



F·R·I·E·N·D·S

OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Supporting Friends of the Library Statewide

F * R * I * E * N * D * S TALK

December 2025

Dear Friends,

What!?! December already? Here in the hills, winter has arrived. The temperature is in the low 30s as I write this! It's especially surprising because it was in the 60s earlier this week. I'm not really complaining because it does put one in the mood for the holiday season. Alleghany County is Christmas tree country, and trucks loaded with them have been crowding our country roads since the end of October. I hope you all enjoy the smell and look of live trees in your homes and support all local growers.

Your state board has been busy since we communicated last month. As result of that last meeting, I am proud to report that you have newly elected board members. I have been reelected as your president and Karen Robbins is also returning as secretary. We serve at your pleasure as we continue to learn in our jobs. This year, for the first time since I've served on the Board, we have a newly elected Vice President in Cindy Shipley. Cindy agreed to serve as long as I didn't dump a bunch of new responsibilities on her. I promised just that! Thank you, Cindy, for agreeing to take on this role while continuing to write the insightful and informative columns on AI and other technological articles in this newsletter. Most importantly, former President, Judy Hills, continues as your newsletter editor and consultant to me. (I couldn't do this job without her experience and wisdom.) Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us with questions, concerns, ideas, comments, celebrations, etc. We look forward to hearing from you.

And, we have been hearing from some of you. Often, it's with good news, but some concerning inquiries have also been communicated. We love hearing about your excellent projects and programs, and, also, assisting where we can with difficult situations that occur. That's one of the reasons this organization exists.

On a national level, there is some good news. Lynda Reynolds, our State Library Liaison, reports that Congress passed a continuing resolution that means "funding for libraries services (IMLS) have restarted (at last year's levels) and employees have returned to work. This also means that state library grants that support interlibrary lending, shared digital resources, and other vital services through state library agencies" have also resumed. "The downside is that Congress did not agree on a new budget for FY 2026." It's also important to note that our State Library did not receive its draw-down from IMLS." Notifying our legislators would be helpful on the state and local levels.

On that "happy" note, I wish everyone a wonderful and restful holiday season. Take time to read a good book!

"Keep looking up...That's the secret of Life." Snoopy (of Charlie Brown fame)

Yours in Friendship,

Joyce Speas, President





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OF NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Supporting Friends of the Library Statewide



**2026
DUES
\$35!**

JOIN US THIS YEAR

**It's time to renew!
Join as a Friends group
or as an individual...**

We hope you will join or renew your FONCPL membership! It's more important than ever for FOL's around NC to stand together as advocates and fund raisers for our libraries.

**FIND THE GROUP FORM [HERE](#). FIND THE INDIVIDUAL
FORM [HERE](#).**



Easy Advocacy Tips for December

- **Thank your librarians**—Take goodies, and let others know how wonderful our staff is on social media, posters, or emails.
- **Buy Christmas presents of books or puzzles at the FOL books sale**—and be sure to share with others the availability of low-cost gifts at the library.
- **Advertise the sale**—Email your book club, neighborhood, or put an article in the local paper with details.
- **Remind folks about membership in the FOL**—December is a perfect time to join or to renew your membership with your local FOL.
- **Consider joining other library advocacy groups**— such as Friends of the North Carolina Public Libraries and ALA. Every membership helps these groups provide support for libraries in your area, across the state, and throughout the country.
- **Host an FOL Membership Day**— set up a table, provide treats and freebies, along with membership information.
- **Host a fundraiser at a local restaurant**—part of the profits for that particular date or time go to the FOL. Be sure to be there and greet the diners. You could give away books to the children as well.
- **Hand-write Christmas cards to your members**—personally thank them for being a member or a new member or a long-time member.
- **Compose a “Year-End” article**—send it to the local paper, highlighting activities, purchases, programs, and thanking sponsors for all the good things they helped sponsor in the past year.
- **Give the gift of a membership**— perfect for those on your Christmas list. Once they find out all the library offers, they will be Friends for life!

TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY

Many of you will recall this line from a famous song from the musical "The Music Man." A man is trying to con a town—he incites fear to get a financial benefit. This is not unlike the situations we heard from around the state this fall, from Friends being pushed by library directors, trustees, and even county attorneys into basically giving up their autonomy and their control over their own funds by forcing them to sign MOUs to that effect. **What follows is NOT a legal opinion. We recommend consulting an attorney for legal concerns.**

Friends are their own legal entity. Those that are both incorporated as a non-profit in NC AND designated a 501c3 by the IRS are in the best position to show this. No one can dictate to you how you handle your funds as long as you are fulfilling your purpose as stated in your bylaws. Are you? And, yes, some statements will be open for interpretation, such as you "support community literacy and lifelong learning." Generally, these terms give you the flexibility for spending money on projects and programs other than the library. Your rationale for how this ultimately supports the library is that there must be a community of readers to ensure the relevancy of the library today and in the future.

Friends incorporated in the state of NC are governed by NCGS 55A. 55A-3.02 (10) gives the incorporated nonprofits the general power, "To conduct its affairs...", (13) "To make donations for the public welfare or for charitable, religious, cultural, scientific, or educational purposes..." (16) "To carry on a business" (17) "To procure insurance..." (18) "To engage in any lawful activity that will aid governmental policy" and (19) "To do all things necessary or convenient, not inconsistent with law, to further the ac-

tivities and affairs of the corporation." Again this is not legal advice, but the wording of the MOU might infringe upon these general rights. **This does not apply if the group is not incorporated in NC—another reason we continue to advocate for incorporation.**

So, what are your options if your group is being told it must sign an MOU that has points you disagree with? First, review your bylaws to ensure your spending complies with your purpose. If it does, do your homework. Research similar issues in other places and use the resources on the FONCPL website. Then ask for a meeting, try to get the MOU adjusted—what points are you flexible on, what are the dealbreakers? Don't be intimidated by titles of those representing the library! If that does not work, your group could ask for a professional mediator or you could hire an attorney to represent your interests, both will cost you.

They may try to make an issue of your name, alleging that by using the name of the library, you have duped the public into thinking that the funds you raise only go to the library. We've seen this before. The rebuttal is that your purpose is stated in your bylaws. If that doesn't assuage their concerns, you could tell them, you'd be happy to do an assumed business name. All that is, is a form that you file with the county Register of Deeds office. Your legal name remains the same. You can call yourselves whatever you want. You can still continue to support the library as that is still your purpose. If you are unsure about this, consult an attorney.

It is so unfortunate that this is happening to so many Friends that are just trying to be good stewards of the funds they have raised. We continue to encourage all Friends to review and keep their bylaws update.

TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY (CONTINUED)

Ensure that your spending aligns with your stated purpose of existence. If not, adjust immediately or amend your bylaws.

Above all, ensure that your Board understands their basic fiduciary duties of care, loyalty, and obedience. The duty of care requires board members to act with diligence and be informed, the duty of loyalty mandates **they act in the organization's best interest**, and the duty of obedience requires them to ensure the organization remains compliant with its mission, policies, and the law.

Is this MOU in the organization's best interest if the library makes or must approve all the funding decisions? Is your organization truly being compliant with its mission if your purpose as stated in your bylaws includes statements like "supporting a community of readers and lifelong learners" or "supporting community literacy" if you sign an MOU which has a provision that, "No funds of the Friends Group may be used on activities that do not support a program of or provide goods or equipment to the Library."

Do your homework. Understand your bylaws and your legal status. Study every word in the proposed MOU. Consider your dependency on the library for support to your organization. Prepare a list of questions and arguments. Even if you elect to consult with an attorney, you are going to have to bring them up to speed on your situation and the issues. You can't do this if you don't understand them. Even if the attorney specializes in nonprofits, the Friends are a unique type.

If the negotiations are unsuccessful, one option is to not sign the MOU, but to

continue as a nonprofit. What are the ramifications for your Friends if you choose that course of action? Just how much is your group dependent on the library? The more dependent you are, the more that decision will impact your operations or even your survival.

The other option would be to dissolve. Legally, only your group can make this decision—not the library or the county. If you do decide to dissolve your Friends, your bylaws should stipulate what happens to any funds remaining after all obligations are met. For those incorporated as a nonprofit with the state of NC, when you filed form N-O1 with the state, you had to attach the provisions regarding the distribution of the corporation's assets upon its dissolution.

Best of luck with your MOU negotiations! We hope this information helped.



Susann Thompson, President FOL Rourk Branch in Shallotte

Running an Efficient & Effective Meeting

The Friends President should make every effort to ensure that a Board meeting runs for only one hour or less. It begins with a written agenda that is manageable within that time.

We offer the following suggestions for helping to make that happen: 1) the agenda should be sent out 5 to 7 days in advance of the meeting and should include copies of all reports and details for any agenda item requiring a vote or explanation; 2) the Board members should be reminded to review all material before the meeting;

3) the attendees should vote at the outset of the meeting to cover only the items on the agenda or to add or delete items from the agenda (approval of agenda); 4) the chair of the meeting should stick to the agenda and move through the items expeditiously; 5) the chair should cut off discussion on any item that either gets off track or that starts being repetitious—ask if anyone has anything new to add; and 6) the chair should follow correct procedure for handling motions—ensuring that a vote is taken.

Idea To Improve Kids' Reading Skills

There was a short piece in the Aug/Sep edition of Reader's Digest suggesting that captions on children's programming might help children learn to read, pronounce, and spell better. There are numerous studies indicating that watching TV with subtitles can improve kids' literacy, vocabulary, comprehension skills, and reading fluency. Think about it. Except for the screen, it is like reading a book to a child. A single children's movie can add exposure to 20,000 subtitled words, about the same number as the average children's chapter book.

Both adult and child viewers automatically exhibit reading behavior when subtitles are on. Older adults frequently turn on subtitles when streaming shows when they have difficulty hearing the show's dialogue.

Reading a book (or a StoryWalk) with a child gives the parent an opportunity to use questions to explore words, concepts, or life lessons. Pausing a streaming video gives the parent the same opportunity.

"Equally important, during a 2021 study, the National Endowment for Science,

Technology and the Arts (NESTA) showed that kids are highly unlikely to turn subtitles off once they are on. Of the 450,000 children observed watching videos, 98% kept them on. Moreover, no children in the study complained about having them on."

"Research shows that children read captions when they're available and achieve significantly better literacy outcomes — especially for those struggling with reading. It's so significant that India just passed a law that requires 50% of television content to have subtitles on by 2025." [Click here](#) to read more.



Yearly Calendar for Treasurers

Setting up a monthly table of activities and reports will help your Treasurer stay on track. It provides a blueprint for the Board to not only track compliance but also to evaluate the performance of the Treasurer. Further, when there is turnover in the Treasurer position, a yearly calendar will help orient the new Treasurer to the role and ensure continuity.

We also recommend inserting separate reports on major fundraising programs and projects, such as book sales. Include payment of any appropriate dues (e.g., FONCPL, North Carolina Center for Nonprofits, Chamber of Commerce) and insurance (liability, D&O, event). If you have any leases or recurring payments, add those to the calendar.

Set up a monthly table and for each month, list what is to be done. Here is a sample from one FOL that meets monthly, but you will have to decide which of the listed activities applies to your Friends. Please note that this FOL's fiscal year is January to December. Submission dates for forms to certain governmental agencies may change if your fiscal year is different. For example, if your organization has a 501(c)(3) designation, its Form 990 is due by the 15th day of the 5th month after the close of your fiscal year. This FOL pays sales tax to the state on book sales. They also apply for a refund for sales tax paid on qualified purchases.

Other things your FOL might owe that should be identified on the calendar:

- If you have a website that is separate from the library, you may owe domain and/or hosting fees. Remember, if you don't pay to renew your domain name, it may be hijacked by an unsavory business. This could be an embarrassment for your FOL.
- Subscription for Zoom
- Subscription for software (MS 365) or QuickBooks

- Subscription to online association management services (e.g., MemberPlanet or WildApricot)
- Subscription to other premium services (e.g., MailChimp, SignUp Genius)
- Reports due to funders (grants).

Here is a sample Yearly Calendar

January

Input the new year's budget into the financial accounting system, 4th Qtr. Prior year sales tax payment and 2nd half of prior year sales tax refund, email December financial report, Dec bank statements, and credit card statements to Board, pay FONCPL dues, attend Board meeting, draft EOY financial report for the Board and for the Annual Report, including 5-year fund balance graph and 5-year book sales graph. Conduct an audit of equipment & furnishings (if any owned by FOL) to verify location and condition.

February

Email January financial report, Jan. bank statements, and credit card statements to Board, File IRS 990 Federal Tax form, renew Charitable Solicitation License (or Exemption), review the assigned registered agent for the FOL's NC nonprofit corporation, and make any change desired by the Board, attend Board meeting

March

Email February financial report, credit card statements, and Feb. bank statements to Board, attend Board meeting

April

Email March financial report, credit card statements, and Mar. bank statements to Board, 1st quarter sales tax payment, attend Board meeting.

Continued on next page

Yearly Calendar for Treasurers (Continued)

May

Email April financial report, credit card statements, and Apr bank statements to Board, report on book sale, attend Board meeting

June

Email May financial report, credit card statements, and May bank statements to Board, attend Board meeting

July

Email June financial report, credit card statements, and Jun bank statements to Board, 2nd quarter sales tax payment, 1st half sales tax refund

August

Email July financial report, credit card statements, and Jul bank statements to Board, attend Board meeting.

September

Email August financial report, credit card statements, and Aug bank statements to Board, renew liability and event insurance policies, attend Board meeting.

October

Email September financial report, credit card statements, and Sep bank statements to Board, written report on book sale, 3rd quarter sales

tax payment, develop a draft of the budget for the new year and present to the Board, attend Board meeting.

November

Email October financial report, credit card statements, and Oct bank statements to Board, pay MemberPlanet fee.

December

Email November financial report, credit card statements, and Nov bank statements to Board, attend Board meeting, Board approval of budget, end of fiscal year.

Regarding the FOL budget, the Board needs to develop a plan of work for the coming year in order to do the budget. This should be done at least one month before the Treasurer presents a draft budget to the Board. Every financial statement should compare actual income and expenditures against the budget. This helps the FOL to stay on track.

We strongly urge you to have a plan of work for either the calendar year or for your Friends' fiscal year, a budget for your fiscal year, and a calendar of activities for your Treasurer. If you do not already have these in place, 2026 is the time to start.



Facebook Posting Ideas

Nothing is worse for your Friends' image than having a Facebook page that has outdated material—and we have seen many of those. It really doesn't take much to keep your page fresh—just someone committed to doing it.

Here are ten Facebook best practice tips for any nonprofit:

1. Make your page public.
2. Make it easy to find your contact info (email, website, address, and/or phone).
3. Set up your Facebook to make a strong impression—visually appealing.
4. Post 2 to 3 times per week and respond to your followers. (more is not better).
5. Consider investing in Facebook ads.
6. Add a "donate" button to your page and posts.
7. Add a join button linking to your membership application.
8. Empower your followers to fundraise for your Friends on Facebook,
9. Create a nonprofit page fundraiser for important, timely campaigns.
10. Schedule an hour monthly to gather material and plan your posts for the month.
5. Post library advocacy messages.
6. Post information about library services other than books and programs (e.g., seed exchange, lending tools, STEAM kits, etc.).
7. Make a list of interesting questions (e.g., What are you reading today? Make up a funny book title. What is your favorite genre, author, or book?).
8. Scour the internet for quotes and sayings that align with your mission and use them as fillers.
9. Publish links to important articles on the Freedom to Read.
10. Include notices of Friends' events and projects.
11. Include information on volunteering at library and other NPO opportunities.
12. Insert a few historical pieces about library, reading, the community or your Friends.
13. Post pictures and reports on Friends' project impacts.

To read more, [click here](#).

Here are some ideas of things to post.

1. Children, teen, and adult programs at the library.
2. Free local family events (cross posting to help other NPOs in your community).
3. Access the calendar of events on the FONPCL website and use those dates to write something funny or entertaining about it.
4. Scour the internet for cartoons about books, libraries, and reading. Collect them and then use as needed for fillers.



Do your research and gather material. Use material from the FONCPL newsletter. It will make posting 2 to 3 times a week easier and actually fun. If you are not going to keep your Facebook fresh, then take it down and don't publish the link.

Staying Safe While Using AI Tools by Cindy Shipley

Best Practices to Protect Your Privacy and Security

Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools are transforming the way we work, learn, and interact online. From writing assistants to image generators, these technologies offer impressive capabilities and can streamline many tasks. However, as AI becomes more integrated into everyday life, it's crucial to understand how to use these tools safely and responsibly. This article provides practical advice on safeguarding your privacy, verifying information, and choosing trustworthy AI solutions.

PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

When using AI tools, always be mindful of the information you share. Refrain from entering sensitive personal details, such as addresses, financial data, or confidential business information, especially on platforms you do not fully trust. Take time to review the privacy settings and permissions of each tool, and adjust them to limit data sharing wherever possible. It's wise to check what data the tool collects, how it is stored, and who can access it.

VERIFY INFORMATION

AI-generated content can be helpful, but it's not infallible. Sometimes, these tools may produce inaccurate, outdated, or misleading information. Before acting on or sharing content created by AI, cross-check the facts with reputable sources. This is particularly important for news, medical advice, or business decisions, where mistakes can have serious consequences. Developing a habit of verifying information will help you avoid spreading misinformation.

USE REPUTABLE TOOLS

Not all AI tools are created equal. Opt for solutions developed by established companies or organizations with clear privacy policies and transparent practices. Read reviews, seek recommendations, and look for certifications or endorsements to ensure the tool is trustworthy. Avoid

downloading or using AI applications from unknown sources, as they may compromise your security or misuse your data.

STAY INFORMED ABOUT AI RISKS

The landscape of AI is rapidly evolving, and new risks can emerge as technologies advance. Stay informed about updates, vulnerabilities, and best practices by following trusted tech news outlets and official documentation. If your organization uses AI tools, participate in security awareness training and familiarize yourself with internal guidelines for safe usage.

REPORT ISSUES AND SEEK HELP

If you encounter suspicious activity, such as unexpected data requests or privacy breaches while using an AI tool, report the issue to the platform provider or your IT department promptly. Seek support if you're unsure about a tool's safety or if you are not understanding its privacy settings.

CONCLUSION

AI tools can be incredibly useful, but their safe use relies on awareness and vigilance. By protecting your privacy, verifying information, choosing reputable providers, staying informed, and reporting concerns, you can enjoy the benefits of AI while minimizing potential risks. Adopting these best practices will help you harness the power of AI confidently and securely.

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), a US Government agency with the US Department of Homeland Security has created a tip sheet for using Artificial Intelligence tools safely. CISA's mission is to lead the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risks to the country's cyber and physical infrastructure.

[Click here](#) for the tip sheet.

Functionally Illiterate Young Adults Earn HS Diplomas

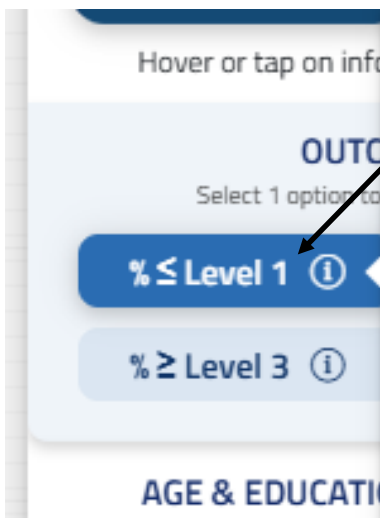
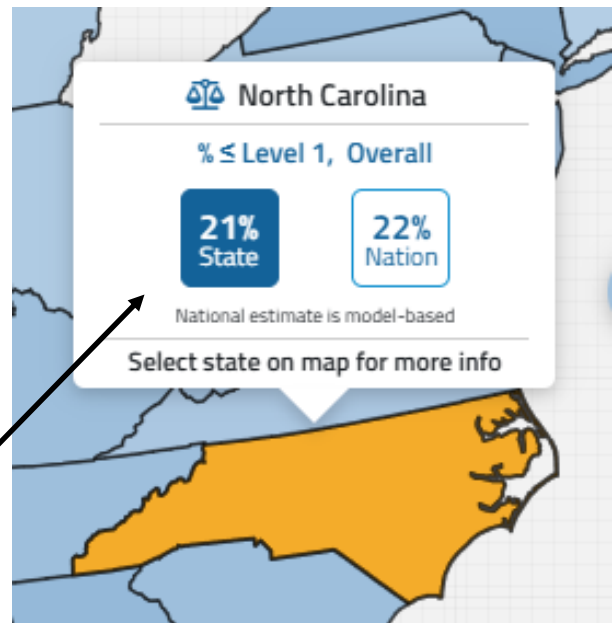
According to The 74's October 16, 2025 article, "The number of 16-to-24 year olds reading at the lowest literacy levels increased from 16% in 2017 to 25% in 2023, according to data released in December from the National Center for Education Statistics in partnership with the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies.

"In 2023, a total of about five million young adults, equivalent to the population of Alabama, could understand the basic meaning of short texts but could not analyze long reading materials, according to further analysis by the American Institute of Research."

For that same six-year period, the percentage of HS diplomas issued increased 50% to 55% to a group that also had the largest decrease in literacy test scores. While many social and economic factors contribute to this issue, researchers believe that more troubling trends are students increasingly passed through their school years without acquiring the requisite skills, a disconnect with the curriculum and reliance on computer-generated information.

This is something we as Friends should be mindful of. Just think, these illiterate young adults will be the very ones *not using libraries* in the future. If libraries aren't used, then they aren't going to get funded. **We need to add our voices to literacy efforts in and out of school.**

To read the entire article and view the US Skills Map, [click here](#).



Below 226 points. Adults at this level can be considered at risk for difficulties using or comprehending print material. Adults at the upper end of this level can read short texts, in print or online, and understand the meaning well enough to perform simple tasks, such as filling out a short form, but drawing inferences or combining multiple sources of text may be too difficult. Adults who are below Level 1 may only be able to understand very basic vocabulary or find very specific information on a familiar topic. Some adults below Level 1 may struggle even to do this and may be functionally illiterate.

Library Makerspace

A library makerspace is a dedicated area within a library that provides resources and tools for hands-on, creative activities, fostering a collaborative and innovative learning environment. Makerspaces equip libraries to offer unique services like 3D printing, digital media creation, and various arts and crafts activities, enriching community engagement and skill development.



What is a library makerspace?

Concept:

Makerspaces in libraries are communal spaces designed for experimentation, problem-solving, and creativity through hands-on activities.

Resources:

They often include tools like 3D printers, sewing machines, digital media equipment, and various arts and crafts supplies.

Community:

Makerspaces foster a sense of community by encouraging collaboration, peer learning, and skill-sharing among patrons.

Accessibility:

Libraries often offer makerspaces as a free or low-cost service, providing access to tools and technologies that might otherwise be unavailable.

Benefits of library makerspaces:

Enhanced learning:

Makerspaces offer a unique environment for learning through play and experimentation, encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Community engagement:

They strengthen communities by providing a shared space for creative expression and skill development.

Skill development:

Makerspaces can be used to learn new skills in areas like 3D modeling, digital media, or traditional arts and crafts.

Accessibility:

Libraries provide a low-barrier access point to technologies and tools for all community members.

Examples of library makerspace activities:

- **3D printing and modeling:** Designing and printing 3D objects using CAD software and 3D printers.
- **Digital media creation:** Working with audio, video, and graphic design tools.
- **Arts and crafts:** Engaging in activities like sewing, painting, or jewelry making.
- **Coding and robotics:** Exploring programming and building robots.
- **Laser cutting and engraving:** Creating custom designs on various materials.

Finding a library makerspace:

Contact your local library:

Check with your local library to see if they have a makerspace or can direct you to one.

Online resources:

Utilize the Makerspace Directory or your library's website to locate makerspaces in your area.

Here are some links to libraries that have makerspace along with policies & procedures for them:

[Wikipedia—Makerspace](#)

[UNC-Chapel Hill](#)

[UNC School of the Arts](#)

[NCSU—Hunt Library and Hill Library](#)

[Makerspace Directory](#)

[Video—tips on starting or expanding](#)

[Video—intro to starting a makerspace in a library](#)

[Video—how to use the makerspace at the Cincinnati public library.](#)

[Charlotte Mecklenburg Library\](#)

[ALA resources for makerspaces](#)

[Example of equipment and scheduling](#)



If your library has the space and technologically savvy staff, a makerspace could be a wonderful, useful addition to the library. What if your Friends were to purchase the equipment, furnishings, and supplies needed? Or assist the library in getting grant funds to do so? Take a road trip to a library nearby that has one. Dream big!





**Friends of North Carolina
Public Libraries**

Helping Friends Build Resilience

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CALENDAR

All material for the newsletter is due to editor **Judy Hills** by the 25th of each month.

Click here for the 2025 Calendar of National Events—use these to plan your activities.

FONCPL Board Zoom Meetings 10 AM annual meeting on 11/15.

Here are a few dates of note:

DECEMBER

12/1 Cyber Monday

12/2 Giving Tuesday

12/5 International Volunteer Day

12/7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day

12/7 National Letter Writing Day

12/9 Christmas Card Day

12/10 Dewey Decimal System Day

12/10 Human Rights Day

12/13 National Guard Birthday

12/15 National Cupcake day

12/17 Wright Brothers Day

12/19 National Ugly Sweater Day

12/20 Go Caroling Day

12/21 Winter Solstice

12/21 National Crossword Puzzle Day

12/22 National Cookie Exchange Day

12/24 Christmas Eve

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Kwanzaa (until Jan 1)

12/28 National Card Playing Day

12/31 New Year's Eve

JANUARY

1/1 New Year's Day

1/2 National Science Fiction Day

1/3 J.R.R. Tolkien Birthday

1/4 Trivia Day

1/5 National Bird Day

1/7 Zora Neale Hurston Birthday

1/8 Stephen Hawking Birthday

1/9 Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

1/14 Dress up your pet day