



Report to the Board of Trustees

October 8, 2025

From the Director

The computer lab was closed for a short time on a Saturday morning to allow a local filmmaker shoot some scenes for a family-friendly science fiction featurette. He was part of the film crew that came in last year and was so taken with the place, he wanted to come back. Hopefully we'll have the opportunity to screen the final version for the public.

We met with representatives from the State Historic Preservation Office to review and approve updated schematic plans for the new meeting rooms we are creating by enclosing interior space. The project continues to move forward, with the next step to have a probe contractor come in and confirm make-up of the balcony flooring to confirm load-bearing capacity.

I attended a FLAG meeting at the Stratford library and learned about initiatives at the East Hartford library to better support digital literacy efforts in their community and what can be done across the state.

Rhea opened ticket sales for Evening with the Spirits and the tickets with one-on-one readings sold out pretty quickly. There are still general admission tickets available which get access to 3 group readings, plus unlimited wine & spirits tastings from Coastal Wine & Spirits, plus light fare and prize drawings. Thank you to Branford Building Supplies, Branford Cleaners, Card my Yard, and Fired Up! for sponsoring this special event! All proceeds from this amazing even-



The couples' first dance happened in the rotunda. They rented out the Blackstone Library for their wedding ceremony and reception. It was a magical evening full of love, laughter, and a lot of dancing!

ing benefit the library!

We hosted events during the Sun Shines on Branford Day, a day to celebrate and promote solar and sustainable energy. This was in concert with other events happening all around town.

The Friends of the Library had their annual book sale on the Branford Green and it was another record-breaking success! They brought in over \$78,000 in sales from the 4-day event. Thank you to the Friends board, Book Sale Committee, and hundreds of volunteers that make this amazing community event possible. Proceeds from the sale benefits enhancements and enrichments to the library. We are so lucky to have such a strong and supportive Friends group!

Thank you to the trustees who

came out to help host our Leadership Circle members at the Sunday reception. Thanks to Rhea for organizing everything. The weather was perfect for an outside gathering, and it was a great chance to say thank you to our very generous supporters. We couldn't do what we do without you!

The library's Social Media Committee has been meeting to discuss ideas for the coming year, and have turned our meetings into working sessions, recording bits for future videos. We hope to continue the wonderful engagement we've enjoyed over the past few years.

Deirdre and I met with representatives and artists from BACA to discuss moving forward on a partnership to bring in more artists for the Artist's Circle Gallery. We're excited to see how this partnership progresses.

— Katy McNicol



Opening night at the Friends book sale is always a rollicking fun time!



Started in 1982, Banned Book Week continues to draw attention to the escalation in attempts to ban books in libraries, schools, and bookstores around the country. This year's theme reminds us that the right to read belongs to all of us, that censorship has no place in contemporary society, and that we must defend our rights.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

August was a busy month in the Youth Services department, and we made sure that the learning continued throughout the summer! At our Science Saturday program this month, participants completed Minute to Win It physics challenges, creating catapults, ramps, and vacuums with everyday supplies like marshmallows, straws, and marbles. This was a wonderful hands-on way for participants to learn some basic physics concepts.



A teddy bear gets a check-up from a nurse from East Shore District Health Department.



A beach-themed pudding cup for the teen take-and-make program.

The Connecticut Science Center also visited for a Picnic Capers program, using forensic science to analyze evidence and figure out which animal suspect destroyed a picnic lunch. Kids used the clues left behind to determine the animals in the area and establish possible culprits. They then recreated the bite taken out of the sandwich using playdough and fake beaks to narrow down the suspect to a mammal, and used playdough and models of animal feet to investigate the footprints. They also examined the fur left behind at the scene, and using all of these clues, determined that the culprit was a raccoon!

We had a few special programs for our youngest patrons this August. Nurses from the East Shore District Health Department visited the library for a Teddy Bear Clinic to help get children comfortable with doctor's visits. They had four different check-up stations for the stuffed animals, and the



Oscar the therapy dog loves a good read-aloud session!

“patients” received a wrist badge, had their height, weight, and blood pressure taken, got their eyes, nose, and hearts examined, and received shots and band aids. Participants ended the session at a recovery station where they were able to color and pick out a treat to take home.

The Little Explorers camp from the Branford Parks and Recreation department visited the library for a field trip with a special storytime. Laura read an ocean themed book, led the campers in songs, and then helped participants make special sea creature headbands. The youngest campers enjoyed being able to visit the library and get a tour of the children's space. Laura also hosted a Ready, Set, Kindergarten program which helped kids and families become familiar with what to expect when they start kindergarten. Kids also enjoyed practicing their reading skills during Nicolette's monthly read to a therapy dog

event. Oscar the therapy dog is a great listener!

In addition to our regular Teen Advisory groups and Dungeon and Dragons campaign, teens also enjoyed a special take and make this month. They got the ingredients to make a beach themed pudding cup, which included blue raspberry Jell-O for the water, graham crackers for the sand, a paper umbrella, a sour stripe for a beach towel, and some graham crackers to pose for a day at the beach!

Finally, our summer reading program wrapped up in August with a total of 275 kids and teens participating in and 65 kids and teens completing the entire summer-long 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

Highlights from the Reference Department—August

In August, we welcomed two new part-time Reference librarians to the Blackstone team, Gilligan Maruzo and Amy Du. We are excited to have them on board and they have both acclimated quickly to their new roles. Each has taken on part of the nonfiction collection for weeding, maintaining and purchasing as well as other projects, including creating email newsletters, assisting with tech help and working on scanning projects.

Jenny continues to plan for the Seed program which is happening on October 4th. Ryan is working on nonfiction cataloging, correcting MARC records, cataloging new items for our Library of Things collection, co-chairing a Sustainability Roundtable and

working on the upcoming Civic Saturday program.

Debby attended webinars on new features in Library IQ (an analytics and reporting solution, that allows us to analyze our collection and circulation) and on supervision and leadership. Jordan held a programming meeting for the library's winter schedule, is working on a number of collaborations, both with community partners and with other departments within the library and completed the creation of our Fall print calendar.

We recently had a patron call to request THE German Chocolate Recipe. She informed us that there was a somewhat official recipe in the 1950's. Our librarians were able to find a copy of the recipe online. Our patron followed

up with a request for a copy of the original recipe that appeared in the Dallas Morning News in 1957. We reached out to the Dallas Public Library, which listed the newspaper on their website, and we were delighted to receive a copy of the article, in addition to a correction to the recipe which appeared in the newspaper two days later. Not only did the Dallas Public Library provide us with this information, but they did so within half an hour of our request!

(The correction was to change the 8 ounces of chocolate to 4 ounces, should anyone choose to attempt the recipe. Our patron assured us that she would bring us a sample!)

— Deborah Trofatter

RECIPE OF THE DAY

By JULIE BENELL, Food Editor of The News

This is the week for our "something borrowed" in recipes. In other words, we are borrowing and giving name credit for some mighty fine recipes that I think you'll want to add to your collection.

Our first recipe is for a German sweet chocolate cake that is a favorite of Mrs. George Clay of 3831 Academy Drive, Dallas. Mrs. Clay was nice enough to

**Dallas News
Kitchen Tested**

share this cake with me, and it's a big one—three layers, or you can make a 2-layer cake, and then a pan that is 9x5x2.

GERMAN SWEET CHOCOLATE CAKE

You'll need 1 cup shortening (I use margarine), 2 cups sugar,

2½ cups sifted flour, ¼ teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon soda, 4 egg yolks, 1 (8 ounce bar German sweet chocolate melted, 1 cup buttermilk, 1 teaspoon vanilla, 4 egg whites beaten stiff.

Cream the shortening and sugar, and egg yolks and melted chocolate. Add dry ingredients alternately with buttermilk. Fold in the egg whites. Bake in three greased layer cake pans, or two layer cake pans and one 9x5x2 pan in a moderate 350 F. oven for 30 to 35 minutes. Cool in the pan, and then turn out on racks for further cooling. Put together with filling and frosting.

To make the frosting use ½ pint whipping cream NOT whipped, ¼ pound butter, 3 egg yolks, 1 cup (p) sugar, 1 cup chopped pecans, 1 cup coconut.

Mix whipping cream, butter, egg yolks and sugar in a saucepan and cook until it begins to thicken, about 12 minutes. Remove from heat, add nuts and coconut, and set aside to cool. This frosting and filling requires little or no beating, and it's a lovely moist filling, and is truly fabulous.

Watch for this recipe of the day when we make it this morning at 10:30 in our television kitchen on Channel 8.



BLACKSTONE LIBRARY PRESENTS:

Evening with the Spirits

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 11TH 7-9 PM

- 👁 Readings with local psychic mediums
(1:1 readings for an additional \$10 fee) **SOLD OUT**
- 👁 Spirits (& wine & beer) tastings
sponsored by Coastal Wine & Liquors
- 👁 Appetizers and prize drawings

LIMITED TICKETS: \$45 PER SOUL

Visit blackstonelibrary.org to purchase your tickets today!
Must be 21+.

PROCEEDS FROM THIS FUNDRAISER SUPPORT THE INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND CRUCIAL SERVICES OFFERED TO THE COMMUNITY BY THE BLACKSTONE LIBRARY.





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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.



October 2025 Program Highlights

Asking for a Friend Tuesday, October 14 @ 6:30–7:45 pm

Concerned about a friend who's frequently angry, or sad? Maybe you know someone who's lonely, or has a gambling problem. Join us for this free and open discussion with four mental health professionals who will take your questions. No lectures, no pressure, no judgment. After all, you're just asking for a friend. Co-sponsored by Branford Counseling & Community Services and Branford Rotary.

Next Steps Toward a Sustainable Future with State Senator Christine Cohen Wednesday, October 15 @ 6–7:30 pm

Learn more about environmental legislation passed in the recent session of the Assembly, and explore with Sen. Cohen how these new bills can support local sustainability

goals. Refreshments available. Sponsored by Living Wisely and Well on Planet Earth.

Classical Guitar Concert Saturday, October 18 @ 2–3 pm

Join us for a performance of classical guitar music by the performer Neal Fitzpatrick. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe Wednesday, October 22 @ 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 Blackstone Library.

Civic Saturday Saturday, October 25 @ 10 am–12 pm

Please join us for a community conversation around housing challenges in Branford. Our goal is for us all to listen and learn from each other. This is a 2 part series where we follow up with another community conversation based around questions raised in the first meeting and share information around where things stand in Branford today. Refreshments will be served.

Wesleyan Spirits A Cappella Concert Sunday, October 26 @ 2–3 pm

Join us for a musical afternoon with the Wesleyan Spirits, Wesleyan University's oldest TTBB (tenor & bass) a cappella group! Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library & the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

August 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Physical Items Circulation: 9,508
August 2024: 9,258

borrowIT: 3,527
August 2024: 2,338

Renewals: 5,564

Computer Sessions: 867
WIFI Logins: 3,369
Website visits: 8,899

Facebook: 2,924 followers
Instagram: 1,603 followers
MailChimp: 8,243 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,449

Libby audiobooks: 1,373

Libby magazines: 978

Palace App: 57

HOOPLA: 1,210

Kanopy: 436

Transparent Languages: 11

Ancestry Library: 231

New Haven Register: 331

Branford History Scrapbooks: 6

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 126

Children's Programs
19 programs/449 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
9 programs/171 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
40 programs/503 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 477
Days open: 26