

# Tribute

## City departments have friends in fundraising agencies

By Dave Schafer

Mary Wagoner had had other jobs, but after 10 years with the Library Department, she still loved working there. Unfortunately, her career was at a dead end in 2001.

A senior library service specialist at Heights Neighborhood Library, Wagoner was a paraprofessional, not a degreed librarian.

"If you don't have a master's degree, you're limited in this field," she said.

Wagoner had a bachelor's in sociology. She'd thought about going for her master's in library science, but it seemed intimidating and financially impossible.

Then she applied for a scholarship offered by the Friends of the Houston Public Library. The organization offers up to two scholarships a year for Library employees who want to become professional librarians. Recipients must have worked in Library at least a year and must agree to stay with the department a year after graduation.

While filling out the application, Wagoner became inspired. As she mapped out the program and the courses she'd take, she realized she really could get her degree, that there was a payoff at the end.

"The application process cemented it for me," she said. "I saw that this was doable."

She won the \$3,000 scholarship, enough to pay about 75 percent of the tuition.

"The scholarship gave me the financial boost and the incentive to do it," she said.

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(Top) The Fire Fighters Foundation of Houston supplies life-saving equipment to firefighters. (Center) Patrons shop at the Friends of Houston Public Library children's book sale. (Bottom) Workers construct a station for the Hermann Park mini-train near the Miller Outdoor Theatre, one of Hermann Park Conservancy's renovations.



After three years of taking classes weekends and online part time, Wagoner graduated with a master's of library and information sciences degree from the University of North Texas in December 2004.

She became acting branch manager of the Moody Neighborhood Library, then branch manager of the Smith and McGovern-Stella Link libraries, and is now regional manager of the nine libraries in the northeast district.

More than 30 Library employees have won a Friends' scholarship since 1992, just one way the nonprofit is improving libraries for all users. Last year, Friends also gave Library \$75,000.

"The library is an asset," said Diane Durbin, Friends' president. "It's like a university for the community."

People use the library for information on taxes or a new career or medical ailments or to run their business, Durbin said.

The city doesn't fund library programs, but Friends is there to help, she said. Last year's donation was used for the summer reading program and for other programs at the branch libraries.

Friends also donates books to the community when needed.

Started in 1953, the organization now has 800 members who pay at least a \$20 annual membership fee. Durbin wants it to become more of an advocacy group.

"I think one of the things that contribute to quality of life in a city is a good library," she said.

Library's not the only department with friends in fundraising places. Several Combined Municipal Campaign agencies offer departments additional funding along with some love.

## Firefighters' friends

"Firefighters are like police officers," said Bill King, president of the Fire Fighters Foundation of Houston. "You don't think about them until you need them, and most people will never need them."

So, on Sept. 11, FFFH holds a gala to demonstrate the city's gratitude.

"This is a way to raise appreciation of

what happens in stations day by day," King said.

It's also a way to help make sure firefighters have the equipment they need. Money raised at the galas – nearly \$300,000 at each of the first two – buys radios, grinders and accessories, thermal imaging cameras, carbon monoxide pulse oximeters, and more. It also helps fund the Valor Awards Committee, the Honor Guard, and the Pipes & Drums Organization.

When the department needs something, it can apply for a grant from the



Friends of BARC help people find new best pals like Tucker, above.

organization. So far, FFFH hasn't denied a request, King said.

"This is all stuff we budget for, but some of this equipment is fragile," said Omero Longoria, an assistant chief.

"Having this support allows us to keep reserve equipment and get it immediately restocked."

"We're able to respond to the department's needs in a matter of days. We give them more arrows in their quivers," King said.

FFFH also buys new equipment for the department to test before the city makes a large investment, King said. New, better equipment, means the firefighters are better prepared.

"The safer our firefighters are, the safer the community is," Longoria said.

## Park's friends

In 1991, being unloved wasn't a problem for Hermann Park.

"The park was so popular, she had been loved to death," said Doreen Stoller, executive director of the Hermann Park Conservancy.

So The Runners, Walkers and Joggers of Hermann Park joined with The Neighbors of Warwick Towers to form Friends of Hermann Park. The two groups had accomplished their initial clean-up goals, and now they aimed to complete other projects in the 445-acre park.

"Friends of Hermann Park wanted to get citizens actively supporting the parks," Stoller said. "The city budget has all sorts of pressures. It sets a baseline of funding. But the real magic comes when private entities and people partner with the city."

In 1997, City Council adopted FHP's master plan for the park, which had taken four years to complete with input from the city and other stakeholders. Since then, FHP has spent more than \$32 million to enhance and restore the park.

In 2004, the group changed its name to Hermann Park Conservancy to denote the group's expanded mission of helping the Parks & Recreation Department maintain the park.

"We're willing to help scrape the duck poop off the limestone," Stoller said.

The group gets most of its money through memberships, which start at \$35. It has 1,000 members.

"I believe in the importance of community," Stoller said. "When you go to the park, you notice all types and ages of people. It really is a special place."

"The park was a part of so many people's families when they were growing up. Here's a chance for community members to become a part of her family."



# Department Coordinators

## Furry friends' friends

Leigh Hollyer loves dogs. She especially has a soft spot for those ugly ones that little boys and girls pass by when looking for a new friend.

So, 12 years ago, when a call for volunteers at the Bureau of Animal Regulation and Care went out, Hollyer and Jim King answered. They exercised the dogs and then moved on to pet adoptions at a local bakery.

At the time, BARC was adopting out about 100 dogs and cats a year, Hollyer said. In the years since, the group and its scope have grown. It has 50-60 volunteers who work at the shelter, grooming the dogs, teaching them tricks, and socializing them.

“Our goal is to make the B-list animals adoptable,” she said. “You have to work to have them adopted.”

The organization provides nutritious canned food for puppies, kittens and sick animals, and distributes about 6,000 issues of Kind News, a classroom newspaper that emphasizes kindness to animals and respect for natural habitats.

Members installed a playground at the shelter and bought comfortable, easy-to-clean, off-the-floor kuranda beds, and pay for weekend veterinarian services, worming, surgeries and vaccines.

“Whatever the city doesn’t have money for, we fund,” Hollyer said.

Saturdays, volunteers adopt out cats and dogs at four PetSmarts: the Loop and Interstate 59, Westheimer, Wallisville, and Highway 290. The 610/59 store also has Sunday adoptions.

Last year, BARC adopted out 3,887 dogs and cats, said BARC Chief Kent Robertson.

“It’s been said that you can tell a lot about a community by the way it treats its dependents,” Hollyer said.

“We’ve got plenty of people willing to put their free time on the line, but there’s limited money and a lot of needs.”

Department	Coordinator	Phone
<b>311</b>	Jackie Strickland	713-221-0951
<b>Administration &amp; Regulatory Affairs</b>	Lance Licciardi	713-837-9681
<b>Affirmative Action</b>	Jean Abercrombie	713-837-9026
<b>Aviation</b>	Lenore Herman	281-233-1038
<b>General Services</b>	Paula Camara Paul Sanchez Kay Brown	713-837-7583 713-247-3642 713-247-1096
<b>City Council</b>	Elvia Valdez	832-393-0782
<b>Controller’s Office</b>	Sandra Zeno Chanelle Clark	713-247-2843 713-437-6120
<b>Convention &amp; Entertainment</b>	Brinda Norwood	713-250-3636
<b>Finance</b>	Erica Mendiola Barbara Johnson	713-837-9287 832-393-8016
<b>Fire</b>	Rose Moore	713-238-3229
<b>Health</b>	Abel Torres	713-794-9313
<b>HEC</b>	Helen Woods	713-884-3900
<b>Housing</b>	Karen Franklin	713-868-8471
<b>Human Resources</b>	Margaret Baptiste Thelma Guevara	713-837-9370 713-837-9346
<b>Information Technology</b>	Kyria Askew	713-221-0631
<b>Legal</b>	Adana Elliott Evelyn Gilleland	832-393-6392 832-393-6209
<b>Library</b>	Jennifer Schwartz	832-393-1652
<b>Mayor’s Office</b>	Jesse Bounds	832-393-1025
<b>Municipal Courts Administration</b>	Gail McGruder	713-221-0454
<b>Municipal Courts Judicial</b>	Nydia Vega	713-247-4560
<b>Parks &amp; Recreation</b>	Phyllis Dallas	713-284-1948
<b>Planning and Development</b>	Paul Voltz	713-837-7710
<b>Police</b>	Jenny Wong Frederick Bradshaw	713-308-3213 713-308-1400
<b>Public Works &amp; Engineering</b>	Keith Hernandez Rochelle Bennett	713-837-7275 713-837-7551
<b>Solid Waste Management</b>	Tanya Brown	713-837-9282
<b>Citywide</b>	<b>Julie Keeton</b>	<b>713-837-9384</b>