



Friends of the Fletcher Free Library
Annual Report FY'26
July 2025 – June 2026

Friends of the Fletcher Free Library

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The purpose of The Friends of the Fletcher Free Library is to support the Fletcher Free Library (FFL) through advocacy, financial support, and fundraising with the goal of promoting the Library as a literacy and multicultural center for the community.

The Friends raise money through the generosity of community donors and donations to the Annual Appeal, and through sales of donated books and branded merchandise at occasional sales, sales from the Stall (shelves of books across from the Main Desk), and from online sales. On occasion, the Friends also raise money through annual fundraisers. The Friends are recipients of most restricted and unrestricted grant monies received in support of the Library. The extent of the Friends' work could not be accomplished without Gale Batsimm, FFL Development Manager, who works tirelessly to provide support for the Fletcher Free. Thank you, Gale!

FY'26

Mark Twery left the Board this past year after nearly a decade of board service. His leadership in the Friends goes far beyond coming to a meeting a month though, and he will continue to make major contributions through book sales, the special topics shelves of the Stall, and most important, our eBay presence where we sell the more valuable books to a bigger audience. The Friends will surely continue to benefit from his experience and insights in the future.

The last thing the Friends did when COVID shut the world down in the Spring of 2020 was to cancel (or rather, postpone) our first Library Mini Golf event. Six years later, we finally held the event, and it was worth the wait. It was organized by an incredibly creative and motivated committee of veteran and new Friends volunteers who put their hearts into the project. There was tremendous community response, a plethora of creative sponsors, and celebrity appearances – Amber LeMay, Darren Perron, Champ, among others. As a fundraiser, mini golf was quite successful, but as a community builder it was unmatched. We hope to see your swing at next year's event!

Thanks to an extremely generous unrestricted bequest, the Friends were able to pay for a geothermal test well that demonstrated the library property has sufficient groundwater flow to cool and heat the library building, potentially eliminating the need for fossil fuels. This is an important component of the Transformational Renovation Project that the capital campaign is working towards and will be a significant step forward in Burlington's Net Zero initiative.

In the context of the Transformational Renovation, the Friends updated its memorandum of understanding with the city of Burlington to refine the relationship and contributed directly to support the completion of the first phase of the project, exterior work on the Carnegie wing, which was funded primarily by government grants (municipal, state and federal).

The Friends contracted with JMM Associates, a local accounting firm, to perform detailed reviews of the Friends' finances for FY24 and FY25.

The Friends held the usual book sales under Mark and Robin Twery's leadership, and participated in several community and municipal events, like Burlington Parks, Rec, and Waterfront's 'Throwback Book Fair, BCA's Winter Market, and opportunities with the Farmhouse Group and American Flatbread. Mark's work stewarding our eBay presence again raised significant funds for the Library. Thanks to Martie Majoros and Carol Livingston for their work on the Stall, and Sara Bourne and Giao Dang for their maintaining our online presence. Our Communications team led by Martie has kept the community informed of Friends activities. And once again, Giao's outside-the-box thinking took the Friends in new and productive directions.

The Friends' traditional fundraising paths require storage and selling space for donated books. Planning began in FY26 for the time when the building renovation closes access to Friends spaces. Two committees were formed, one to re-imagine book sales and to plan on how to clear Friends space of accumulated books in the library basement and one to work on the future transition to another location.

Board of Directors

Role	FY'26
President	Jonathan Chapple-Sokol
Vice President	Carol Livingston
Treasurer	Tina Lesem
Secretary	Robin Twery
Director	Sara Bourne
Director	Giao Dang
Director	Amanda Hannaford
Director	Kathleen Laramée
Director	Martie Majoros
Director	Sydney Rybicki

Friends volunteers again devoted over 2500 person-hours to supporting the Fletcher Free Library. City Market member-workers play a big part in making all of our book sales so successful. We are thankful for those who worked hundreds of hours and those who contributed just a few and very much appreciate City Market members for providing so much volunteer support, as well as City Market itself for the creative way the community is served through its member-worker policy.

Capital Campaign Committee

Amy Mellencamp, co-chair
Kathleen Laramée, co-chair
Betsey Krumholz, treasurer
Shana Morrow Trombley, Campaign Manager
Cate MacLachlan
Dawn Moskowitz
Ryan Chartier
Jonathan Chapple-Sokol
Gale Batsimm
Mary Danko

FY26 Capital Campaign Overview: *Building One Story at a Time*

In FY26, the Capital Campaign Committee made significant progress toward our \$35 million vision to transform Fletcher Free Library into a 21st-century hub for learning, equity, sustainability, and community engagement. All totaled through the end of FY2026, we raised \$18,322,718 in gifts and pledges, establishing a strong foundation for the project's next phase.

In spring FY26, we completed Phase I of the project, a \$2.6 million historic preservation project focused on the Carnegie Building's exterior. Work included restoration of historic windows, masonry repair and tuckpointing, new gutters, caulking, and other measures to protect this treasured civic landmark.

We also reached an important sustainability milestone with completion of a geothermal test well in March. Water was found approximately 380 feet below ground, with preliminary testing indicating sufficient flow to meet the building's heating needs and roughly three times the capacity needed for cooling. These results support development of an open-loop geothermal system that could enable the Library to operate with zero carbon emissions.

A significant focus in late FY26 was completing the documentation, coordination, and City processes required to move into Design Development. We formalized the Building Committee, documented project scope and procedures, and completed the necessary steps to select a Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) and advance the project into Design Development.

With this groundwork complete, we are poised to begin Design Development with Dore + Whittier Architects in Q1 FY27, with Construction Documents scheduled for completion by the end of FY27. CMAR interviews begin September 1, bringing construction expertise into the design process early and allowing for ongoing cost estimating and value engineering. Construction remains on schedule to begin in Q4 2027, with an estimated 18-month construction period.

Fundraising remains strong including a couple of seven-figure gifts secured and more under consideration. We hosted a luncheon honoring Pat Robins and Lisa Schamberg, our honorary campaign co-chairs, for major donor prospects as well as dozens of one-on-one meetings with prospective donors. We also continued to demonstrate the vital role that the library plays in bringing our community together by organizing a couple *Civic Reads* events in partnership with UVM and Champlain College, and a community event featuring *National Geographic* photographer, Ami Vitale, in cooperation with Shelburne Farms.

Our all-volunteer Working Campaign Committee continues to meet bi-weekly, supported by the Honorary, Finance, and Budget Committees - all of which are working to deliver this significant project to our community.

FY26 Capital Campaign Highlights

- \$18.3 million raised toward the \$35 million campaign goal.
- Phase I historic preservation work completed on the Carnegie Building exterior.
- Geothermal testing completed, confirming strong potential for an open-loop system.
- City documentation and procedural requirements completed to move the project into Design Development and begin the CMAR selection process.
- Major philanthropic and public funding opportunities advanced, including several significant gift prospects and federal/regional funding requests.

Together, these accomplishments position the project to move from planning and preparation into active design and construction planning in FY27.

FY'26 Library Highlights

HISTORIC EXTERIOR PRESERVATION to the 1904 Carnegie building fully spanned FY26.

Beginning in June 2025, exterior work to the masonry, windows and gutters of the historic building helped restore and protect this architectural gem, which sits on the National Register of Historic Buildings. Summer 2025 programs were moved indoors and to City Hall Park. The library lawn was reseeded in the spring in time for 2026 Summer Challenge live theater programs. Funding for this phase of work came from the Friends of FFL, T-Mobile, a National Parks Service Save America's Treasures award, a Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development Historic Preservation grant, and grant matching from the City of Burlington.

CIVIC READS series, led by the FFL Capital Campaign Committee, kicked off a year of deep conversation and civic engagement. Popular programs included: *Abundance in Burlington: Innovation Infrastructure, & a Greener Future*, *Autocracy, Inc. Book Group Discussion*; Tom Sullivan discussing his new book *The U.S. Presidency: Power, Responsibility and Accountability*; a *Healthy Union: How States Can Lead in Environmental Health* with author Susan Kaplan, J.D. in conversation with Christine Vatovec, Ph.D.; and UVM professor and author Minh Ly presenting his book *Answering to Us: Why*

Democracy Demands Accountability. National Geographic photographer Ami Vitale also offered an engaging talk and slide show.

NEW NORTH END BRANCH LIBRARY offers programs including *Singalong with Linda*, *Stories with Geoff*, *LEGO Time*, and *Lake Champlain Memory Café* (in partnership with the UVM Center on Aging and Age Well) continued. The branch library launched Minecraft Meet-ups for ages 7-12. The Vegan in Vermont Cookbook Club that originated in the NNE has become so popular that this monthly program moves to the Main Library when the waitlist necessitates the added space. Special thanks to NorthCountry Federal Credit Union for their support of NNE programming.

YOUTH SERVICES The 2025 Summer Challenge Program (SCP) visited parks and youth summer camps throughout Burlington with two outreach summer staff, reaching 1,083 kids, 182 teens, and 658 caregivers. During 7 weeks of visiting 19 sites weekly, youth enjoyed hands-on activities, completing 619 activities, and received 752 free books, prizes from our generous in-kind donors, and t-shirts. Friends' funding supported weekly youth programs and brought exciting live summer programs including Lyric Theatre, Very Merry Theater, Dinoman, and the Vermont Lake Monsters. The Children's Literacy Foundation (CLiF) provided a story time and book giveaway to youth to build their home libraries. The Early Literacy Outreach Program (ELOP) visited home-based childcares with direct outreach. We appreciate our SCP grantors in 2025: Northfield Savings Bank, M&T Bank, Price Chopper's Golub Foundation, and others.

THE BURLINGTON STORYWALK(R) continued into its sixth year, thanks to sponsorship from Appletree Bay Physical Therapy, Baystate Financial, Burlington Electric Department, Burlington Telecom, Champlain Cable, Common Deer, Heritage Automotive Group, NBT Bank, Phoenix Books, and Pingala Café. The storybooks at this popular family destination continue to change with each season with the help of volunteer BTV StoryWalk(R) stewards.

PARTNERSHIPS AND PROGRAMMING offered regular programs including North Enders Book Club, FFL Book Discussion Group, Food for Talk and Bake Club Cookbook Book Clubs, Queer Reads, Crafters Drop-In, and an Italian Conversation Group. A new Spanish language conversation group, Spanish lessons, and a Fictional Book Club launched during the year. During April's National Poetry Month, the Library provided free, stamped poetry postcards. These programs were supported by the Friends of FFL, the Vermont Humanities Council, and City Market.

TECHNOLOGY classes included Drop-In Tech Support at the Main Library and NNE Branch Library.

TWO LITERARY FESTIVALS returned for their fourth year at FFL in November with support from the Friends. The 2025 Green Mountain Book Festival (GMBF) focused on SciFi, offering panels on humor and world building and featuring keynote speaker John Scalzi. The Non-Fiction Comics Festival, the largest event of its kind in the country, highlighted illustrators and authors of non-fiction graphic books.

TEEN DEPARTMENT worked with the schools to bring classes to the Library. The Teen Space held programs including Dungeons and Dragons, Minecraft Meet-Up, Movie Matinees, and Teen Drop-In Volunteering.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT strengthens staff's knowledge and ability to serve community needs. The Friends proudly fund opportunities to enhance the skills of Library employees.

Financial Support for the Library

The Friends' Board annually allocates resources to the FFL for investment at the discretion of the Library Director. This procedure facilitates the FFL's ability to plan and prioritize programming, professional development, and special project investment more effectively. The Library Director proposes an amount to the Friends' Board based on anticipated programming and departmental needs for the coming fiscal year. The level of funding allocated each year is based on the availability of funds as stated in the Friends' end-of-year financial statements and Treasurer's reports. For FY'26, the Board allocated \$80,600 to support programs and services for youth, teens, and adults, and professional development support for staff. For general operations this is a 7.2% increase from last year. Beyond that, the allocation includes \$14,000 as a placeholder for supplies for the Summer Challenge Program, to ensure purchases can be made in time independent of uncertain grant timetables. As previously, the Friends also allocate \$10,000 to the City of Burlington, per our Memorandum of Understanding.

FY2026 Allocation Request

	FY26 Request
Programming - Adult	\$20,000
Outreach (Seniors)	\$2,000
Programming - Youth	\$15,000
Programming - Teen	\$7,000
Professional Development	\$7,000
Innovation Grants	\$5,000
Shredding Contract/\$42.50 month	\$500
ELOP Coordinator	\$1,000
Staff Support and Recognition	\$3,600
Volunteer Support	\$500
NNE Branch	\$5,000
Summer Challenge Program (as insurance in the event grant not available in time)	14,000
Total Library Support	\$80,600
Donation to City Revenue Line	\$10,000
Capital Fund	\$10,000
GRAND TOTAL	\$100,600

The Friends also contributed \$10,000 to Capital Campaign funding from its General Fund. Some of the campaign expenses include but are not limited to: funding part-time staff, printing (mailings, brochures, signs, renderings, etc.), mailing/postage, consulting, advertising/social media, video production, and events/receptions. We anticipate that as the Campaign evolves, this direct support from the Friends operational budget will decrease in future years.

Financials (unaudited)

Summary Statement (with notes on significant changes from FY25)

Income	FY26	FY25	Comments
Contributions Income	\$83,077	\$140,061	VCF Endowment; No major FY26 bequests (and see below)
Contributions Through Partnerships	\$1,750	-	Items where others raise money on the behalf of Friends (e.g., City Market Rally for Change)
Capital Campaign Building Income	\$6,295,508	\$577,093	Cash -Full Year of Capital Campaign Fundraising
Grants	\$54,612	\$51,945	
Annual Appeal	\$85,637	\$91,288	
Fundraising Events	\$32,842	\$15,370	Library Mini Golf; Includes Sponsorships and Events Organized for Capital Campaign
Interest Earned	\$129,183	\$26,627	Capital Campaign
Book Sales	\$16,381	\$23,339	
Bookstall	\$7,800	\$9,041	
Offsite Stalls	\$1,269	\$1,732	
3rd Party Book Sales	-	\$3,141	Little Dealer Sales Activity in FY26
3rd Party Sales - Other	-	\$500	
New Ventures pilots	\$1,309	-	Participation in new and Innovative Fundraising Opportunities
OnLine Sales/eBay	\$7,645	\$5,304	

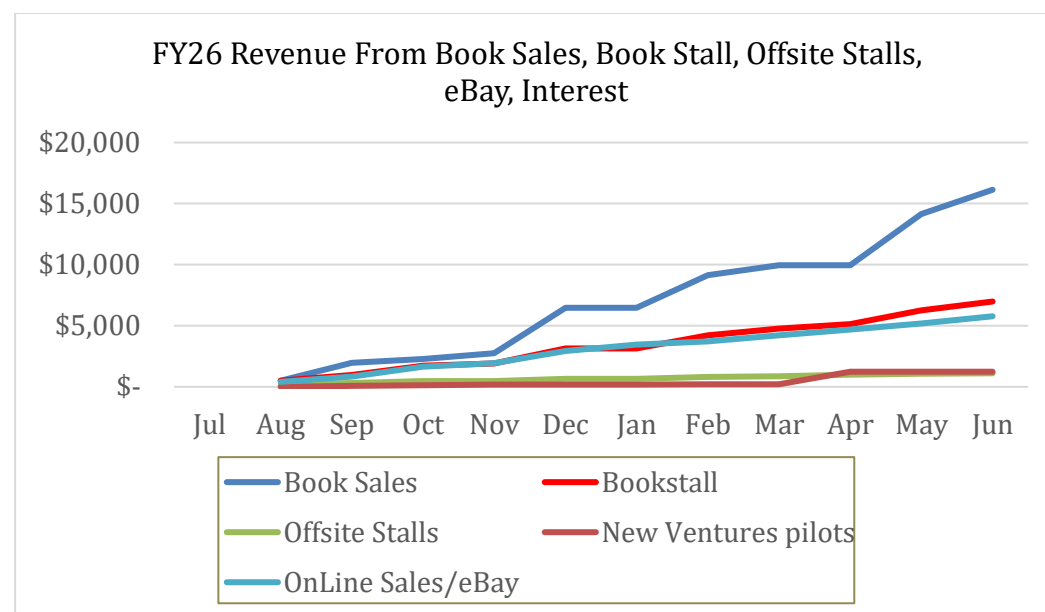
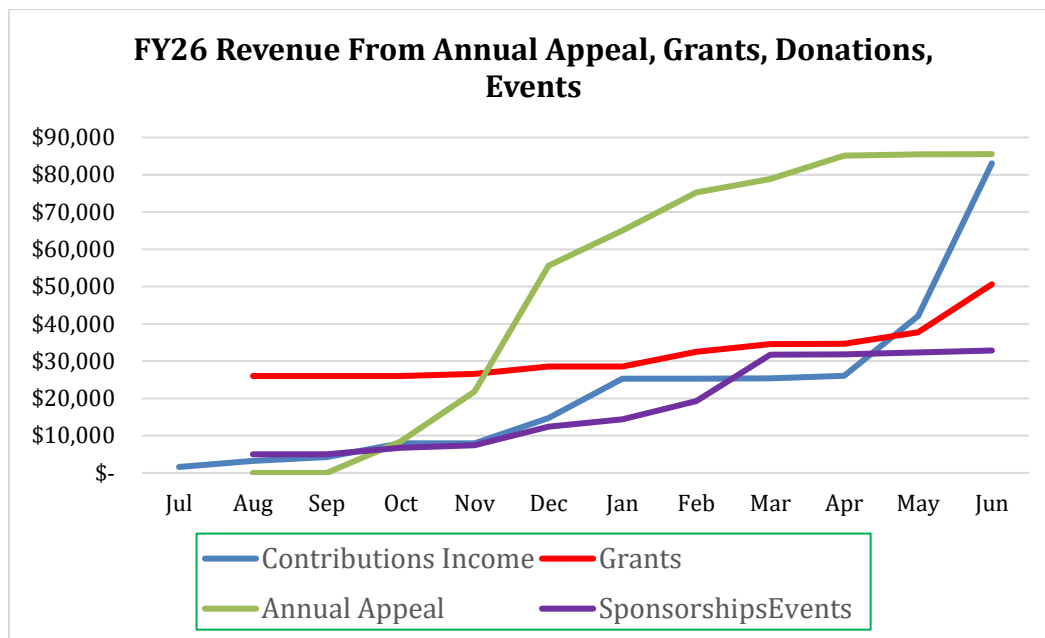
Expense	FY26	FY25	Comments
Stipends/Professional Fees	\$4,780	\$39,073	FY25 had unique expenses
Wage Salary	\$64,415	\$64,638	Full year of Capital Campaign Manager
Payroll Taxes	\$5,618	\$5,513	"
Sales Tax	\$2,044	\$3,277	
Accounting Fees	\$15,460	\$8,864.	Includes bookkeeping work and financial review fees
Insurance	\$2,089	\$2,069.	
Legal Fees	\$0	\$1,500	
Building Expense	\$659,824	\$54,723	Includes Contributions to Historic Restoration Due to Recission of Federal Grant and Increased Costs
Office Supplies	\$3,070	\$2,707	
Marketing	\$9,862	\$16,047	FY25 had unique expenses
Staff Development \ Training	\$7,403	\$8,700	
Travel	\$2,918	\$3,539	
Speaker/performer fees	\$36,669	\$31,769	
Program Supplies	\$46,224	\$40,310	
Books	\$4,276	\$2,397	
Merchandise	\$2,699	\$743	
Community Relations	\$11,993	\$12,143	Primarily the Allocation to the City of Burlington
License fees	\$4,719	\$3,374	
Postage	\$2,143	\$2,238	
Catering	\$11,916	\$6,654	
Equipment	\$20,413	\$710	AV Equipment

Account Balances (does not include <\$2000 held in eBay, PayPal, Venmo accounts)

BALANCES	6/30/2026	6/30/2025
Friends General	\$408,817	\$ 364,252
Capital Campaign (Cash)	\$6,866,984	\$1,114,663
Capital Campaign (Accrual – including Pledges)	\$14,500,078	

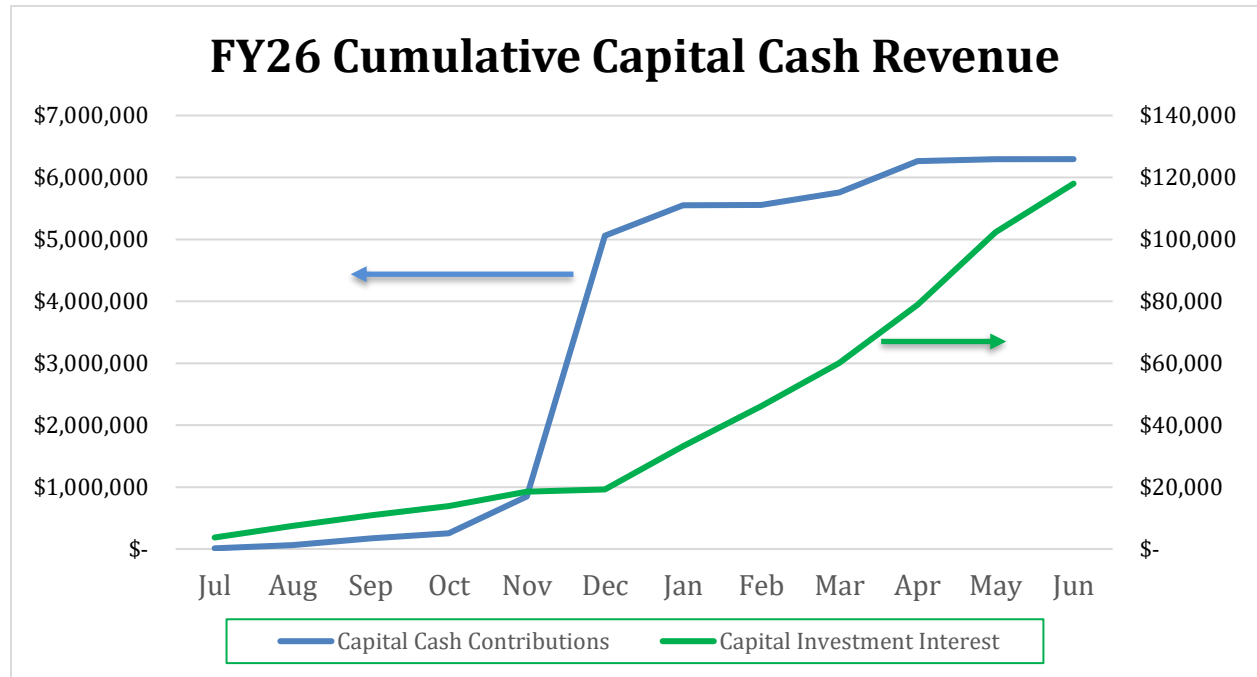
Revenue

Cumulative revenue by source (non-Capital Campaign)



Cumulative Revenue Capital Campaign

Operational costs were paid out of Investment interest revenue to ensure that donor contributions remain committed to the construction project.



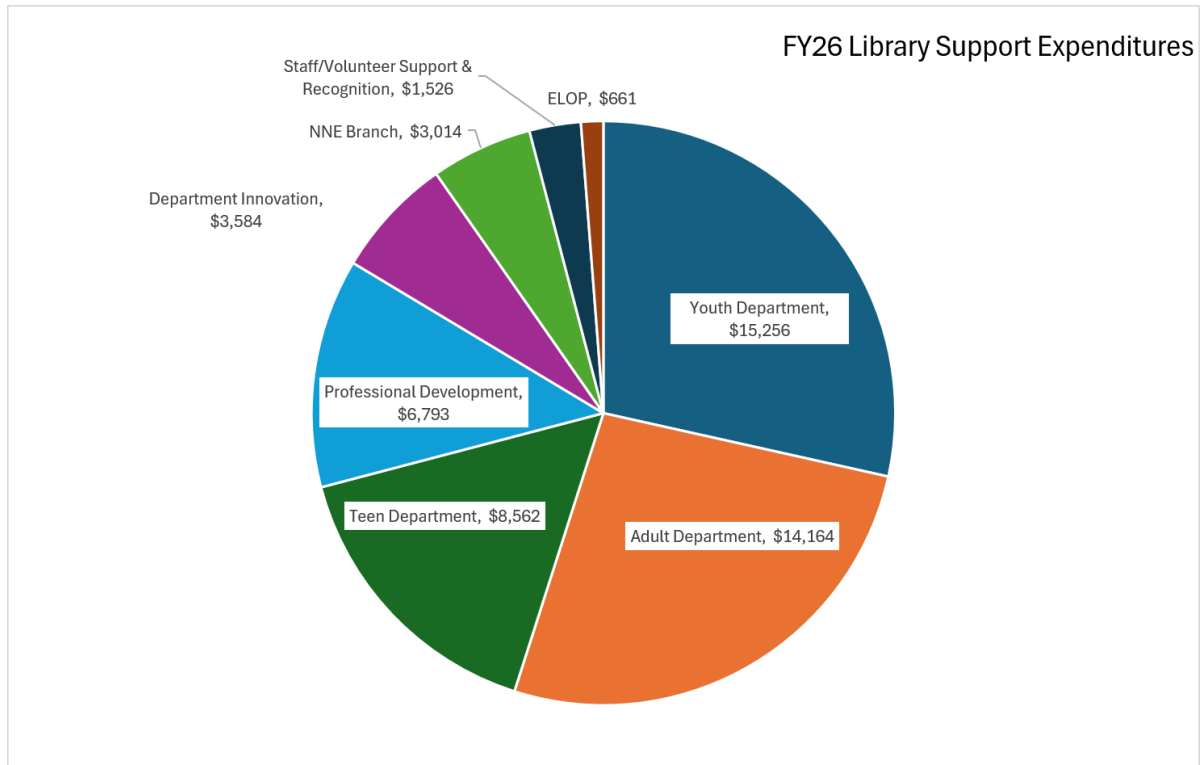
Interest Income

Interest Earned	FY26
Friends Operating (General) Fund	\$11,173
Friends Capital Campaign	\$118,010

The community generously supported the Friends and the library through donations, the Annual Appeal, planned giving, and response to the Capital Campaign. Annual Appeal donations remain strong at levels unrealized before COVID, and beyond donations, Development Manager Gale Batsimm's grant writing drove a record level of funding, for use in a variety of Library and outreach programs. We are deeply grateful to the incredibly generous Capital Campaign donors, named and anonymous, who are building the Fletcher Free Library's future.

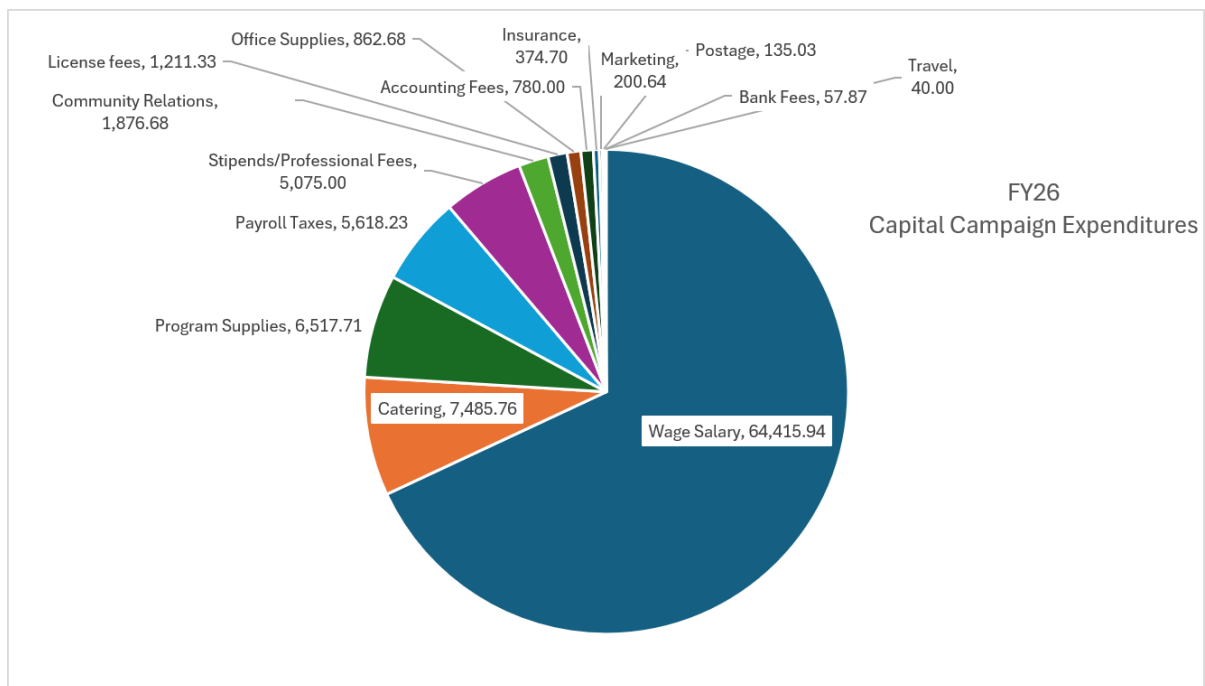
Expenditure

Library Support



We met our City obligation by sending \$10,000 in June.

Capital Campaign



Not shown: \$594,700 in building expenses – contribution to exterior preservation project necessary due to rescission of NEH Grant and project cost increases.

Thank You

The Friends are thankful for all the folks who support the Friends and the Fletcher Free Library: Friends volunteers; Library staff; financial and in-kind contributors, individual, corporate and institutional; donors of books; and all who share the vision of a library space anchoring Burlington's vibrant downtown, contributing their time and resources; and, of course, all the booklovers who come to our sales. Thank you all!