



December 3, 2025

Engaging Community • Expanding Minds • Enriching Lives

Report to the Board of Trustees

From the Director

November flew by with a flurry of meetings. I met with our arborist to walk the grounds and we identified some potential winter pruning projects to consider.

I co-chaired the New Directors Roundtable at the Berlin Peck Memorial Library, where we had an interesting discussion about library building maintenance.

The auditorium sconces and chandelier were repaired over the summer and re-installed in November. Some final adjustments are needed, but it's great to have the pieces back in the building.

When the federal SNAP program was affected earlier this month, we reached out to the Branford Food Pantry to partner with them to hold a food drive to help stock their shelves. We have continued the drive during November and the community has been filling the bin.

We also partnered with Amy Rosen of Snuggles for Shoreline Seniors again, putting out a bin to accept donations of new blankets, which are then given to local seniors in need.

The circulation team has also been a drop off point for the Friends Gift Basket Sale donations. The Friends are accepting donations toward the



The Reading Room held a packed audience for the November 18 swearing-in ceremony for the newly elected town officials, including First Selectman Josh Brooks, pictured above.

sale through December 4. The sale itself runs December 11-14, held in the downstairs lobby. Proceeds from the sale help support the Friends, who help support the library!

I am pleased to welcome Christine Yost to the Blackstone as our new Business Manager. Christine brings with her a wealth of accounting experience. While we searched for a new Business Manager, Kathy came back to the library on a part-time basis to help get us through the interim period and will work with Christine to get her started in her new role.

As in years past, we hosted the swearing-in ceremony for newly elected officials for Branford, including constables, board of assessment appeals, town

treasurer, and board of selectmen, with Josh Brooks sworn in as First Selectman. There was a packed crowd filling the Reading Room and a lot of positive messages shared about keeping Branford a wonderful place to live and work.

Thanks to Rhea for working hard to get the fall appeal items printed and sorted, thank you to staff who helped the stuff many, many envelopes, and thank you to trustees who took the time to write notes on letters to our supporters. This appeal is the library's largest fundraising event of the year, and a really important part of our fundraising structure. We deeply appreciate the support of the community to help us raise 11% of our annual operating budget!

— Katy McNicol



Drop off items for the food drive to support the Branford Food Pantry and new blankets for Snuggles for Shoreline Seniors at the library's downstairs lobby.



Highlights from the Youth Services Department—October

We had lots of engaging and unique programs this October in the Youth Services department! We hosted Christian from the Connecticut Dental Health Partnership for a special dental storytime. He shared a lively song and book to make brushing teeth fun for kids. He also demonstrated proper brushing techniques and gave toothbrushes to all the participants.



Our booth at the Tisko Literacy Night.

Our Science Saturday program this month, led by Claudia from Cool-ology, explored the marine life of the Long Island Sound. Participants observed hermit crabs and periwinkle snails up close using magnifying glasses, examined shells and whelk egg sacks, and learned how salt water and fresh water interact—mimicking how Connecticut rivers flow into the Sound. Then participants read *A House for a Hermit Crab* by Eric Carle and finished with a creative craft: decorating hermit crab shells.



Marine life examples to explore at the Cool-ology program for Science Saturdays.



Illustrated reactions to music at the Homeschool Meetup.

For our Homeschool Meetup this month, we learned all about music and how it can communicate emotions. After a musical warmup where we moved our bodies to music based on how it made us feel, we learned why musical elements like the tempo, key, and instrumentation of a song can impact our emotions. Finally, kids listened to four different songs and drew their reactions, sharing how the music influenced their artistic interpretations.



Nicolette and Rodcel lead a sing-along at the Halloween Storytime and Parade.

We are offering a Stay and Play program for parents and caregivers after our weekly Wednesday storytimes, and this month's Stay and Plays featured some wonderful community partners. Representatives from 211 Child Care, Read to Grow, and the Diaper Bank joined us to share resources and connect with families.

Our annual Halloween Storytime and Parade was a hit, drawing over 100 participants! Nicolette and Rodcel led the children in seasonal songs and a Halloween read-aloud, and then the kids trick-or-treated throughout the library. We also showed the film *Hocus Pocus 2* on an early-release day to help people get excited about Halloween!

For teens this month, we welcomed Bernie Shea, a representative from CT State Community College to speak with families about why they might consider choosing a community college. He shared helpful

information about the academic programs, financial aid, and support services available to students. It was a great opportunity for teens and their families to learn more about their options after graduation. In addition, I hosted another 3D printing workshop and volunteer orientation for teens. I offer both of these events quarterly, so keep an eye on the calendar for our next sessions!

Nicolette and I also did more outreach at Branford Schools this month. I attended Tisko Elementary's Literacy night, sharing information about our resources and events with parents while making custom buttons with the kids. Nicolette also visited the kindergartners at Murphy and Tisko schools, and I continued my visits to the first-year students at Branford High. We love being able to connect with students and make sure everyone has a Blackstone Library card and access our resources!

— Emily Yates

Highlights from the Reference Department—October

We had a busy and well-attended month of programs in October. 74 people attended An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe, 80 joined us for a musical afternoon with the Wesleyan Spirits, Wesleyan University's oldest TTBB (tenor & bass) a cappella group, 49 were here for a bipartisan forum with the candidates for the Branford Board of Education for the 2025 election and 25 came to learn about environmental legislation passed in the recent session of the Assembly and to explore with Senator Cohen how these new bills can support sustainability goals in local communities like Branford.

Jenny wrapped up the season with a seed swap that was attended by 35 people. Gilligan, Amy and Ryan have made great progress on their project to add author names to the call numbers of the fiction and mystery collections. Jordan is wrapping up the winter programming calendar, assisted a patron with a job application (and the patron later reported that he got the job!) and is working with library staff to share photos and info on staff pets on social media.

Our Tech Help sessions continue to be very popular; we see a really wide variety of questions and problems. In a recent session,

Gilligan had a very successful and positive interaction. A patron had deleted all of her emails and was panicking as she believed she had lost her plane tickets for her trip the following week. By using the Gmail Recovery Tool, they were able to retrieve all of her emails and reconnect her Gmail to the Mail app on her phone. She was extremely appreciative and thanked Gilligan many times for "working their magic" to get them back.

— Deborah Trofatter

Holiday Basket Sale

December 11 - 14th

Blackstone Library Bottom Floor

Thursday 12/11 - noon to 8 pm

Friday and Saturday 9- 5 pm

Sunday 1-3 pm

Shop for everyone on your list

Sponsored by Friends of the Library

 FRIENDS
OF
BLACKSTONE LIBRARY



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reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
instagram.com/blackstone_library

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

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY GIFT BASKET SALE

The Friends' Annual Gift
Basket Sale takes place
December 11-14.

You'll find great gifts for
everyone on your list!

The Friends are currently
accepting donations of
complete baskets or new or
gift quality items for baskets.

Donations can be brought to
the library's downstairs
checkout desk anytime the
library is open.

Visit the Friends on our
website to learn more:
blackstonelibrary.org

Your support of this event
helps the Friends enhance
and enrich all the Blackstone
has to offer!



December 2025 Program Highlights

**Fireside Chats with Local
Author Katie Tietjen
Saturday, December 6
@ 1–2 pm**

Award-winning author of
Death in the Details and
Murder in Miniature.
Sponsored by the Friends of
Blackstone Library.

**Aging in Place: How to Protect
Assets and Stay at Home
Tuesday, December 9
@ 6–7 pm**

Estate Planning and Elder Law
Attorney Erin Duques will help
you better understand how to
avoid putting your hard-earned
assets at risk in a way that can
best position you to stay in
your own home and age in
place. You'll learn about
Medicaid and other public
benefit programs the state has
to offer as well as strategies
that married or single people
can use to protect their assets.

**The History of Chocolate
Making
Wednesday, December 10
@ 5:30–7:30 pm**

The Pewter Pot will be joining
us for a presentation on the
history of chocolate with a
demonstration. Presented by
the Branford Historical Society.

**Musical Arts Society Presents:
Guitar & Flute Concert
Sunday, December 14
@ 2–3:30 pm**

Join us for a musical afternoon
with guitarist Neal Fitzpatrick
and flautist Elaine Thoma!
Presented by the Musical Arts
Society of Branford.

**Frequencies with Friends:
Karaoke Party
Sunday December 21
@ 1–2:30 pm**

The Frequencies with Friends
karaoke party is a welcoming
place where you can let loose
and fully express yourself by

dancing, singing or just
jamming along with people.
There is absolutely no pressure
or competition here, just good
vibes and fun songs! So shake
out some energy and get
singing with us!

**Winter Inspired Sea Glass
Ornaments Craft Workshop
Tuesday, December 30
@ 5:30–7 pm**

Courtney of Re-loved Designs
will be teaching this workshop
to create your own Winter
Inspired Sea Glass Ornament.
Bring a touch of the coast to
your holiday crafting! Using
wood disks and sea glass, you'll
create two of your own winter-
themed ornaments—sparkly,
beachy, and totally unique.
Choose from sample designs or
dream up your own. All
supplies provided. Registration
required, as space is limited.
Sponsored by the Friends of
Blackstone Library.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

October 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Physical Items Circulation: 7,921
October 2024: 7,122

borrowIT: 3,179
October 2024: 1,759

Renewals: 4,938

Computer Sessions: 957
WIFI Logins: 3,889
Website visits: 9,414

Facebook: 2,979 followers
Instagram: 1,674 followers
MailChimp: 8,061 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,268

Libby audiobooks: 1,366

Libby magazines: 981

Palace App: 40

HOOPLA: 1,012

Kanopy: 448

Transparent Languages: 18

Ancestry Library: 94

New Haven Register: 166

Branford History Scrapbooks: 1

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

Children's Programs
37 programs/1085 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
8 programs/74 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
47 programs/621 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 479
Days open: 29