



Report to the Board of Trustees

October 9, 2024

From the Director

The highlight of each September is the Annual Book Sale on the Green, hosted by the Friends of the Blackstone Library. This event is a year-long affair, with books being donated, picked up, sorted, scanned, and organized on a daily basis, all leading up to the massive effort to bring everything to the green. The planning and organization that goes into the book sale each year is done by incredibly capable and dedicated volunteers. I was grateful to be The Sound's Person of the Week leading up to the book sale, allowing me to talk about how important the Friends are to the Blackstone and what our partnership brings to Branford. The book sale event is a huge community draw, with a palpable energy happening under the tent all weekend long. And the result? Sales of over \$74,000! Proceeds from the funds raised by the book sale will benefit the Blackstone Library in the form of a gift from the Friends. The Blackstone uses Friends gifts to greatly enhance the library offerings, providing for enrichment opportunities outside of the library's regular operating budget. We are so very lucky to have such a great group of Friends who truly enhance the library's offerings to Branford.

Thank you to Emily, Jordan, Debby, and Deirdre who compile statistics throughout the year that I use to complete the annual State Library Report, and thanks to Kathy for assistance with the financial reporting. All libraries in CT who receive any state funds must complete this report, shar-



Ann Freeman's arrangement inspired by the library book "The Perfect English Cottage."

ing foot traffic, program attendance, circulation stats, and more. This past fiscal year, our foot traffic and circulation continued to grow, bringing us almost to pre-pandemic levels. Our program attendance has skyrocketed, thanks to support from the Friends, and a dedicated effort by our programming staff to offer an incredible array of programming for all ages, plus a publicity machine that continues to grow.

We hosted a table at BACA's artisan festival the week prior to the book sale. This is a great way for us to share all of the ways we can support the arts, from a subscription to Creativebug (offering online art and crafting classes, free with your Branford library card) to lending sewing machines from our Library of Things. Jordan manned the table and had a great time talking with folks.

We had meetings with Stirling Brandworks to review progress on the website development, and saw the new design con-

cept. We gave feedback and are working to tweak the final design. We're so excited about the progress and can't wait to show off the new and improved website... coming soon!

Emily has been working with Traveling Toys, a Guilford non-profit, to create a new Toy Library for the Blackstone. With grants from Branford Community Foundation and Branford Rotary, we will be able to offer over 50 sets of toys plus games and more for teens, all for borrowing with your library card. Join us for an unveiling reception happening October 28!

At the end of September, we hosted the Garden Club's after hours event, Books & Blooms. This event featured floral arrangements created by local floral artists that were inspired by books! The over 30 arrangements filled the library all weekend long, and were so very creative. It was wonderful to see the inspiration and imagination so many in our community are able to share through flowers!

— Katy McNicol



Angela Meikle and Jordan Nolan worked with Keely Baisden-Knudsen and others from the Legacy Theater to partner with them for their annual fall film festival. We were able to offer screenings and programming outside of their regular hours.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

The end of summer flew by in the Youth Services department! We had so much fun enjoying the warm weather and hearing about everyone's summer adventures.

Our final summer learning event, sponsored by the Bradford Community Foundation, was a Learn How to Play Ukulele program with musician Julie Stepanek. She brought ukuleles for everyone to use and taught participants the basics, including how to hold a ukulele, how to pluck the strings, and some simple songs like Happy Birthday and Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.

This month our Homeschool Meetup was also all about music! We talked about how rhythm is a combination of short and long sounds, and visualized this by creating our own patterns using pom poms to symbolize short sounds and popsicle sticks for long sounds. We then practiced these rhythms with various percussion instruments, including tambourines, triangles, maracas, and egg shakers. Kids then got to create a percussion instrument of their own to take home using paper towel tubes and popcorn kernels.

There were plenty of other opportunities to learn and explore this summer! An educator from the Steward Outdoor School led a program called "A Close Look at Coneflowers." Children were asked to examine coneflowers closely with a magnifying glass and then use



Julie Stepanek teaches attendees how to play ukuleles.

what they observed to paint a detailed watercolor painting of the flower. We were so impressed by the beautiful creations the participants made! Laura also offered a second session of her Ready Set Kindergarten program this month, preparing our youngest patrons to succeed in school, and Nicolette hosted another bilingual storytime in Korean and English with teen volunteer, Audrey.

We celebrated the end of the summer season with a few more relaxing programs! Laura and Nicolette led a family bingo program with many enthusiastic participants and lots of books to give away as prizes. Our Read to a Therapy Dog program also continues to be a success! Children who are working on their reading skills get to practice with Colt the Bolt, a friendly dog who loves to hear stories. Teens also enjoyed a relaxing afternoon watching the 2024 Mean Girls film, and our take-and-make this month was a s'mores craft made out of cardboard, foam, and cotton balls to celebrate the season.

Nicolette and Laura had the opportunity to attend a professional development workshop for children's library staff at the Darien Library this month. Unlike a traditional conference where the topics are predetermined, at this event the participants got to vote on what topics they wanted to explore. Nicolette and Laura attended and helped facilitate sessions on storytimes, children's playspaces, programming, and outreach. The keynote speaker, Jessica Anne Bratt, talked about the importance of maintaining curiosity instead of judgment in library work.

Finally, our summer reading program wrapped up in August with a total of 77 kids and teens completing the program and entering into our drawing for prizes. Congrats to all of our winners, and good luck to all the families heading back to school!

— Emily Yates



Children's detailed watercolor paintings of cone-flowers.

Highlights from the Reference Department—August

We were really happy to welcome Stephanie to the department in a full-time position this month. We look forward to having her work with us on the new website, as well as a number of other upcoming projects and her ongoing work creating TikTok videos with Jared. Jordan has settled nicely into his new role as Programming Coordinator and has a full slate of programs planned for the fall.

Christina and I met with the program manager for Community Webs, our partnership with the Internet Archive where we crawl and save websites of local organizations on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis. The Community Webs program has expanded to provide free digital preservation storage of 500GB to each participant. Although used only for storage at this time, Archive-IT hopes to find ways to make the stored material available to the public. Christina and I will be discussing what materials we might store on the site.

We had another challenging local history question this month when a caregiver of a local senior asked if we had any school records. She was hoping to locate the name of a teacher at a local elementary school in the fifties, but only knew that he was known as “Mr. K.” While we don’t have a full list of teachers over the years, we do have access to online digital newspapers and while searching our collection, I came across a Mr. Kojabash. I had him as a teacher

in Junior High and he was called “Mr. K” by everyone. I was able to verify that Mr. Kojabash started out as an elementary school teacher and the patron confirmed

that’s who he was remembering. He was really happy to be reminded of his actual name!

— Deborah Trofatter

TICKETS ON SALE NOW



James Blackstone Memorial Library Presents:

AN EVENING WITH THE SPIRITS

SATURDAY • OCTOBER 19 • 7 PM
AT BLACKSTONE LIBRARY • 756 MAIN STREET, BRANFORD

Event ticket: \$45 per soul (ages 21+) includes:

- ☞ whiskey, beer, wine and other spirit tastings hosted by: *Coastal Wine and Spirits* ☞
- ☞ gallery readings by mediums: *Lisa O'Connor, Kate Howe and Michelle Pellin* ☞
- ☞ light refreshments sponsored by *Branford Building Supplies* ☞
- ☞ raffles and so much more! ☞

Ticket add on: \$10 (first come first serve and only 48 slots available)

- ☞ individual readings by a psychic medium: *Amanda Lambirt, Althea DePascale, Beth Riggott-Turnage, Grace — Psychic Boutique, James Luse and Stephanie Double* ☞

Purchase tickets at www.blackstonelibrary.org or scan QR code.

This event is a fundraiser and all proceeds benefit the programs and services offered at the Blackstone Library.







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

October 2024 Program Highlights

Paranormal Encounters with Joe Franke

Wednesday, October 2 @ 6–7 pm
Joe currently lectures throughout the New England region discussing past and current cases of real-life hauntings, poltergeist activity and demonic infestation. Through his many public appearances, Joe thoroughly enjoys educating the public on the serious dangers and misconceptions of the paranormal realm. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Fun with a Looping Cello by Randy Calistri-Yeh

Sunday, October 6 @ 2–3 pm
How can one cello play an entire quartet by itself? Randy will provide explanations, demonstrations, and great music using an acoustic cello and a microphone looping pedal to play duets (and more) with himself. The concert includes classical music, Broadway tunes, a passionate tango, and classic rock songs. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Art Workshop:

Leaf-Printed Cards
Monday, October 7 @ 5–6 pm
Denise Smith from Cheshire, Ct. is a lifelong, self-taught artist educator with a deep connection with the woodlands of New England. Join her for a nature-themed art class. Supplies provided. Sponsored by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

Blackstone Library Tours

Saturday, October 12 @ 10–11:30 am
Take a tour of the Blackstone, learn historical tidbits, and get an insider’s peek behind the scenes. Registration recommended, but drop-ins welcome.

An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe

Monday, October 21 @ 6–7 pm
The master of the macabre, Edgar Allan Poe, returns for an evening of mystery and horror. Learn the truth behind the life, death, and

legacy of this American legend. Enjoy your favorite stories and poems performed live by actor, Campbell Harmon. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Spooky Trivia

Thursday, October 24 @ 6–7:30 pm
Test your knowledge on Halloween history, horror movies, and more spooky topics at the Blackstone Library! There will be a 5 person limit per team, and prizes for first and second place teams. Costumes encouraged! Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Musical Arts Society Presents: Solo Violin Concert

Sunday, October 27 @ 2–3 pm
Join Grace Coolidge for a solo violin concert with piano accompaniment. Grace is a Branford native and was recently appointed Assistant Concertmaster for the Eastern CT Symphony in New London.

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.



Check our website for more programs and registration details!

August 2024 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 9,055

August 2023: 9,258

borrowIT: 2,338

August 2023: 1,841

Renewals: 5,708

Computer Sessions: 816

WIFI Logins: 2,725

Website visits: 8,608 sessions

Facebook: 2,789 followers

Instagram: 1,393 followers

MailChimp: 8,686 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,507

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 1,064

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 590

Palace App: 42

HOOPLA: 1,045

Kanopy: 289

Transparent Languages: 42

Ancestry Library: 268

New Haven Register: N/A

Branford History Scrapbooks: 126

Creative Bug: 35

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 107

Children’s Programs
19 programs/550 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
10 programs/117 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
33 programs/443 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 436
Days open: 27