



Starting in Fall 2005 as “the occasional coffeehouse”, the Diné College Libraries occasionally reopened after hours on Fridays for a potluck and open mic session. We quickly discovered that we were filling a strong need for a venue for aspiring poets, songwriters and academics, as well as accomplished members of our community, to share their talents and creativity. Since then, it has evolved into *Friday Nights @ the Library*: a semimonthly, grant-funded, traveling series that has raised the libraries’ profile among all our constituents, including college administrators, who recognize its potential as a valuable recruitment tool.

*Friday Nights @ the Library* is a coffeehouse that brings together students, faculty, staff, and members of the wider community in a comfortable and casual gathering place at the library after hours, with coffee, tea, and a community potluck supper. The library setting creates a relaxed, intimate atmosphere that is welcoming for performers and stimulating for audiences. It also offers our patrons a chance to interact with our librarians in a friendly and social environment, helping them to overcome “library anxiety.”

We found that the community potluck supper that begins every coffeehouse evening promotes mingling and conversation, and the readings and music are great conversation starters. Many people have become regulars, and new friendships and even artistic collaborations have grown out of the series. Local artists discovered the coffeehouse to be a supportive environment for trying out new work, and the regularly scheduled events goad them to continue creating. The libraries benefit by taking on a more participatory role in the production of knowledge, while at the same time forming relationships with our community’s next generation of leaders, thinkers, and performers.

In May 2006, we were awarded an IMLS-funded LSTA grant through the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, in the Community Focal Point category. During the 2006-07 academic year, *Friday Nights @ the Library* is traveling to the College’s community centers in Window Rock, Ganado, Kayenta, and Tuba City. As our library reaches far beyond its walls, we are gaining new opportunities to promote our library and its services – and to support lifelong learning – in every community we serve.