



# Report to the Board of Trustees

September 3, 2025

## From the Director

As it seems to every year, the summer flew by. July and August were filled with summer reading activities for kids and teens, a wonderful array of adult programs, and many people coming in to use our meeting rooms and spaces, borrow books, magazines, museum passes, and items from our Library of Things, get tech help or simply have a cool place to be on a hot summer day.

The Community Dining Room hosted three of their Summer Meals on our lawn (the rest were held at Branford High School due to heat or inclement weather). It was a great partnership that brought over 400 people to the library to eat and explore our grounds and building. CDR ended the summer feeding a total of 3200 people! We're happy to have been a small part of supporting that effort! We are also hosting another toiletries drive for CDR to support their September 11 Freeshop.

We installed a new soundproof phone booth on the top floor, near the stairs. This allows patrons to step inside and have private conversations. The booth has been in use every day since it was installed and people love having a private space to use the phone!

We posted a public Request for Qualifications for a Facilities Condition Assessment and received 12 responses. A subcommittee made up of Building & Grounds members and Town representation will interview the finalists before making a selection. The re-



The Community Dining Room held their outdoor Summer Meals on the Blackstone lawn this summer. It was a great partnership that fed over 400 people at the library over the three sessions hosted here (they fed 2800 people at the indoor sessions at BHS)!

sulting study will be a thorough report on the library's 129-year-old building and systems, detailing current conditions and providing prioritized recommendations for repairs and maintenance for the next 15-20 years, with an eye to keeping the library building safe and in good condition in a fiscally responsible way.

Due to some staffing changes and restructuring, we have some new faces working at the library part-time: Cinda in Circulation, Amy and Gilligan in Reference, and Lee in Youth Services. Having more people on a part-time basis gives us more flexibility in staffing for all of the hours that we're open. We're so excited to have them join the team!

Cynthia, Rhea, and I attended the Shoreline Chamber's annual Women of Excellence Awards and were so impressed



by the winners - they are inspiring women who are working tirelessly to better our communities.

Rhea has been working hard to organize mediums for Evening with the Spirits which happens October 11. It should be another fantastic event to benefit the library!

Our summer reading program wrapped up in August — we'll have more updates from the Youth Services team next month. For the adult program, we had 52 adults participate in the game board and over 200 "love notes" were posted on our wall. With notes saying how libraries "are the best. My favorite books are here!!!" and sharing love for the cookbook section and children's marble run, among other sentiments, it was so touching to see how much our community appreciates all that we offer.

— Katy McNicol



Our new soundproof phone booth at the top of the stairs. Use is on a first-come, first-served basis. It's been very popular since being installed!



## FRIENDS ANNUAL BOOK SALE

September 18–21

Branford Town Green

Visit the website for more details:

>> [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org)

## An Evening with the Spirits

October 11, 7–9 pm

Visit the website for tickets and info:

>> [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org)

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June/July

Summer is the busiest season in the Youth Services department! With kids and teens out of school and summer learning in full swing, we made sure to have lots of fun and educational programs on offer this June and July!

We kicked off the summer with two special programs for kids and teens, sponsored by the Friends of the Library. For kids we had a magic show led by Jon Cap, who works at Branford High School. He performed magic tricks with a variety of props and lots of audience participation. For teens we had a wonderful video gaming event that involved VR headsets and two Nintendo switch stations for gaming, where teens could play Minecraft, Super Smash Bros, and Mario Kart.

For our homeschool meetup in June, we made our own ice cream and learned about the science behind it. Then in July, the Elm City Robo Squad visited to teach us all about rockets and forces. We created our own rockets using pool noodles and rubber bands, which we then tested on the grounds of the library!

In July, kids got to meet the local author Jules Bakes, whose graphic novel, *Sea Legs*, was published this year. She did a Q&A session, followed by a book signing, and then participants got to make an origami boat and color their own version of the character's boat from the novel. Other great programs for kids includ-



Laura and Emily at the Branford Festival to kick off summer reading.

ed bingo, sand art, Lego club and lots of summer films. We even had a snow princess visit for a special storytime!

Thanks to the support of the Branford Community Foundation, we were able to host some special events this summer featuring performers and experts from outside the library. For teens we had a pizza making class with Matthew Yanarella from My Productions CT. None of the teens had ever made a dough from scratch, so it was a great learning experience and they got to enjoy their hard work afterwards!

We also had visit by the Connecticut Ballet that gave a backstage look at the lives of their dancers and a Paint your Pet program with watercolor artist Nancy Roman. Participants brought their own photos of their pets to the program, and were guided by Nancy to create beautiful masterpieces that captured their animals' personalities.

Teens had lots of opportunities to craft this summer too! We made delicious dessert creations that looked like tacos using cookies, brownie bites, icing, and coconut. We also made our own squishies using memory foam and fabric paint and we also decorated our own tote bags. Other events for teens included a 3D printing workshop, multiple volunteer orientations, and our second annual potato chip taste test!

Finally, our summer learning program is in full swing! Each week of summer learning kids under five can collect a sticker, kids six and up can make a button, and teens can pick out an enamel pin for reading or completing the activity of the week on their gameboard. At the end of the summer, participants who complete their gameboard can enter to win a gift card to Ashley's Ice Cream or Fired Up! We love to see the kids and teens each week as they read and learn all summer long! summer!



Making sand art on a sunny summer day.



A collage of pet portraits — such talent on display!



Making pizza dough—some for the first time ever!



## Highlights from the Reference Department—June/July

Adult Summer Reading is under way and we are excited to see what our patrons have already shared with us. To participate, patrons can grab a game card from our lower lobby area and complete the 9 challenges. Each completed challenge gives patrons 1 entry into gift card drawings for the following local busi-

nesses: Slackline Press, P.S. Fine Stationers, What's the Issue? Comics, Ashley's Ice Cream, and R. J. Julia Booksellers. Participants have until August 18th to complete all challenges.

We have asked our patrons to share what they love about the library and to share with us where

they have gone this summer with their library card, by adding a push pin to our world map. People have traveled all over the United States (including Hawaii), to Europe, Japan and Africa. We have received many heartwarming notes as well.

— Deborah Trofatter



## Highlights from the Reference Department—July

Ryan has been working on organizing a Civic Saturday program which will take place a few times per year. The program is aimed at encouraging participation in civic engagement and education. The subject will be different each time with the goal of educating people on how their local government works and how they can get involved. Ryan will also be co-chairing a Sustainability Roundtable, which will be a monthly meetup for librarians to share ideas, practices, or programs having to do with sustainability.

Jenny has been planning additional programs on saving seeds. There will be a drop-in event, held on the library lawn, in August and a seed swap, hosted with the Branford Garden Club, again on the library lawn, in Oc-

tober. Jordan has been finalizing all of our Fall programs and we are very excited to have a really robust, varied schedule of upcoming events. We had a Branford Land Trust program on New England marshes last month that was attended by 120 people! Jordan has put in a lot of time and effort to convert our print calendar from Publisher to Canva. While making this change was very time-consuming, it will make creating future print calendars much easier!

Debby helped a local caregiver who was searching for photos of the restaurants that were in the location where Starbucks is now. The caregiver's client remembered buying ice cream at this location. We found photos of two previous businesses as well as

photographs of the "pretzel." This area was known as the "pretzel" because of the road configuration that existed before traffic lights were put in and the area was reconfigured.

— Deborah Trofatter





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Join our email list for more  
information about programs  
[www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org)

## September 2025 Program Highlights

### Branford Microfund Info Session

Saturday, September 6  
@ 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.

### Marsh Migration at Jarvis Creek Farm

Wednesday, September 17  
@ 6:30–7:30 pm  
Join us for a presentation by Jack Matthias of Audubon Connecticut. Presented by the Branford Land Trust.

### Sun Shines on Branford

Saturday, September 20  
@ 9 am–2 pm  
Sun Shines on Branford is a free all-ages festival with activities

taking place near Branford Town Green, at Blackstone Memorial Library, and throughout the town. This event will focus on solar energy and opportunities for sustainable and renewable resources that abound in Branford. So join the fun all around town with crafts, demos, workshops, art, music, and much more!

### Sinter: Emergence from the Rocks at the End of Choice

Saturday, September 20  
@ 2–3:30 pm  
Join us for an immersive performance with artist Vesper70. Interweaving solo acoustic piano, spoken word poetry, video art, and sound design, Sinter places both performer and audience together “in the round” - at the center of this special event. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

### An Afternoon with Van Gogh

Saturday, September 27  
@ 2–4 pm

Join us for a screening of the Academy Award winning film *At Eternity's Gate* starring Willem DaFoe! After the screening, there will be an art show and reception at the BACA Art Gallery from 4-6 pm featuring pieces inspired by the painting style of Vincent van Gogh. Presented by BACA.

### The Synergismus Duo Concert

Sunday, September 28  
@ 2–3 pm

Join cellist Randy Calistri-Yeh and violinist Millie Calistri-Yeh for an afternoon of Broadway tunes, classical music, and international folk songs, along with stories behind the music! Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

*Check our website for more programs and registration details!*

## June/July 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**June / July**  
**Total Physical Circulation:**  
9,157 / 10,482  
2024: 9,790 / 10,099  
**borrowIT:**  
2,664 / 3,317  
2024: 1,655 / 2,160  
**Renewals:**  
4,330 / 5,518  
**Public Computer Sessions:**  
754 / 813  
**WIFI Logins:**  
3,367 / 3,777  
**Website visits:**  
8,212 / 9,461  
**Facebook:** 2,915 followers  
**Instagram:** 1,588 followers  
**MailChimp:** 8,331 subscribers

**June / July**  
**Downloadable Circulation:**  
**Libby ebooks:**  
1,416 / 1,491  
**Libby audiobooks:**  
1,246 / 1,332  
**Libby magazines:**  
878 / 765  
**Palace App:** 34 / 49  
**HOOPLA:** 1,009 / 1,171  
**Kanopy:** 445 / 393  
**Transparent Language:** 6 / 21  
**Ancestry Library:** 47 / 157  
**New Haven Register:** 200 / 167  
**Bford History Scrapbooks:** 39 / 19

**June / July**  
**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage:** 116 / 142  
**Children's Programs**  
15 / 31 programs  
1,112 / 828 attendance  
**Teen Programs (12+)**  
9 / 9 programs  
429 / 73 attendance  
**Adult/All Ages programs**  
35 / 37 programs  
552 / 532 attendance  
**Average Daily Visitors:** 485 / 544  
**Days open:** 25 / 26