

Annual Event 2025/2026 Report

Event was held on the evening of April 25, 2026 at the Phillips Event Center in Bryan, TX.

This was our first attempt in moving the Annual Meeting to an evening event instead of a luncheon. For a first time endeavor it went well and was very well received – especially from attendees who have continued to voice their awe and excitement of the speaker's presentation. We have also continued to receive kudos for taking the event "to the next level". Although I am sure we would all have liked to have made more than we did, Friends made \$3,753.34 on the Annual Meeting and Event. Much of this was due to the tremendous success of the Silent Auction chaired by Janet Davis. Thank you to ALL of the volunteers for making the event a success and an enjoyable experience. Hopefully it will build from here.

Former President Linda Hartman and Annual Meeting Chairperson Virginia Shanks convened the following week to review the event, logistics, learnings and recommendations going forward. Here is what was discussed:

1. For an evening event, we should have realized there would be an increase in expense and time needed to plan and execute.
2. If Friends wants to keep this format, the Annual Meeting Committee needs to have more volunteers with DEDICATED responsibilities i.e. Marketing and Invitations Chair, Underwriters and Sponsors Chair, Speaker Liaison, Tickets Sales Chair, Auction Chair, and Ops and Logistics (likely can be a shared responsibility of the AM Chair and the current Friends President). Not all of these will require the same amount of time so a single person could own one of these and also be a member of another, less time consuming, committee. The Committee relied too heavily on last minute volunteers to try to get everything accomplished.
3. Expenses for venues, food, photography, etc. are more expensive in the evenings (i.e. our usual photographer had a wedding on the evening of our event and others charged more for evening events).
4. Although we get a "cut" of sales when using Texas A&M Press, it was easier and very efficient to use a local bookstore i.e. we were not responsible for check out, inventory, and/or collecting and returning any unpurchased books. There was no "out lay" of money prior that we then needed to recoup. This will obviously depend on authors/speakers.
5. When you have a series author, we should have enough inventory for purchasers to buy the entire series. We misjudged the interest in all of the speaker's books and ordered

her first book of the series, and her most recent publication. The other books sold out quickly.

6. Venue and Speaker MUST be identified ASAP. Evening venues are a lot less available than day venues and book up quicker. We were very lucky to get the Phillips Center for our required date and time. We cannot count on that in the future.
7. Marketing should be started months ahead of the event and Board Members should be promoting the event throughout the year. The website needs to be ready to go as soon as date, venue, speaker and price has been set. Physical invitations are still very useful and trying to make all marketing and information “online” excludes a large portion of our potential donors.
8. Having Board members collect and donate items for the Silent Auction worked very well as did the requirement of members to purchase their own ticket even if sitting at a sponsored table.
9. Pre-event for sponsors/underwriters should be revisited. It does not seem to be a draw for someone decide to sponsor a table or underwriting opportunity.
10. The best way to quickly grow this event is to have Board Members to spread the word and personally invite family and friends to attend. Community outreach (including posters at Bookstores, etc.) did not have much impact. Of course, it always helps to spread the word, but it does not necessarily translate into ticket sales.



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