., conex). She created a contest aimed at renaming the storage area – now called the BOOK NOOK. Mary and her family

ensured the Book Nook was properly sandblasted, primed and repainted so that Ellie Aldridge could complete her Eagle Scout project – a book shelf mural on the outside wall of the Book Nook. The project was funded by the Oriental Arts Council. Mary is also the lead on developing and implementing a landscape design and planting for the library which includes the foundation planting and the two garden areas. Some selected plants were in place before the end of the year and the hardscape (i.e., benches, seats, arbors, tables) will be procured through Nautical Wheelers in Oriental, NC using donated funds for that purpose in 2026.

Peggi Carman, FOL's web master, kept our news timely and accurate. Her master graphic skills were directed toward the library and the grand opening. She developed various honorary plaques; Donor Wall Tree mural; recognition symbols for our many donors; flyers, pamphlets and handouts, invitations for the Grand Opening; and, T-shirts, totes, pins, and buttons for sale in support of the library.

As the year drew to a close, FOL sponsored another outreach program at the library: the Artisans Craft Show in November/December organized by Bonnie Cap. Nineteen local artisans displayed their creations throughout the holiday season. This show highlighted local talent and has been popular with the community in search of reasonably priced gifts. Many of the Artisans faithfully donated a portion of their proceeds to the FOL for library support. Additionally, Jim Kellenberger held another successful end-of-year fundraiser (his infamous Goat-Roping), to equally support two charities: FOL for the library back-up generator purchase and Pamlico County Fishes & Loaves (PCFLO).

Our dedicated membership support and generous donations allowed us to increase our position in Vanguard's Federal Money Market funds which provided the working capital to achieve a turn-key facility and library enhancements. The funds in the local First Citizens bank account support general operations of the library. At the end of the calendar year, the Friends had over \$40,000 in the operating fund and \$130,000 in reserve.

The Friends passed the yearly NC State-directed audit of the NC grant funds in July. Significantly, FOL also passed the first-ever professional audit of FOL financial activities. The Friends reinstated the FOL solicitation license with North Carolina which positioned us for grant writing and fundraising during the 2025 – 2026 enhancement phase of the Capital Campaign. The Friends filed IRS Form 990 (Long Form) based on our gross receipt and total asset profile. The Friends' end-of-year Budget and Balance Sheet is available on the web site (pamlicofol.org) as an adjunct to the 2025 Annual Report.

The Friends will continue in 2026 to pursue the "Enhancement Phases" by focusing on additional financial support. Significant highlights will be the pursuit of a back-up generator, installation of a digital sign, and completion of the outdoor gardens. As FOL returns to a normal footing (average \$8,000 expense/year), the Board of Directors appropriated \$24,000 as a set-aside in capital reserve funds to cover potential exigencies. The Board will review the position annually.

A SPECIAL NOTE: the Friends wish to recognize Katherine Clowers for over two and half decades of unparalleled service to the community. Kat retired on December 31, 2025 as Director of the Regional Library system. Her service throughout Pamlico and Craven County was inspirational, visionary in scope, and extraordinarily positive under challenging conditions. She

mentored many and befriended everyone she met. The library system was blessed with a caring leader.

Finally, the Friends sincerely thank our membership and many supporters once again. We still have a bit more to do, but the year's achievements are clearly visible and motivate us. We could not do it without the willing and continuous financial and personal support of our membership and the community at large.

New Library Program Financial Summary

September 29, 2025

	<u>Expense</u>	<u>Revenue</u>
NCDNCR (NC Dept of Cultural & Natural Resources)		
250,000		
Property/land purchase	150,000	
Survey	3,060	
New Roof	40,288	
HVAC	12,350	
Architecture Design & Engineering	34,000	
Insurance, Maintenance, Fees	10,302	
NC State Capital and Infrastructure Funds (SCIF)		1,833,000
Dividend		208,107
Library/Community Center Contracts		
Walker Architecture Group	180,825	
Waters Construction Company	<u>2,404,510</u>	
SUB TOTAL "A"	2,835,335	2,291,107
FOL Support/Enhancements (not part of above contract)		
Children's Room	35,000	
Adult Shelving	37,653	
Business Center	33,000	
Young Adult Area (Havelock library contribution)	36,700	
Kitchen	1,650	
Book Nook Rehab	9,554	
Landscaping	1,865	
Information Technology	8,637	
Utilities, Maintenance	14,435	
Insurance	12,020	
Audits	15,800	
Fundraising	<u>34,535</u>	
SUB TOTAL "B"		240,849
GRAND TOTAL		3,076,184

The data above reflects the situation as of September 29, 2025. The \$785,077 difference between GRAND TOTAL costs and government grant revenue funds (SUB TOTAL "A") was provided by private grants (28.6%); local businesses, associations, and groups (10.9%); and, individual FOL activities and members (60.5%).