

Advocacy: It's Not a 4-Letter Word

If you're like a lot of people, especially in the library world, you groan when you hear the word advocacy. Advocating for your library isn't something you signed up for; they didn't teach you about it in library school; you just want to do your job (answer reference questions, create fun and engaging programs for children, shelve books, make booklists, etc.). However, in today's world, advocacy is your job. And you're already doing it, whether you realize it or not.

A. Advocacy? The definition, according to Merriam-Webster, is:

"the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal: the act or process of advocating something".

The Alliance for Justice describes advocacy as "any action that speaks in favor of, recommends, argues for a cause, supports or defends, or pleads on behalf of others."

We know that each one of you speaks in favor of and recommend your library every day, to anyone who will listen. You will also argue for, support, and defend your library if the need arises.

B. Why do we advocate?

1) Because it's necessary to keep your library, its services, its importance to your community, at the forefront of the decisionmakers in your community. If we don't tell them, no one else will

C. How do we advocate successfully and efficiently?

Know your stakeholders so you can communicate effectively with them

1) Learn who they are – state and local elected officials who can directly affect your library

2) Learn what they want, what's important to them: issues, personal interests, What does your library have that the stakeholders need and will benefit from?

3) Sign up for their newsletters, emails, etc. so that you can track their messaging, know what they're focusing on.

4) Be present, as much as the current circumstances will allow.

This is for everyone, not just the director. Often, stakeholders will be more open to trustees, neighbors, church members, fellow Kiwanians or Rotarians, parents, and more.

D. What do we say?

Tell your Story

- 1) When you know their interests, issues, concerns, you can respond with the resources that will help

E. What Do You Do When your Stakeholder's Agenda Doesn't Align

- 1) Try to find someone who can bridge that gap
- 2) Don't give up.

Successful advocacy will rely on:

Relationships

Good will

Connections

Persistence

What are we preparing for in the next legislative session?

Q&A