

## **Saying goodbye to Suzanne, with gratitude**

The Friends of the Willmar Public Library Board of Directors said goodbye this January to Suzanne Nelsen, the last remaining charter member of the Friends to serve on the board.

Suzanne has been with the Friends since they organized in the mid-1990s to help promote the passage of a local sales tax to renovate and expand the library.

"I offered to help with that. I like libraries and I just wanted to do what I could to help," she said.

The volunteer Friends were successful – the referendum passed in 1996 and a grand opening for the completed project was held in 1999.

Eight years later, a gift of stock shares provided the seed money to establish a Friends of the Library Fund with the Willmar Area Community Foundation, helping ensure a sound long-term future.

"I wanted to make sure the Fund was there and available to the library to support them if they have a dream of doing something," she said. "It has been a great feeling that I'm a part of that."

Suzanne has been going to the library since childhood, when she would check out a favorite book and sit in a corner to read. Later, as a teacher, she spent many hours at the school library, often reading aloud to children. "There's nothing more special than reading to a child," she said.

Now that she's retired from an active role on the Friends board, she has turned some of her attention to a reading list that includes two of her favorite genres – nonfiction and essays. She also is continuing as a member of the Friends of the Library.

She loves the comfortable atmosphere at the library and the energy and creativity of staff in developing programs and services that appeal to all ages.

"Friends is going to continue to grow and support the library, and that feels good," she said. "You set a foundation and now we're passing it along."

