



James Blackstone Memorial Library 2021—2022

The Blackstone received the final payment from the State Library to close out our \$1M construction grant and turned that payment over to the Town of Branford. We are in the process of closing out the State Historical Preservation Office grant, which will officially conclude the renovation project.

The library announced its new Heather Nolin Creative in Residence program, which aims to provide the community with intensive creative experiences. The program is funded through a generous gift and is currently in development.

In September 2021, we resumed in-person events inside the library. We continued to offer some events via Zoom, as well. We learned from the community that many people enjoy the convenience that streaming and recorded programs offer. In addition, attendance at in-person programs grew throughout the year, with some of the living history performances and concerts enjoying audiences of 60 or more people at each event.

The strategic planning team held community conversations through October. Data and insights from those conversations were then compiled and analyzed to identify eight strategic initiatives that address the community’s deep needs. The team developed and evaluated programs and services, and identified infrastructure requirements needed to support those initiatives. A Strategic Framework will be presented to the Board of Trustees in the fall

for approval. After that, the library will set a priority plan for implementing the Framework for the coming years.

“I love our library and take a lot of pride in it.”
—*Summer Survey Response*

Blackstone Library received a very generous bequest from the estate of Linda J. De Laurentis. The gift will be used for a variety of projects the

library has planned. A portion was also approved by the Board of Trustees to be added to the endowment, helping to strengthen the library’s financial resources for the future. We are deeply grateful to Linda for including the library in her estate planning, and appreciate everyone who considers the Blackstone when making charitable contributions.

In the spring, the Board of Trustees Development Committee hosted its third Mini Golf fundraiser, which featured two days of play for all ages. The adult portion of the event, Mini Golf: After Hours, sold out at almost 200 tickets. The event raised over \$15,000 and will support the library’s operating budget. The library also hosted two Shred-A-Thon events, with proceeds totaling over \$3,000 for library operations. The library’s annual appeal again exceeded its goal, earning over \$57,000 for library operations.

The library opened its upstairs Rotunda Gallery to artists, with a different artist featured each month. The library hosted 3 artists over the summer, and a call for artists is ongoing. Displaying artists are encouraged to host an informational program during the month, discussing their work processes, inspiration, and techniques.

The Blackstone Library’s 125th Anniversary celebration took place in June 2022. At the day-long event, an estimated 300 people came out to enjoy a storyteller and lawn games (both sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library), speeches, a time capsule-sealing ceremony, refreshments, and music. Over and over, we heard how people enjoyed the opportunity to gather together on the library’s lawn.

In June, Director Karen Jensen retired after 9 years of service at the Blackstone Library. In her time at the library, she oversaw a major building renovation, the launch of a new program for teens, the implementation of a formal development program, the building and strengthening of relationships with community organizations, the management of the library through COVID, and

“Thank you for doing so much for the kids! The library has always been a positive, welcoming place for myself and my young children.”

—*Summer Survey Response*

“Your library is a great place for me, I enjoy coming there every week. It makes me feel comfortable and welcomed.”

—Summer Survey Response

work on the library’s new strategic framework, including an internal alignment and community deep needs assessments.

After a nationwide search for a new director, I was selected for the position. I have been with the Blackstone Library for

over 12 years, most recently as Associate Librarian for Development & Outreach. I am excited to continue on in this new capacity, working with staff, trustees, Friends members, and the community to ensure the library continues serving Branford, carrying on our legacy of engaging community, expanding minds, and enriching lives.

I look forward to inviting more of the community to rediscover the many treasures that the Blackstone has to offer—with books, magazines, movies, and music, in both physical and digital formats; plus access to special online resources for jobs, genealogy, language learning, and art classes; lawn

games; 3D printers; sewing machines; conference and meeting rooms; quiet spaces to study; classes and programs for all ages; a dedicated teen and children’s space, and new terrace to enjoy, there truly is something for everyone.

Statistics

Registered Cardholders	9,906
Material Circulated (Physical/Online)	147,823
Reference Questions	6,286
Children’s & Teen Program Attendance	3,831
Adult Program Attendance	4,880

Library Materials

Books, CDs, Audiobooks, DVDs	62,018
Newspapers/Periodical Subscriptions*	61
Overdrive Digital collection**	69,054
Total Collection	131,133

**Does not include Overdrive magazines/periodicals
**Does not include access to over 1.2 million HOOPLA titles*



Katy McNicol, Library Director

Library Staff

- Katy McNicol, Library Director
- Carly Lemire, Associate Librarian, Youth Services
- Kathy Oxsalida, Business Manager
- Deirdre Santora, Associate Librarian, Access Services
- Deborah Trofatter, Associate Librarian, Technology & Reference Services
- Jenna Anthony, Reference Librarian & Programming Coordinator
- Barbara Barrett, Access Services
- Erin Byrne, Access Services
- Carol Capezzone, Youth Services
- Brendan Galvin, Reference Assistant
- Sara Guglietti, Access Services
- Moira Healey, Access Services
- Christina Kondziela, Reference Librarian
- Mary Lockery, Youth Services
- Sarah Mallory, Teen Services
- Angela Meikle, Access Services
- Jared Torello, Access Services
- Frank Zdunek, Maintenance

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- Jeff Vailette, *ex. Officio*
- Yale University Librarian, *ex. Officio*

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