



Report to the Board of Trustees

June 7, 2025

From the Director

For the month of May, we were the chosen organization for the Big Y Community Bag partner program. Every time someone purchased a special bag from Big Y in May, we received a small portion of the purchase amount. We appreciate Big Y for including us in this program.

I joined the Branford Lions Club at their monthly May meeting as their guest speaker. I spoke about the history of the Blackstone Library and how we're continuing its legacy into the future. It was great to share some stories about the library with such a community-oriented organization.

Rhea coordinated the library's participation in The Great Give. This annual online giving event offers local organizations opportunities to connect with supporters. We raised about \$2,500 during The Great Give. We appreciate the support of our community!

The library lawn played host to the annual plant sale for the Branford Garden Club and Branford Community Gardens. This was the first instance of a local organization making use of our new Lawn Use Policy, which allows nonprofits to hold events on our grounds. In a note from the Garden Club, they stated that "the location proved to be perfect for us. We had another record year!" Perhaps they'll be back again next year!



Jenny and I staffed a library table at the Annual Plant Sale. Jenny is showing an attendee the seed library offerings. We also had nature- and botanical-related kits on display from the Library of Things.

I attended the NELLIS II Leadership Training in Stowe, VT. It was a 4-day intensive workshop with over 20 library leaders from around New England (including 4 others from CT). It was an informative training session, and I got to know some great library people.

We hosted a toiletries drive supporting the Community Dining Room's monthly Freeshop. We heard from the coordinator that about 40-50 people came through to 'shop' for needed supplies. They have other financial concerns, so any necessities they do not have to spend money helps immensely. We'll do another toiletries drive in early fall.

We then partnered with the Friends of the Blackstone Li-

brary to host a food drive to help the Branford Food Pantry. The Friends organized this after hearing how food pantries across the nation were facing steep budget cuts and in great need of support. The food drive will continue through June 14. We're so proud of our community for all they do to step up and help.

A subset of the Building & Grounds committee interviewed the two architect firms who bid on the balcony enclosure project. The sub-committee presented its findings to the greater B&G committee and made a recommendation to move forward. It will be great to take the next steps on this project bringing us closer to new, much-needed meeting space within the library.

— Katy McNicol



Author Sierra Greer joined our book club, Books & Brews, to discuss her book, *Annie Bot*, with us. We met at the library in May because our regular host, Thimble Islands Brewery, closed its doors for good this month.



A social media post from the CDR thanking us for the toiletries drive — thanks to our generous community for donating all of these toiletries!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—April

We had a special visit from some very cute therapy dogs in April, when the East Shore District Health Department came to do a read-aloud of *Gizmo's Pawsome Guide to Mental Health*. The dog Gizmo, the star of the book, made an appearance, along with his friends and fellow therapy dogs, Ruby and Tiny Teddy. Participants had a wonderful time meeting the dogs and learning about strategies to promote good mental health.



Teens learn about cooking in the Food Explorers program.

The learning continued when the American Chemistry Society of New Haven visited to offer a program about the chemistry of glaciers. After learning about glaciers and why they are important for the planet, we did a few science experiments to expand our new knowledge. Using water dyed with food coloring, we learned about what happens when cold water is added to warmer water, mimicking what happens when cold glaciers melt in warmer water. We also observed an ice cube melt in salt water to make hypotheses about how glaciers melt in the sea. We continued the Earth Day theme with our Take- and-Makes this month, which were flowers made of popsicle sticks, pompoms, and cupcake liners.

For our Homeschool Meetup in April we celebrated National Poetry month by reading and writing some poetry of our own! We started by writing an acrostic poem using the letters of our first names, and came up with some beautiful poems about our favorite qualities. We then examined paintings,



Attendees taking the Gizmo pledge to support better mental health.

imagined what it might be like to be in the painted scene, and wrote a poem including the five senses based on our observations.

We had three special events for teens over spring break. First, we did another round of our popular Book Boxes. Teens signed up to receive these boxes which contain books picked out based on their interests, snacks, and other goodies to keep! We also hosted the Food Explorers for an Italian fruit tart cooking program. In partnership with the Community Dining Room, we also hosted a Teen Job Fair over the break, which featured over ten local businesses and organizations that hire teens. We had 75 teens show up to the fair, which was a huge success, and are hoping to partner with the Community Dining Room again next year for a similar event.

Nicolette hosted several other fun programs for kids and families this month, including a Mario Kart tournament, a family board game day, and a

Lego club meeting. I also offered an all-ages 3D printing workshop that ended with participants getting to design or pick an item to be created on our 3D printers. We had a few opportunities to do outreach this month as well. A class from Branford High visited the library to learn about our resources and get a tour of the building, and Nicolette visited Murphey School for their English Language Learners night. I also attended Healthy Kids Day at the YMCA, and brought the button maker and lots of information about all the library has to offer.

Laura, Nicolette, and I also had the opportunity to attend the Connecticut Library Association conference this month, which was a wonderful way to connect with other librarians across the state and get ideas for ways to improve the department. We can't wait to start implementing some of our new ideas!

— Emily Yates



Snoopy visited our booth at Healthy Kids Day and made a button with our button maker!

Highlights from the Reference Department—April

The Reference department had a very busy April. We welcomed Ryan Keeler as our new full-time librarian. He has taken on most of our nonfiction cataloging, joined the LION Bibliographic Committee, is working with Debby on catalog maintenance and cleanup, has jumped right into tech help (both at the library and at the Senior Center) and is working on some future programming ideas.

Our full-time staff attended the Connecticut Library Association annual conference and we all returned to Blackstone with new ideas and ways to enhance our programming and services to our patrons. Although I was disappointed in a program on AI, I particularly enjoyed hearing from a library about the activity kits they created for patrons with dementia and their caregivers, a presentation by the Guilford Library on staff involved programming and a presentation from the NASA space grant program.

Blackstone has several activity kits for patrons with dementia in our Library of Things collection and I am working on creating new ones and adding activities to our existing ones, based on what I learned.

Ryan attended programs on AI, on balancing security and privacy, the Guilford Library's program on maximizing staff potential by including them in library programming, supporting mental health in the library and leadership for introverts.

Jordan co-presented a social media presentation at CLA, with our former intern, Kacie. They discussed the importance of libraries having a social media presence, which social media platforms to use, strategies for creating content, and filmed a short video as a group for everyone to share to their social media pages. The turnout was great and attendees seemed to really enjoy the presentation.

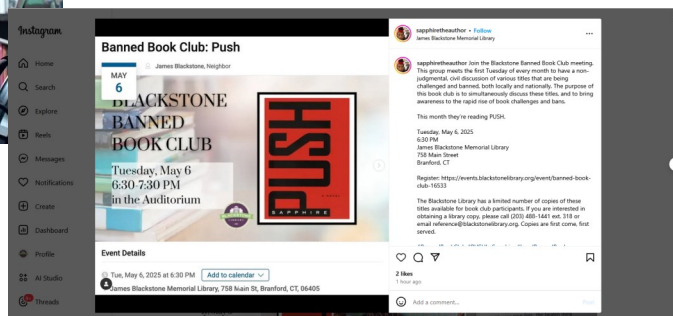
Stephanie continues to offer crafting classes with Jared, maintains some of our genealogy indexes, works with patrons who need longer tech appointments and works on flyer design and social media. She attended CLA programs on business services, creating a memory cafe in the library, a Library of Things presentation as well as the keynote address and Jordan's program.

Jenny is keeping our seed collection up to date and is planning a seed swap for the fall. She has taken on a larger role in tech help, helping patrons with a wide variety of questions, including scanning, recovering a repossessed car and learning how to record memories on a gift app. She also attends some of our Senior Center tech sessions.

— Deborah Trofatter



Jordan and Angela host our monthly Banned Book Club, and had a zoom session with author Ryan Estrada (above), who co-wrote a book called *Banned Book Club*. Ryan zoomed in all the way from Seoul, South Korea. The book club was also picked up on social media by Sapphire, author of *Push*. She shared our event on her own social media accounts (right)!





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no further than
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gather friends and family and
have fun playing together.

Visit: bit.ly/jbmlLOTlawn to see
all of the lawn games and re-
serve your favorites today!

Thanks to the
**Friends of the
Blackstone Li-
brary** for making
the Library of
Things possible!




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BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

June 2025 Program Highlights

Branford Microfund Info Sessions

Saturday, June 7

@ 10 am - 12 pm

Drop-in event. The Branford Microfund is a 501c3 non-profit organization providing interest-free loans of up to \$3,000 for unexpected financial challenges to Branford residents.

Members of the organization will be here to answer your questions on how to apply for a loan.

Mandala Tote Bags Workshop

Tuesday, June 10

@ 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Join Nature Artist Denise Smith for a fun craft experience.

Create your own canvas tote bag decorated with a mandala stencil and words of affirmation. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

The Inside Story of Publishing a Picture book

Wednesday, June 11

@ 6 - 7:30 pm

Amy J. Barry, author of the children's book, *A Cat All His Own* (June 2024) and Haley Grunloh, the book's illustrator, will share tips and advice on getting your picture book into print. They will discuss the various elements that go into producing a book, including how the story and illustrations come together, and the pros and cons of self-publishing versus traditional publishing.

Decoding Shakespeare's Poetic Clues

Thursday, June 12

@ 6:30 - 7:30 pm

Do you like Shakespeare but don't always understand it? Join Artistic Director Rebecca Goodheart and actors of Elm Shakespeare Company on a romping linguistic adventure

into the words and nuance of Shakespeare's poetry, while also giving a sneak peak of this year's 30th anniversary Bollywood-themed production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*!

The Afro-Semite Experience Juneteenth Concert

Monday, June 16

@ 6 - 7:30 pm

Celebrate Juneteenth with the Afro-Semite Experience, a one-of-a-kind group that blends jazz, gospel, and world music to honor themes of liberation, community, and social justice.

Join us for this evening of rhythm and resilience as they bring a message of hope and harmony to the stage! Registration required. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

April 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Physical Items Circulation: 8,227

April 2024: 8,070

borrowIT: 2,243

April 2024: 1,909

Renewals: 4,620

Computer Sessions: 877

WIFI Logins: 3,369

Website visits: 8,344

Facebook: 2,906 followers

Instagram: 1,533 followers

MailChimp: 8,458 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,283

Libby audiobooks: 1,275

Libby magazines: 844

Palace App: 37

HOOPLA: 1,110

Kanopy: 287

Transparent Languages: 14

Ancestry Library: 136

New Haven Register: 343

Branford History Scrapbooks: 22

Creative Bug: 81

**Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 132**

Children's Programs
33 programs/749 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
9 programs/125 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
51 programs/704 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 466
Days open: 29