



Report to the Board of Trustees

February 5, 2024

From the Director

Branford Counseling & Community Services reached out with an idea for a partnership opportunity, which we were able to finalize and put in place in January. We will now host office hours at the Blackstone for 1-2 BCCS staff members, who are available for drop-in consultations. The idea is to offer confidential social services support out in the field where people who need those services may be. Office hours will be held at the Blackstone each Thursday, from 1-2:30 PM.

We continue to host John Marquis, East Shore District Health Department's Harm Reduction Navigator, on Wednesdays from 2-4 PM. We are so grateful to our community service partners for making this level of support happen. Branford truly cares about its community!

Another partnership is progressing, as well. We are hosting the Branford Schools Book Club discussion of *The Anxious Generation* on February 13 in the library's auditorium. Copies of the book are available through the school board; the library's copies are all checked out, but you can still place a hold on the next available. You can still attend the discussion even if you haven't read the book. Come learn about how to support the teens and adolescents in your lives.

A big thank you to Kathy for her hard work preparing the FY2026



Case manager Jeff Kikosicki and clinician Michelle Cubanski, LCSW.

budget draft. By starting with known expenses then looking at last year's actuals and the first 6 months of this year, and incorporating the Development Committee's budget, Kathy creates a reasonable forecast of income and expenses that will serve the library by being fiscally responsible while supporting strategic plan goals, and we work together to tweak it and finalize it for review and approval.

Thank you to John Hoeffler and Michelle Blank for their time this month as we prepare the bid invitation for the balcony enclosure project. And thank you to the Building & Grounds Committee for coming out for a building walkthrough, looking at the various repair and maintenance projects we will prioritize and plan for.

We have received our very first hole sponsor for mini golf! Thank you to the Branford

Community Foundation & Guilford Savings Bank for awarding us a hole sponsorship at the \$500 level. Rhea has begun contacting past sponsors to invite them to return this year.

The fall appeal was another success, raising over \$54,000! Thank you to the trustees who helped support this effort by writing notes and making contributions. Thank you to Rhea for jumping in and helping process gifts and acknowledge donors in a timely manner. Looking ahead, we plan to participate in Library Giving Day, send out a small spring appeal campaign, and host Mini Golf in April, join the Great Give in May, and host the Shred-a-Thon in June. We hope to have a Leadership Circle Donor Reception some time in the spring as well. It will be a busy spring!

— Katy McNicol



The library's new podcast dropped its first 2 episodes this month. Thanks to Rich Pfeifer who proposed, edited, and produced the podcast. Stay tuned for more episodes!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December

December flew by in Youth Services! This month I was excited to visit Walsh Intermediate School to do presentations for the 5th graders about the resources available at the library and some of our upcoming programs. We passed out library card applications to students and shared information about some of the volunteer opportunities available for middle school students at the library. We love our partnerships with Branford schools and are always excited for the opportunity to visit and share about the library!

Speaking of volunteers, we hosted another one of our quarterly teen volunteer orientations this month to train students to shelve books in the Youth Services department. After receiving this training, teens in grades 7 and up can volunteer for up to two hours a week on their own schedule. These volunteers are a huge help to our department, and they appreciate the opportunity to get service hours for school.

We had a special Homeschool Meetup this month with the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center. The theme of the program was Owl Prowl, and participants got to meet Timmy, a barred owl, up close and learn about the amazing adaptations that make owls so special, including the unique features of their eyes, ears, talons, feathers, and necks! They also learned about the different types of owls that live in Connecticut and the sounds they make. Afterwards, families got to dissect an owl pellet



Happy Noon Year's Eve!

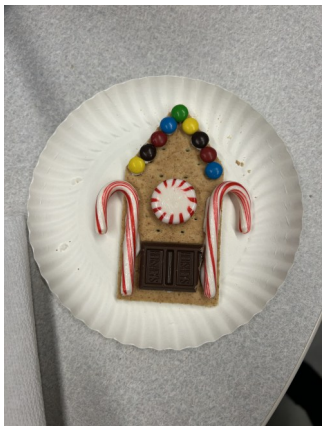
and sort and identify the bones they found. Participants discovered rodent, shrew, mole, and bird bones in the pellets, which helped them learn more about what these birds of prey eat.

We embraced winter with a few programs celebrating the season. Nicolette hosted a graham cracker decoration event. Kids created their own edible homes using graham crackers, icing, and lots of candy while enjoying a cup of hot chocolate. For teens we had a special spa program that was inspired by winter scents. Participants got to make their own peppermint lip balm and a hot cocoa scented sugar scrub using simple ingredients like beeswax, cocoa powder, sugar, and almond and coconut oil. We had a few special storytimes this month. Nicolette and Laura revived a Blackstone tradition: the annual Happy Noon Year storytime! Families got to count down to noon on New Year's Eve and experience an exciting balloon drop when the clock struck

12! Music Together also came to visit one of our weekly storytimes for a Singalong event. Participants had lots of fun singing, dancing, and playing instruments.

For older kids we had a few other fun programs in December. The Coder School, which is opening a location in Branford this spring, came to offer a Minecraft coding lesson over winter break. Using a special education version of Minecraft that had coding challenges throughout the game, participants learned the basics of computer programming. Nicolette also continues to have Lego Club once a month as a way for kids to relax and get creative after school, and on the first day of winter break, we showed Inside Out 2 to families with lots of snacks. With the cold weather, the library is a great place to play, explore, and warm up. We hope to see you soon!

— Emily Yates



Kids created edible graham cracker homes to celebrate the season.



Timmy, a barred owl, paid a visit to the homeschool group.

Highlights from the Reference Department—December

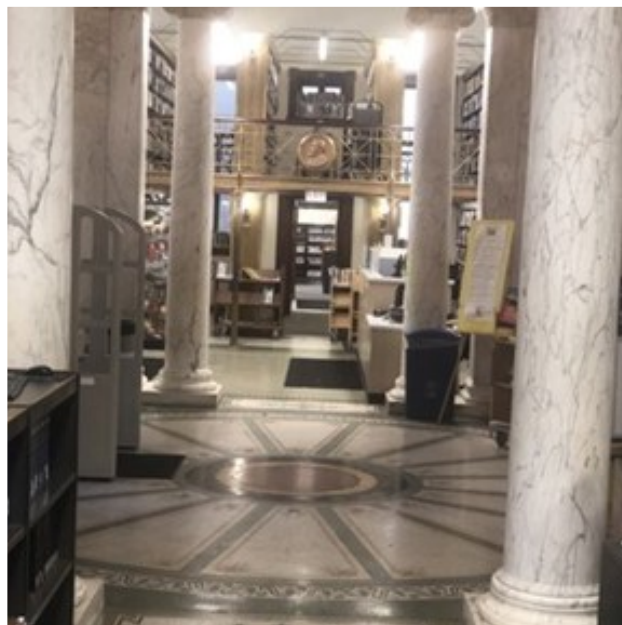
We recently received an email from the archivist at the Chicago Public Library. She sent us a copy of a letter that library pages at Blackstone Library had written to the library pages at the Blackstone Branch of the Chicago Public Library. The Blackstone Branch was the first branch of the Chicago Public Library, opened in 1904, with funding from Isabel Norton Blackstone in honor of her husband, Timothy Beach Blackstone. Timothy Blackstone is the man who funded the construction of our Blackstone Library; our sister branch was built by the same architect,

Solon Spencer Beman, and the same painter, Oliver Dennett Grover. You can see the similarities in the photographs below.

Unfortunately, the letter from the pages was undated, but we were able to estimate that it was written in 1970 or 1971 (we found the authors in the Branford High School yearbooks). Here is an excerpt from the letter - "There are four of us working here, all boys, all 16. (Sounds exciting - huh?!) Actually, working here is pretty dull, but we find things to keep us busy! We are curious to know what you pages do for excitement.

(And don't say shelf-reading!) How many poor kids slave in your dungeon? How much do you make? We live on bread crumbs & water! Only kidding - we make \$1.85 an hour. Actually, that's a real switch from what we used to make - we started at \$.65 an hour! (Guess we were nuts to go for that kind of money!)"

— Deborah Trofatter





James Blackstone Memorial Library
758 Main Street
Branford, CT 06405

203.488.1441 | blackstonelibrary.org
reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
instagram.com/blackstone_library

Join our email list for more information about programs
www.blackstonelibrary.org

MUSEUM PASSES AT THE BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

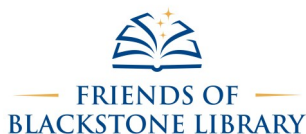


Looking for a fun outing for the whole family? Check out our museum pass collection! Passes offering free or discounted admission to museums all across the state (and beyond!).

Reserve passes online and get many passes sent directly to your smartphone or print from home.

More info: blackstonelibrary.org/museum-passes

Passes have been generously provided by the Friends of the Blackstone Library and the Allan Louis Loeb Foundation.



February 2025 Program Highlights

Academy Award Sundays Sundays, February 2, February 9, February 23 @ 1:30 - 3:30pm

Join us for a series of former Oscar-nominated films you may have missed, leading up to this year's award show! Check the events calendar online for movie titles.

The Golden Age of Hollywood Monday, February 3 @ 6-7 pm

Fashion on the silver screen during the '30s, '40s, '50s was not only glamorous and influential, but also was enjoyed as an "escape" from the problems of each decade. Join fashion historian Ren Antonowicz on a journey through these fascinating decades and enjoy a glimpse into the glamour of that golden age. Registration required. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Social Security Strategies & Your Retirement Future Thursday, February 6 @ 6-7 pm

Join USA Financial & Tax Services LLC for an educational workshop on Social Security filing strategies and retirement planning. Registration required.

New England UFOs Tuesday, February 11 @ 6-7 pm

Ronny LeBlanc, of the Travel Channel's hit series Expedition Bigfoot and Paranormal Caught on Camera, will discuss the history of UFOs in New England. Registration required. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library. Musical Art Society Presents: Josu de Solaun Thursday, February 13 @ 3-4:30 pm Join us for a musical afternoon presented by the Musical Arts Society, featuring Spanish

pianist Josu de Solaun. Funded by the DARO Foundation. Registration required.

Branford Schools Book Club: The Anxious Generation Thursday, February 13 @ 6:30-8 pm

Join us to talk about ideas covered in Jonathan Haidt's book, The Anxious Generation. Copies of the book are available through the school board or at either Branford library.

Musical Arts Society Presents: Antonio Galera Saturday, February 22 @ 1:30-3 pm

Join us for a musical afternoon presented by the Musical Arts Society, featuring pianist Antonio Galera, who will be performing Hispanic classical music. Funded by the DARO Foundation. Registration required.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

December 2024 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,735
December 2023: 6,827

borrowIT: 1,833
December 2023: 1,752

Renewals: 4,600

Computer Sessions: 764
WIFI Logins: 2,908
Website visits: 7,161

Facebook: 2,855 followers
Instagram: 1,440 followers
MailChimp: 8,693 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:
Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,290
Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 1,175
Overdrive/Libby magazines: 799
Palace App: 33
HOOPLA: 1,031
Kanopy: 407
Transparent Languages: 10
Ancestry Library: 14
New Haven Register: 158
Branford History Scrapbooks: NA
Creative Bug: 60

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 123
Children's Programs
27 programs/713 attendance
Teen Programs (12+)
8 programs/212 attendance
Adult/All Ages programs
35 programs/419 attendance
Average Daily Visitors: 372
Days open: 29