



Report to the Board of Trustees

September 4, 2024

From the Director

We kicked off July with a repaired chiller screen and roof for the rear parking lot utility building. The roof has been leaking and the screen has been deteriorating for many years, and library trustees voted to carry out this repair and rehab project. The roof was repaired and the finished screen we placed in early July with a huge crane. The finished screen protects the library's HVAC system and the new paint job looks great!

We switched to a new language learning service, Transparent Languages. The Friends of the Library sponsor this service, and the switch means a lower cost for a more user-friendly interface, plus it comes with an app for easy language learning access.

We also switched to AtoZdatabases, which offers free residential and business phone and address searches. Create mailing lists, find friends and family, and conduct job searches. All free with your library card. This replaces a similar service but at a lower cost.

We also signed up for LibraryIQ, a behind-the-scenes service that gives us a lot of information about our collection of physical items, and will help simplify how we see usage stats, plus offers additional information about how the library is used and how diverse our collection is. We were able to get group pricing by joining in with ten other Lion libraries.

Jordan Nolan was promoted to Reference and Program Librarian.



Quiet on set! Filming during "Salvation is Within You!" at the Blackstone Library.

an. He'll take over planning adult programs, coordination of the events calendar, as well as continue with reference duties. Jordan is a fantastic librarian and we're looking forward to him bringing his programming ideas to life! Congratulations, Jordan.

Barbara Barrett, the Friends of the Library's President, also has congratulations coming her way. She was chosen for a 2024 Shoreline Chamber of Commerce Women of Excellence award for her work with the Friends AND a 2024 Shore Publishin Beacon Award!

Jordan and I met with local representatives from the League of Women Voters who are interested in strengthening our partnership to offer voter registration information and regular civics and local government-oriented programming.

The library was one of a few

local filming locations for indie filmmaker Luke Simboli's latest work, *Salvation is Within You!* He won a grant to make this film, set in the run-up to the infamous Sacco and Vanzetti Trial of the 1920's. It's a narrative historical thriller which follows two brothers down the path of political radicalism as the government tightens its grip on their Italian immigrant community. We can't wait to see the finished film which will be judged in the final stage of the Russo Brothers Italian American Filmmaker Forum.

In August, the library was awarded a State Library Construction Grant to create additional meeting space in the library, addressing needs that were identified in our recent Strategic Plan. Thank you to local legislators for their support and to the state and CT State Library for awarding this grant.

— Katy McNicol



The chiller screen frame was replaced in pieces and then the screens were added after. The finished screen looks great!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June/July

Summer is in full swing in the Youth Services department! We officially kicked off our Summer Learning program on June 15th. This summer, kids and teens received a summer reading gameboard with the opportunity to earn buttons or pins each week of summer by reading, attending a library program, or completing the weekly task on their gameboard. If they collect a button or pin every week of the challenge they will be entered into a drawing for an Ashley's Ice Cream or a Fired Up! gift card. We love to hear about what the kids are reading and to see them each week to collect their buttons.

To promote summer learning this year, Nicolette visited the summer reading assemblies at Branford's elementary schools, and I made a video about our summer programs to share with the middle and high schools. Laura and Nicolette also attended the Branford Festival on the green to do a special Storytime and to promote our summer learning program. We also connected with two other community partners. The Branford Parks and Recreation department brought their Little Explorers camp to the library for a storytime and craft, and one of Shoreline Adult Education's ESL classes came for a library tour and to view this summer's Storywalk, Sidewalk Flowers, on display on the library grounds.

Our Homeschool Meetup group in June was visited by children's book publisher Star-



The Homeschool Meetup group learned about the Art of Storytelling.

ry Forest Books. They presented an Art of Storytelling workshop, which taught participants all about the process of how a book gets published, from the writing to illustration to editing! In July, the Elm City Robo Squad visited our homeschoolers, teaching us all about the science of why things sink or float. After learning about objects' mass, volume, and density, participants designed tin foil boats to test their understanding of what they learned.

Our Science Saturday program in June was "Gross but So Cool" science. Claudia from Cool-ology taught participants about water absorbing polymers by testing how much water diapers can hold. They also learned about acids and bases by adding different substances to sticky cabbage juice and observing the color changes.

Laura reached our youngest patrons by hosting a Ready, Set, Kindergarten program for children starting school in the fall. A local kindergarten teacher joined her to do circle time and stations to help the

children learn what to expect when they go to school. Nicolette supplemented our regular storytime program by partnering with a teen patron, Audrey, to offer a bilingual storytime! This storytime featured songs and stories in Korean and English, and we are hoping to host bilingual storytimes in other languages in the fall.

We are revamping our teen volunteer program to help more teens get community service hours when they need them. We are planning to have new volunteer orientations quarterly, after which trained teens can volunteer on their own schedule in the Youth Services department. We had 22 teens go through the training this summer, and have been grateful for the help these teens provide shelving, cleaning, and organizing in our department. We look forward to enjoying the last few weeks of summer at the library!

— Emily Yates



Audrey and Nicolette hosted a bilingual storytime.



Science Saturday participants learn about water absorbing polymers during the Gross But So Cool program.

Highlights from the Reference Department—June

June marked the end of Jenna’s tenure with us. We were sad to see her go, but we are certain she will thrive in her new position in Woodbridge. Jordan has taken over the position of Programming and Reference Librarian and has begun planning the Fall programs schedule. Jenna left things in really great shape, with many notes and instructions, both printed and electronic. We look forward to seeing Jordan continue with a robust and diverse schedule of programs.

Our June programs included a Passport Fair, a class on how to use Hoopla, Kanopy, Palace and Libby, a Shredding Event, a talk on ticks presented by the East

Shore District Health Department and a Jazz Concert, in addition to our ongoing monthly programs and book groups.

Tech help continues to be very important to our patrons. Christina and Jordan are holding tech sessions, having individual appointments with patrons, planning classes for the summer and fall and learning more about creating training videos. As we prepare to transition to our new website, we are all discussing the best way to provide links, tip sheets and videos to assist our patrons with their technology needs.

— Deborah Trofatter



**FRIENDS OF THE
BLACKSTONE
2024 FALL TENT SALE**

Branford Town Green

**Thursday, September 19 –
Sunday, September 22**

*Friends members
get in early!*

Highlights from the Reference Department—July

We recently had a patron ask if we could locate a three-volume encyclopedia of bronzes for her. She owns two bronze statues that are pictured in this particular encyclopedia and she was hoping to get a copy of the relevant pages. We found the only copy in the state in Yale’s online catalog, but then discovered that the title was in fact missing. After searching WorldCat (an online catalog containing billions of records from libraries around the world), we found that the Boston Public Library owns the encyclopedia. We reached out to their reference department and



within a few hours, we received scans of the relevant pages by email. Our patron was very pleased and we were delighted with the prompt response from BPL.

We are grateful to our library partners who are closer to home as well. Yale has been very generous in opening up their collection to public libraries for interlibrary loan. We regularly

request titles from them that we would not otherwise be able to obtain for our patrons. Many of their resources are also available online; we recently had occasion to search the collection of digitized maps (upwards of 20,000) that the Beinecke Library has made available. We are trying to help a patron discover if there was a Native American name for a particular location in Branford. They have several maps from the 1700’s which list Native American tribes in the area. (That particular inquiry is ongoing.)

— Deborah Trofatter



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

September 2024 Program Highlights

Beyond ChatGPT: New Developments in Generative AI Wednesday, September 11 @ 6:30–7:30 pm

Connie Steel, PhD, a member of the Yale Poorvu Center’s Artificial Intelligence Working Group, will present an overview of the current wave of generative artificial intelligence applications from the point of view of supporting students and lifetime learners. Her talk introduces questions about data security and ethics to ask when choosing AI applications. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Legacy Theatre Independent Film Festival Monday, September 23 through Wednesday, September 26

Join us for film screenings, panels, and talks with the filmmakers, in collaboration with Legacy Theatre! All events held at the Blackstone Library will be free and open to the public.

Branford Garden Club Presents: Books & Blooms

Saturday, September 28 through Sunday, September 29
Branford Garden Club invites you to view creative floral designs inspired by books that will be showcased throughout the weekend at the Blackstone Library.

Intro to Pilates Saturdays, September 28 through October 26 @ 11am–12pm

In this introductory series of classes, you’ll learn the basics of Pilates from certified instructor Cindy Kondziela. Whether you’re new to fitness or just trying to mix up your existing fitness routine, this class has something for everyone. Please bring a yoga mat to class. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

The Witches: Play Reading Sunday, September 29 @ 1:30–3:30 pm

New England premiere reading of The Witches, the full length script from award-winning playwright Gina Russell Tracy. Witches finds 11 Witches (who identify with their signs in the Zodiac) struggling to find the young witch, who is a Scorpio and represents the Halloween Holiday and end of Summer. Audiences are encouraged to dress up to join the festivities and honor the young witches efforts for harmony and peace.

Evening of Guitar at the Blackstone Thursdays @ 6–7:30 pm September 26, October 31, November 21

Guitarist and Branford resident Neal Fitzpatrick will present a regular, monthly program of music for classical guitar. Each session will feature a different era, genre, or style.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

MUSEUM PASSES AT THE BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

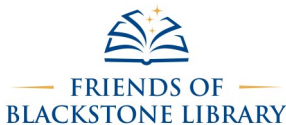


Looking for a fun outing for the whole family? Check out our museum pass collection! Passes offering free or discounted admission to museums all across the state (and beyond!).

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.



June/July 2024 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

June / July	June / July	June / July
Total Circulation: 12,325 / 15,438 <i>2023: 12,885 / 13,653</i>	Downloadable Circulation:	Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 139 / 130
borrowIT: 1,655 / 2,160 <i>2023: 1,779 / 1,595</i>	Libby ebooks: 1,340 / 1,452	Children’s Programs <i>June: 23 programs 1,075 attendance</i>
Renewals: 4,365 / 5,339	Libby audiobooks: 953 / 1,071	<i>July: 34 programs 930 attendance</i>
Public Computer Sessions: 673 / 864	Libby magazines: 650 / 632	Teen Programs (12+) <i>June: 5 programs 35 attendance</i>
WIFI Logins: 3,408 / 3,600	Palace App: 47 / 38	<i>July: 8 programs 54 attendance</i>
Website visits: 8,524 / 8,692	HOOPLA: 1,119 / 1,123	Adult/All Ages programs <i>June: 42 programs 981 attendance</i>
Facebook: 2,778 followers	Kanopy: 340 / 339	<i>July: 30 programs 448 attendance</i>
Instagram: 1,389 followers	Transparent Language: 53 / 30	
MailChimp: 8,653 subscribers	Ancestry Library: 898 / 189	
	New Haven Register: NA / NA	
	Branford History Scrapbooks: 129 / 104	
	Creative Bug: 27 / 2	
		Average Daily Visitors: 457 / 488
		Days open: 24 / 26