Let's Talk About Relationships: Building a Board with Muscle

Tennessee State Library and Archives
Secretary of State Era Hargett
presented by Lynette Sloan for the 2018 Trustee Workshops

Muscle = Strength

• Your library is only as strong as your board.
• Every library needs a board with muscle.
• Having muscle implies the body is healthy, fit, and strong.

A Solitary Muscle

• A solitary muscle is useless by itself. It must work in tandem with other muscles, nerves, and ligaments to produce movement.
• A muscle will also become flaccid and useless if it isn’t flexed or trained sufficiently.
Developing Relationships

- The muscle must develop relationships with these other structures in order to perform its job.
- The library board must do the same to help the library grow and serve its community.

Build the Muscle

BOARD RECRUITMENT

Prepare for Board Recruitment

- Make sure your board bylaws are updated.
- Develop/approve a Trustee Code of Ethics, including Conflict of Interest statement.
- Prepare a list of talking points and questions to use with prospective trustees.
- Decide on who and how board members will approach prospective new members.
Prepare for Board Recruitment

- Be thoughtful and intentional in your consideration of prospective board members.
- The Board should be representative of the community it serves.
- Think about what skills and knowledge you need on the board.

Board Recruitment

- After the Board has agreed upon the needed prospective new members, submit the Board's recommendations to your county/city commission for approval.

Train the Muscle

BOARD DEVELOPMENT
Board Development

- Provide a guide before or as the new trustee joins the Board. (Basic information about the library & Board)
- Provide a planned, organized orientation program for new trustees.
- Your library director and regional library staff can assist with both guide and orientation.

Access to Training

- Recommend/require Tennessee Trustee Certification program completion.
- Recommend/require attendance at Tennessee Trustee Workshops.
- Use the Trustee Resources LibGuide.

Expand and Strengthen the Muscle

BOARD RELATIONSHIPS
Board Relationships with Stakeholders

- Director & Staff
- Civic Groups
- Local Government Officials
- Friends

Relationship with Other Trustees

- Get to know each other; provide opportunities to bond or network.
- Discover each others' strengths.
- Show respect for others; earn respect for yourself.
- Work as a team with a common goal.
- Stand together when a decision is made; speak with one voice.

Relationship with Director/Staff

- Your director and staff are the muscle of the daily life of the library. Take care of them and they will take care of the library's services and programs.
- Board hires/evaluates library director; develop a good working relationship with the director. Trust is needed on both sides.
- Celebrate your staff/show appreciation for their dedication when appropriate.
Relationship with Director/Staff

- The Library Director hires/evaluates staff.
- Know your staff but don't intervene between director and staff.
- Support your staff by providing healthy working conditions and wages and benefits comparable to other local government employees.

Relationship with Local Government

- Your relationship with your funding body is more than just the budget.
- Communicate with officials all year round; keep them informed.
- Get to know your officials individually; discover what the community needs and work to help support those needs.
- Avoid confrontation, if possible.
- Help them understand the library is a jewel in their crown; make them look good.

Relationship with Friends' Group and Library Volunteers

- Show them how much you appreciate what they do to help.
- Communicate with them frequently.
- Celebrate their contributions; make them feel valued.
- Help them understand the role of the Friends versus the role of the Library Board.
Relationship with Foundation

- Generally, the purpose of a Foundation is to assist the Library Board with major funding projects.
- Have a clear distinction of the difference between the Foundation Board and the Library Board.
- Show your gratitude for what they are doing for the library's future.
- Communicate with the Foundation regularly.

Relationship with Civic Groups

- Partnering with local civic groups is beneficial to the library and to the community.
- Local civic groups are a good resource for future library trustees.
- Encourage your library director to partner with civic groups for new library programs and services and to expand community support for the library.

Relationship with Other Agencies

- Get to know, communicate and partner with other government or community resources. Think about and discuss how you can help each other.
  - Local law enforcement, fire departments, etc.
  - Economic and community development agency
  - Local Health Department or hospitals
  - UT or Agricultural Extension Services
  - Local Educational Institutions or agencies
  - Chamber of Commerce
  - Others??
Relationship with Other Gov't Agencies

- Communicate with your Regional Library and the State Library & Archives and take advantage of their services and support. Let them get to know the board and your library's needs.

How Can We Help?

Why Do We Need Muscle?

- To be advocates for the library
- To ensure the financial health of the library
- To ensure fair and equal treatment to all segments of our community
- To fight against censorship
- To support patron privacy
- To provide a strong support system for the library.

Finally

Give yourselves a “High-Five” for creating a board that works hard to develop the library muscle that is strong, healthy, and fit and able to serve its community even better in the future.