



Report to the Board of Trustees

May 1, 2024

From the Director

April was a whirlwind month. I attended the Public Library Association (PLA) Conference in Columbus, OH. There were 7,500 library workers from all over the US and Canada in attendance. I attended some really interesting and inspirational programs, and met a lot of librarians from all over. Thank you to the Friends for sponsoring my attendance at this national conference.

It was also National Library Week April 7-13, and we held different events all week to showcase the different ways libraries support their communities. Dr. Judith K. Liebmann, Branford Poet Laureate, did a wonderful reading of her new book, *Ekphrasis*. The Reference team held a day-long tech help session. And we closed out on Saturday with an open house to get hands-on with some of the Library of Things. I gave a Blackstone Library Tour, and people got to use the button-maker. We also had a gift to each service desk of a gorgeous flower bouquet from Flower Wonderland.

I attended a FLAG meeting at the Wilton Library, the CLC New Directors Roundtable via Zoom (and have signed on to become one of the roundtable co-chairs, to help plan meeting topics and lead discussions), and attended the LION Board meeting at the Meriden Library. Each time I visit a library, I try to take lots of pictures of things of interest and different areas, which I make available on our internal shared drive, so other staff have the



The CT Racial Profiling Prohibition Project forum on April 25 offered open, honest and respectful discussion between panelists and attendees.

chance to see what other libraries look like, if they haven't yet had the chance to visit. I encourage staff from different departments to get out when possible and see how other libraries do things – we'll either learn something new, or realize that we're doing it right for our library!

We had 3 big outreach events this month. Nicolette attended the YMCA Health Kids Day, Emily attended the early childhood fair and family fun day in celebration of Week of the Young Child at the Community House, and Jenna and I staffed a booth at the Earth Day Fair at the Branford Green. It's always great to meet and greet the community where they are, and have the chance to share things about the library that people may not realize we offer, such as early literacy back-

pack kits, a seed library and Library of Things.

We hosted the Friends of Connecticut Libraries (FOCL) mini-conference. Our Friends of the Library have members who are on the board at FOCL, and wanted to gather a group of Friends from various libraries to discuss an issue that affects them, and to share ideas and learn from each other. About 30 people convened, and I had the chance to sit in and listen. This conference centered on membership, and how to increase and support members who join the Friends. It was a great discussion, and really showed me how dedicated Friends members can be, and how much they care about the libraries they support. We are so lucky to have such a strong and dedicated Friends group here in Branford!

— Katy McNicol



Photos from PLA conference. Top: Author Dr. Bettina Love spoke at the keynote session. Middle: Talking with the Palisades Park (NJ) Public Library director. Bottom: Message wall in the conference hall.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

We had a month full of learning, outreach, and fun this March! Our Super Science Saturday program used roller coasters to explore gravity, friction, and other physics concepts, with participants having the chance to learn about these forces first hand by creating their own marble roller coaster!

At our Homeschool Meetup group, we talked about the different elements that go into making a theatrical production, including the costumes, set, makeup, sound, and lighting. We then did physical and vocal warmups and played improv games to help the students flex their acting muscles. The meetup culminated with a humorous performance of Goldilocks and the Three Bears on the auditorium stage.

Kids enjoyed a local author visit showcasing a new children's book, Joan Joyce The Wonder Girl. The authors shared information about Joan Joyce, an athlete who was inducted into 21 halls of fame, did a read-aloud of their book, and sang a song based on the story.

Then the Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center visited for a presentation called Habitats are Homes, where participants learned about local habitats and why they are so important. Kids had the chance to meet some animals, including a turtle, frog, and snake, and then made seed bombs to help make their yard become a better habitat!



Attendees at the Taylor Swift Friendship Bracelet event show their creations.

Teens had two special programs this month. The first was a spa program where participants got to make their own lip balm and sugar scrub to take home. The second special program was a Taylor Swift friendship bracelet making event, complete with Taylor Swift music and trivia. At our Junior Teen Advisory Group this month, Stephanie and Jarred, who run the library's tiktok account, coached the tweens as they created content for the library's social media pages.

Murphy Elementary School's English Language Learner Family Literacy Night, Nicolette made library cards, shared information about our services, and helped kids design their own buttons to take home.

I attended several helpful professional development sessions this month. The first was an Every Child Ready to Read training with Kim Powe, the Children's and YA Consultant for the Connecticut State Library. During the training, we discussed several early

literacy skills to incorporate into our storytimes, and shared ideas for creating learning opportunities for both kids and parents. I also attended a training on Library Programming for Neurodiverse Youth, where we learned tips for creating welcoming, inclusive programming for all of our patrons. Finally, I attended the maker roundtable, which met this month at the Wallingford Public Library. We got a tour of the makerspace equipment that the library offers, and left with some ideas for the future.

If you haven't visited the Teen Room recently, stop by to take a look at our newly genrefied collection! After surveying the teens, we decided to organize the books by genre, then alphabetically by the author's last name, to make the collection easier to browse. Our new genre system is color coded and the catalog has been updated to make it easy to find books on the shelves. Stop by and let us know what you think!



Learning about physics by building a roller coaster.



JTAG filming videos for social media.

Highlights from the Reference Department—March

Along with our monthly book groups, writer’s, poetry and grief support groups, coloring, knitting, tech help, Trivia, and Saturday Cinema, we had a unique program titled Words from the Front, a play about the conflict in Ukraine, a foster family information session, a program on Medicare, a Land Trust lecture, a program on seed starting, a Celtic music celebration and a program by the Astronomical Society of New Haven. Kudos to Jenna for another month of great variety in programming!

Christina had another very busy month of tech help, with drop in sessions, individual appointments, a tech help session at the Senior Center and an added session at Harbor Chase. She hopes to continue providing tech

help at the various senior living communities in town.

Jordan joined Christina for the tech help sessions in the library and at the Senior Center and had several individual appointments. He continues to learn more about AI and researches information on book bans regularly, to share with the Banned Books Group. He’s working with the Poet Laureate to enhance our poetry collection and continues to purchase for our Library of Things collection. He completed a handout for the collection, so patrons can see what we currently own and learn about future intended purchases.

Stephanie and Jared visited the new Friends warehouse to film for some new TikTok reels; we

continue to receive very positive feedback.

Debby has been working on updating our index to the Historical Society photographs collection, which now numbers nearly 15,000 photographs. Jane Bouley, the Town Historian, recently added to the collection and our online index is now up to date. In addition, we have created a separate file of the entire scanned collection so that patrons who visit the library are able to request to view the photographs on a library laptop.

— Deborah Trofatter



Check Out our Seed Library
 Stop in anytime we're open and browse the current seed offerings of herbs, ornamentals, vegetables, and fruits.
 Scan the QR Code to learn more

JOIN US FOR 18 HOLES OF MINI GOLF AT BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

Mini Golf at Blackstone Library FUN FOR ALL AGES



Play downstairs, play upstairs, play everywhere!
Saturday, May 18, 10 am – 4 pm
Sunday, May 19, 1 – 3:30 pm
\$5 per person, golf clubs and balls provided



FRIENDS OF THE BLACKSTONE 2024 FALL TENT SALE
 Branford Town Green
Thursday, September 19 – Sunday, September 22
Friends members get in early!

MINI GOLF: After Hours



Saturday, May 18, 7 pm
Featuring
Tastings: whiskey • spirits • beer • wine
 hosted by Branford Wine & Liquor
Plus
mini golf • food • silent auction

\$30 per person
ADULTS-ONLY, AGES 21+

Use the QR code below to learn more about each event and purchase tickets!





James Blackstone Memorial Library
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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

May 2024 Program Highlights

The Art of the Odyssey: Classical Mythology in Stories & Art
Thursday, May 2 @ 6:30–7:30 pm
Professional storyteller Tom Lee shares tales from ancient classical myth, and depictions of them in art throughout the millennia. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Robert Jawitz Opening Reception
Saturday, May 4 @ 10:30 am–12 pm
Visit our top floor gallery to view Robert Jawitz’s photographs of Hammonasset State Park. No registration required.

Musical Art Society Presents: Woodwinds Orchestra Concert
Saturday, May 4 @ 2–3 pm
Flute Loops is an adult flute choir directed by Erin Vivero. Their repertoire is specifically arranged or composed for multiple flutes and includes classical pieces, contemporary compositions, arrangements of popular music and original works written specifically for the flute choir.

50 States of Mind: A Journey to Rediscover American Democracy
Monday, May 6 @ 6–7:30 pm
Is America as divided as it seems? Oxford University graduate student Ryan Bernsten took a 23,000-mile journey through all 50 states of his home country to answer that question. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Building a Lasting Legacy: Essential Estate & Tax Planning Strategies For Retirement
Tuesday, May 14 @ 6–7 pm
It can be easy to overlook, but an estate plan is essential for nearly every person, regardless of how much money you have. Michal Alimo of USA Financial & Tax Service will go over tax strategies

and concepts to help illustrate how you can potentially protect your hard-earned resources for the next generation.

Alzheimer’s Association Effective Communication Strategies
Wednesday, May 22 @ 6–7:30 pm
Join Alzheimer’s Association Volunteer Maria Tomasetti to explore how communication takes place when someone has Alzheimer’s or another type of progressive dementia, learn to decode the verbal and behavioral messages delivered by someone with dementia, and identify strategies to help you connect and communicate at each stage of the disease.

Friends of the Blackstone Library SPRING WAREHOUSE SALE – Saturday May 4

Join the Friends at their new warehouse for a Spring Book Sale!
20 Thompson Road, Branford
9 a.m.–2 p.m

You’ll find: adult & children’s fiction books and cookbooks.

Hardcover books are \$3, Trade and Paperbacks are \$2, Mass Market Paperbacks are \$0.50 and Children’s books start at \$0.50.

Stack up for summer reading!



FRIENDS OF
BLACKSTONE LIBRARY



Check our website for more programs and registration details!

March 2024 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 7,932
March 2023: 8,233

borrowIT: 1,674
March 2023: 1,765

Renewals: 4,929

Computer Sessions: 800
WIFI Logins: 3,653
Website visits: 7,985 sessions

Facebook: 2,707 followers
Instagram: 1,332 followers
MailChimp: 8,590 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,358
Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 1,001
Overdrive/Libby magazines: 730
Palace App: 32
HOOPLA: 1,162
Kanopy: 450
Pronunciator: 815
Ancestry Library: 145
New Haven Register: 323
Branford History Scrapbooks: 139
Creative Bug: 14

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 161

Children’s Programs
29 programs/780 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
6 programs/33 attendance

Adult programs
54 programs/717 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 338
Days open: 31