



# Report to the Board of Trustees

January 7, 2025

## From the Director

Our Fall Appeal got in full swing in December, with many generous donations coming in, all in support of the Blackstone Library. We will continue to record gifts toward the Fall Appeal through January, and we are on track to surpass our Fall goal! Thank you, Rhea and Christine for processing the donations as they come in.

The Branford Garden club came in early December to decorate the library for the winter. Their decorations were lovely, with garland and wreaths placed throughout the library. This year, they did a neutral white, gold, and silver theme with ribbons and bows. A couple who is getting married here in January has asked if the decorations could stay up through their wedding. Thank you, Garden Club!

The Friends held their Holiday Gift Basket sale, with many baskets being sold, resulting in another successful fundraising event for the Friends! Congratulations!

Thanks to the Friends, we were able to hold our staff holiday party after hours at the library. It was a lovely evening for us all to get together and enjoy the library off the clock! We also took the opportunity to begin our goodbyes to Deirdre Santora, who retired after 26 years of service. Her last day at the library was December 19. We wish her well in her retirement. Her position has been posted and we are in the process

**"Thanks for all the wonderful events over the past year. Concerts, Films, info events, etc. Special thanks to you and your staff for the computers. The staff was helpful many times on how to operate or seek info on the computer."**

—Note from V.K.



Thank you to everyone who contributed the Branford Food Pantry drive! We collectively donated 130 pounds of food!



The Branford Garden Club get the library in a wintery, holiday mood with decorations throughout the building. Thank you!

of reviewing resumes.

Trustees and I attended meetings at Town Hall with new First Selectman Josh Brooks to discuss the library facilities study, as well as meetings with Lothrop to review and discuss the balcony enclosure project. We are closing in on the deadline to initiate construction and began the process to request a grant extension so we have sufficient time to get approvals from the CT State Library, publish and review public bids, and award a contract for the project.

We hosted a private event for a local company's holiday dinner and I met with other groups to discuss future upcoming private rentals event at the library. I also attended the December FLAG meeting and holiday luncheon, worked with

Petrunti Woodworking to finalize the design of shelving in the archives room, attended a Yale SOM informational webinar, and attended the LION board meeting.

I worked with Sandweiss to address some issues that had been noted with storm damage on a few trees on property. I also worked with the Town to remove a large cracked branch that was overhanging a sidewalk.

We also have a new face in the Circulation Department. Please welcome Mark Myers to the Blackstone Library. Mark rounds out our circulation team and jumped in help keep service levels high while we find a new department head.

— Katy McNicol

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—November

We had a wonderful November filled with activities for all ages. One of the biggest hits was a program called For Goodness Snakes! led by an educator from the Meigs Point Nature Center. Participants discovered fascinating facts about reptiles—learning that they are cold-blooded, lay eggs, and have scales and tails. They also learned that many snakes are strong swimmers, use heightened senses to locate prey, and can open their jaws an impressive 180 degrees. Attendees examined a snake's skeleton and skin, and even met two live snakes: Latte the milk snake and Mr. No Tail the rat snake.



Adults and youngsters alike enjoyed learning about snakes in a hands-on session from an educator from Meigs Point Nature Center.



A Lego Club creation featuring a wedding on the moon!

The learning continued as our homeschoolers explored the five senses this month. To learn more about their sense of touch, kids traced their hands and attached textured items, like foam, beads, and pom-poms, to each finger. They then labeled each finger with words to describe the different textures. To explore their sense of smell, kids took part in a blind scent test featuring lavender, vanilla, vinegar, and coffee, guessing each scent before the answer was revealed.

This month's Science Saturday was all about light and color. Participants refracted light through a prism, made rainbows using flashlights and CDs, and experimented with chromatography using Skittles. They also discovered how marker colors separate using coffee filters and pipettes

filled with water, and created symmetrical paintings by mixing primary colors then folding their paper in half, revealing new colors created by the combinations.

Kids enjoyed making shrinky dinks this month with Nicolette, coloring designs like turtles, ice cream cones, and donuts, and then watching their creations shrink in the toaster oven. The program was so popular that many have already requested a repeat! At November's Lego Club, creations included a soccer player, a wedding on the moon, and a secret hideout.

Teens enjoyed a pumpkin spice taste test this month. We sampled a wide variety of pumpkin-spice treats—from butter and cereals to hummus, donuts, whipped cream, and more! The clear winner was a classic pumpkin pie, while pumpkin spice hummus earned the lowest score. Our popular book boxes also returned just in time for Thanksgiving break! Teens filled out

forms about their reading and viewing interests, and received curated boxes packed with library books, stickers, fidget toys, snacks, and other goodies. We had 17 teens participate! We also ended the month with a Nintendo Switch tournament, where teens battled it out on Mario Kart and Super Smash Bros.

We continued doing outreach this month, visiting fifth graders at Walsh Intermediate and kindergarteners at Tisko Elementary. Nicolette also represented the Blackstone at Murphy School's Math and Literacy Night, helping kids make buttons using our button maker and sharing information about upcoming programs. As the days grow colder and darker, we invite you to warm up at the library—there's always something new to discover!



Teen book boxes ready for pickup.

— Emily Yates

## Highlights from the Reference Department—November

Our Reference librarians have been busy with a number of projects. Jordan is a co-chair of the New Librarians Roundtable - they discuss topics such as "How to Deal with Ideas Not Panning Out" and "The Creative Process at Work." They share the various ways that they brainstorm in their professional lives and try to cover a variety of topics for those new to the field to help build connections, inspire new ideas, and learn more about what various librarians do in their roles.

Jordan and Ryan attended the first Regional Roundtable for the Greater New Haven area, where they discussed different ways in which surrounding libraries can work together to serve their communities. They were able to meet both academic and public librarians and talk to them about the similarities and differences between their various workplac-

es. They are hoping to have more meetings in the future, potentially at different locations, so they can all visit area libraries in person.

Ryan and Amy finished adding author names to all of the fiction titles in the catalog. Amy continues to work with patrons at our Tech Tuesday sessions and has received very positive feedback, including comment such as “you were wonderful” and telling another patron “you’re in good hands.” She has taken over preparing our weekly community events email as well.

Gilligan continues to study ASL, creates monthly book displays and is working on our digital scrapbooking project. (Our Town Historian has identified photographs in the early 1900's newspaper scrapbooks that she believes warrant scanning for digital preservation.) Gilligan also created a Connecticut Shore Guide

which we will be including as part of our Digital Resources.

Jenny completed the Propagation Station, which can be found in the main lobby. Stephen helped by sanding down a wooden book cart and Lee did a beautiful job of painting it. Plant propagations are pieces, or cuttings, from plants that grow their own root systems and become new plants. Patrons are welcome to take a cutting home with them and we encourage donations of cuttings as well. More information and instructions can be found on our website at <https://blackstonelibrary.org/plant-propagation-station/>

– Deborah Trofatter



## Plant Propagation Station – Take a plant, leave a plant

The Blackstone Library is excited to present our Plant Propagation Station—open to everyone in the community!

Visit our plant propagation station in the Circulation Lobby. You do not need a library card to take a free cutting home.

This project helps promote green spaces and cleaner air by enabling the community to take and grow plants in their own homes. Plants are a fun hobby—and come with the added benefits of cleaner air in your space—but it can be hard to maintain a plant collection because of plant prices. The Library hopes this program will promote green spaces at no charge to the community!



James Blackstone Memorial Library  
758 Main Street  
Branford, CT 06405

203.488.1441 | [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org)  
[reference@blackstonelibrary.org](mailto:reference@blackstonelibrary.org)  
[facebook.com/blackstonelibrary](https://facebook.com/blackstonelibrary)  
[instagram.com/blackstone\\_library](https://instagram.com/blackstone_library)

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

## January 2026 Program Highlights

### **Beyond Intermission: Thriving in Your Third Act**

**Thursdays @ 2-4 pm**

**January 8 through January 29**

In this popular workshop, Branford resident Amy J. Barry will implement creative visualizations, hands-on expressive art and writing exercises, current research findings, and group discussion and feedback to help participants get “unstuck” and move beyond “intermission” into a rich and rewarding “third act.” Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

### **Taxes in Retirement**

**Thursday, January 8 @ 6-7 pm**

Learn essential strategies for managing your retirement income and minimizing tax liabilities in this informative workshop led by USA Financial and Tax Services. Topics covered will include 2025 Medicare information such as enrollment periods for

Medicare Parts A, B, C, D, and Medigap (including the Initial, Special, General, and Annual Open Enrollment Periods), as well as premiums and deductibles.

### **Branford Land Trust Lecture**

**Sunday, January 11 @ 1-3 pm**

Inhabitants: Indigenous Perspectives on Restoring our World documentary screening with Jesse Rose & Clan Mother Shoran

### **Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament**

**Saturday, January 17**

**@ 2:30-3:30 pm**

Prove your puzzle-solving skills at our jigsaw puzzle tournament! Teams will be given the same puzzle to complete within the given time. Prizes will be awarded to the first 3 teams to complete their puzzle. There is a 2-4 person

team size limit. Registration required. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

### **Volunteer Fair**

**Saturday, January 24**

**@ 10 am-12 pm**

Are you interested in volunteering but don't know where to start? Stop by our Volunteer Fair! You'll meet representatives from local nonprofits, find out more about what they do in our community, and learn about opportunities to get involved.

### **Branford Land Trust Lecture**

**Tuesday, January 27 @ 6-7:30 pm**

“The Anatomy of Grit: A journey from Survival to Purpose” with Justin Brownwell

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

## November 2025 Statistics—Circulation Department

**Physical Items Circulation:** 7,827  
*November 2024:* 7,331

**borrowIT:** 3,162  
*November 2024:* 2,086

**Renewals:** 4,770

**Computer Sessions:** 786  
**WIFI Logins:** 3,631  
**Website visits:** 9,476

**Facebook:** 2,987 followers  
**Instagram:** 1,693 followers  
**MailChimp:** 7,998 subscribers

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Libby ebooks:** 1,347

**Libby audiobooks:** 1,235

**Libby magazines:** 934

**Palace App:** 21

**HOOPLA:** 993

**Kanopy:** 395

**Transparent Languages:** 14

**Ancestry Library:** 39

**New Haven Register:** 190

**Branford History Scrapbooks:** 4

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage:** 134

**Children's Programs**  
24 programs/882 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**  
7 programs/75 attendance

**Adult/All Ages programs**  
43 programs/761 attendance

**Average Daily Visitors:** 402  
**Days open:** 29