



Report to the Board of Trustees

May 7, 2025

From the Director

Scenes from the Gail & Alan Rosen Memorial Mini Golf @ Blackstone Library event:



In April, I presented the Blackstone's FY2026 budget request to the Branford RTM Education Committee. Thank you to Kathy and the trustees for coming out in support. The committee will vote on the budget at their May 5 meeting, and will then present it to the full RTM at the meeting on May 13.

Branford Poet Laureate Judith K. Liebmann hosted a Poetry Fair in celebration of National Poetry Month. This well-attended event was in the Reading Room and offered music from balladeers and poetry readings from local poets—plus cookies!

We had a wonderful lineup of concerts this month, with music from pianist Pablo Martínez, funded by the DARO Foundation, a cappella from the DOOX of Yale, funded by the Friends of the Library, and music of the 1920's from the Modernistics Trio, funded by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund. Each concert was very well-attended and very well-received.

After 22 years of dedicated service, Kathy has announced her retirement in June. We are so grateful for all of her contributions to the Blackstone over the years; the library finances have been managed by her steady, capable hands, and we will miss Kathy greatly. We wish her all the best!

The Gail & Alan Rosen Memorial Mini Golf @ Blackstone was another



The Connecticut Library Association Conference was held April 26 & 27 at the Mystic Marriott Hotel. Sessions covered a wide range of topics from storytimes with props to AI in the library. Thanks to the Friends for sponsoring our attendance!

er huge success! The event saw over 700 players come out over the course of the weekend and raised \$19,700 for the library! This was Rhea's first fundraising event and she did a fantastic job jumping in and pulling it all together! Thank you to Amy Rosen for being title sponsor, to the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven for being silver sponsor, and all of the hole sponsors who decorated the holes in such amazing ways. This event would not be such a success without your support. Thank you to the volunteers who made the event possible—from setup to breakdown, we could not make this event run without you! And thank you to everyone who came out to play. We love hearing all of your cheering when you get a hole in one and seeing all of the happy faces coming through. Look for this event again next April!

Thanks to support from the Friends of the Library, we were

able to send 10 staff members to the Connecticut Library Association (CLA) Conference this year. An additional staff member, Stephanie, won a prize drawing last year and was able to attend this year for free! The conference spans two days, and staff attended on different days. This is a great chance to learn from and catch up with our colleagues across the state. Jordan, alongside Kacie Meixell, who works at the Hamden Library and has interned with us in the past, presented a session on creating viral social media campaigns. The videos they've posted to the library's social media accounts from the event are so fun! Great job, Jordan!

Just a note that digital audiobook checkouts through Libby in March surpassed ebook checkouts for the first time ever. With the decline of CD players being readily accessible, more people are looking to borrow audiobooks digitally. We anticipate this trend will only continue.

— Katy McNicol

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

We did lots of learning in the Youth Services department this March! Our Science Saturday program was all about flight. Participants learned about the forces involved in flight, including gravity, lift, and drag. They demonstrated lift using a ping pong ball and cups and practiced flight with special paper planes. Participants finished up the program by making mini rockets with straws!



Beautiful and tasty edible terrariums made by teens.

In addition to our regular storytimes this month, we hosted a Baby Sign Language program with More to Say, a pediatric development and therapy office. In this weekly program, their practitioners taught participants six new baby signs each week, incorporating them into songs, a read-aloud, and pretend play. Music Together also visited to offer a class based on their program for kids and families. Participants sang songs, used shakers, and waved scarves during this fun musical event.

An educator from the Steward Outdoor Day School came to teach a lesson which blended science, nature, and art. Participants learned all about birds and how their features, like their beaks, feet, and feathers, tell us about their lives. One example of these adaptations is how the shape of the birds' beaks change depending on their diet. Kids learned about the yellow finch and why its color shifts from brown to yellow as winter changes to spring and then drew their own pictures of a yellow finch.



A child draws a yellow finch after learning why its color shifts with the seasons.



Science Saturday attendees learning about flight and the scientists who discovered the forces involved.

For our Homeschool Meetup this month we focused on clouds. We learned about what clouds are made of, how they form, and some of the most common types of clouds. We then made a cloud chart using cotton balls to represent the different shapes and features of cloud formations. We finished the program with an experiment inside a jar using ice and hot water to demonstrate how clouds form! Our Take-and-Makes this month were also inspired by the natural world. Our Teen Advisory Group helped us put together kits that included soil, clay, and seeds, along with instructions on how to create seed bombs to plant at home.

Teens had opportunities both to give back to the community and to relax and have fun this month. We hosted one of our quarterly Teen Volunteer Orientations, and trained ten new volunteers to shelve books and help with projects in the Youth Services department. We also hosted an edible terrarium program where we made beautiful and deli-

cious creations. Using pudding, crushed graham crackers, icing and chocolate rocks and mushrooms, we made some unique and tasty scenes.

Nicolette and I both attended outreach events this month! First, we participated in Read Across America Day hosted by the United Way of Greater New Haven. This program brings guest readers into local elementary schools, and donates new books to the classrooms. We enjoyed reading to the students and answering their questions about what it is like working in a library. Nicolette also attended Literacy Night at Sliney Elementary School. This event for families was dedicated to literacy and math, and included a photo-booth station, temporary tattoos, math equations, books, and of course, the Blackstone Library button maker! We can't wait to see you for more fun and learning this spring!

— Emily Yates

Highlights from the Reference Department—March

Jordan has been working to establish new collaborations with local organizations and strengthen existing ones. He met with an associate professor at the Yale School of Music to discuss establishing a recurring series with Yale music students. He met with the Elm Shakespeare Company to discuss a potential partnership/series. And he continues to work with BCTV to publicize what they can offer Branford residents.

Stephanie participated in the annual Read Across America event and read at John B. Sliney Elementary School to a 1st grade classroom. She read the book *The World Needs Who You Were Made to Be* by Joanna Gaines, followed by an engaging discussion about the pictures and what was happening in the

book. Stephanie asked the students if they had been to Blackstone Library and most had. One student said that his sister told him that there are "secret stairs" to get to the teen room. Stephanie explained that there are "secret stairs" and that sometimes when a child visits the library for the first time and wants to know how to get to the Children's Area, she asks them if they want to go the regular way or if they want to use the "secret staircase".

She explained that that staircase is "secret" because when you look at the book stacks, you see stairs going up to where adults can work quietly and study, but if you walk to the side of them, there is actually a staircase that goes down to the teen room. She encouraged the kids to visit and two days later a little girl found Stephanie at the

Youth Services desk and when asked if she was in the class that day she said "Yes" and "My mom and I found the secret staircase"! A colleague later told Stephanie that the little girl ran into the stacks and then ran back out to her mom exclaiming "I found them! I found the secret staircase!" before heading downstairs. We love to see our youngest patrons get excited about visiting the library.

— Deborah Trofatter



Stephanie and State Representative Robin Comey participated in Read Across America Day.



Local author Tony Ferraiolo chats about his work during a Fireside Chat. Jordan has brought this program back as a way for the community to get to know local authors in a cozy, relaxed setting.



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

"I just wanted to say thank you to the staff and volunteers for the mini-golf program this weekend. We brought our two young nephews and we all had a blast. So much effort and ingenuity went into designing those holes! Yet another reason to be delighted that we live in a town with such an extraordinary library.

Thank you to your whole team!"

—Email from Michelle D.

May 2025 Program Highlights

Ask a Medicare Specialist Saturday, May 17

@ 9 am–5 pm

Drop-in event. Have all of your Medicare questions answered by Medicare expert, Theresa Borchetta. She will be available throughout the day to help people learn how to navigate the Medicare system.

Branford Land Trust presents "Circular Economy"

Monday, May 12

@ 6:30 pm–7:45 pm

Tess Lee talks about the Circular Economy, plus BLT hosts their annual meeting.

Tech Help Tuesdays

Tuesdays @ 11 am–12 pm

May 13 & 27

Confused about your new iPhone or iPad? Need help formatting a Word document? Drop in to the library between 11 am & 12 pm to get a tech question answered. First come,

first served. Sessions will be limited to 15 minutes per person. No registration required.

Third Thursday Movie Matinee Thursdays @ 10 am–12 pm

A monthly film screening and discussion group dedicated to discovering and rediscovering the oldies but goodies of classic Hollywood.

May 15: Leave Her to Heaven (1945)

Library of Things Petting Zoo Saturday, May 17

@ 10 am–1 pm

Drop by and try out our collection of games and other Library of Things items for borrowing! **Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.**

Musical Arts Society Presents: Carl Cranmer

Saturday, May 17 @ 3–4 pm

Join us for a musical afternoon

presented by the Musical Arts Society, featuring pianist Carl Cranmer, who will be playing pieces from Scarlatti, Chopin, and Borodin.

Smartphone Photography Workshop

Saturday, May 24 @ 1–4 pm

Learn how to take high-quality photos using your smartphone with professional photographer Peter Glass! Please bring your own device for this workshop. Registration required as space is limited. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Saturday Cinema

Saturdays @ 2–4 pm

Join us for Saturday Cinema and see a highly-rated movie on our big screen in the auditorium. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

March 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Physical Items Circulation: 7,960

March 2024: 7,932

borrowIT: 1,907

March 2024: 1,674

Renewals: 4,918

Computer Sessions: 831

WIFI Logins: 3,300

Website visits: 7,314

Facebook: 2,895 followers

Instagram: 1,505 followers

MailChimp: 8,551 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,375

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 1,390

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 884

Palace App: 37

HOOPLA: 1,208

Kanopy: 337

Transparent Languages: 45

Ancestry Library: 172

New Haven Register: 176

Branford History Scrapbooks: 44

Creative Bug: 132

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 136

Children's Programs
38 programs/742 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
9 programs/125 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
46 programs/611 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 395
Days open: 31