



Report to the Board of Trustees

February 4, 2025



L to R: Images from the Community Volunteer Fair, held Saturday, January 24.



From the Director

Below: Images from the Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament, held Saturday, January 17.

Despite the cold wintry depths of January, we saw a lot of people come out to the library for special events.

We hosted our second ever Jigsaw Puzzle Tournament, sponsored by the Friends of the Library. The auditorium was packed with puzzling teams, who race to finish their puzzle. The first team to win got a custom puzzle featuring an image of the Blackstone Library!

The following week, we hosted a Community Volunteer Fair. The first floor was filled with local organizations who staffed tables to share information and volunteer opportunities. Members of the public came out to connect with these organizations and sign up to volunteer. Thank you to Jordan for organizing both of these wonderful community events.

We also hosted a private event outside of regular library hours — a lovely winter wedding took place on a Sunday while we were closed. The couple loved the Garden Club's decorations so much that they asked to keep them up until after the wedding.

Thank you to Christine for working

with me so diligently to create a budget draft for trustee review. We have had some personnel restructuring to be more responsive to service desk staffing needs, and it has resulted in some shifts in line item expenses, but overall we feel we have a reasonable budget that allows us to be flexible and responsive to staff and community needs without sacrificing service and programming.

We continued the search for a new Associate Librarian for Access Services to replace Deirdre, who retired in December. We received over 20 applications, and interviewed 4 strong candidates. We narrowed the choice down to one candidate who we felt would be a great fit for our library. The candidate accepted the position and starts with us February 17. I was accepted as a session leader at the upcoming CT Library Association conference to host the CLA Career

Development Committee Mentor/Mentee meetup. I will also be a resume reviewer at the conference for anyone who wants feedback. Congratulations also to Emily and Nicolette for having their conference proposal accepted! They will be sharing their successes developing programs in conjunction with our local homeschooling group.

I attended the CLC Association Library roundtable session, the FLAG meeting at the Milford Library, hosted a session of the New Directors roundtable, and met with a private rental party to discuss an upcoming after-hours rental.

Thank you to Rhea for continuing to process donations from a very successful fall appeal, and thank you to everyone in the community who made a gift to the library. Each gift makes a positive impact for Branford and the Blackstone.

— Katy McNicol



Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December



The Non Year's Eve Storytime is always a hit. This year, Christine Yost and Rodcel's children helped release the balloons to the eager crowd below!

We had a fun and festive December in the Youth Services Department!

At our Homeschool Meetup, we explored how our eyes work and how we perceive color. Kids created dots with markers and used pipettes to drop water onto them, watching the pigments separate into their component colors. We also learned how light travels and used a prism to reveal the rainbow hidden inside sunlight. To wrap up the lesson, everyone made their own kaleidoscopes using beads, mirrored paper, cardboard tubes, and rubber bands.

Teens had a blast this month making candy sushi. Using Rice Krispie treats, Swedish Fish, gummy bears, and fruit roll-ups, they crafted delicious candy versions of their favorite sushi rolls. Teens also enjoyed a screening of Hamilton, our monthly Dungeons & Dragons meetup, and another volunteer orientation where they learned how to shelve books in the department.



Cookies decorated for the holiday season.



Teens made candy sushi.

We were thrilled to welcome the New Haven Bird Club for their puppet show Could Roxi Be a Bird? The show introduced children to Connecticut's native birds through the story of Roxi Fox, who decides she wants to become a bird. Along the way, she meets a robin, an owl, a vulture, a seagull, and a duck, discovering what makes each one special. After realizing she doesn't want to eat worms, be nocturnal, or migrate, Roxi decides she's happiest being herself—a fox. Kids stayed afterward to ask questions and give the puppets plenty of pats and hugs.

To celebrate the season, children enjoyed a festive cookie-decorating program complete with frosting, candy toppings, and food coloring for custom designs. Many created holiday-themed cookies—gingerbread people, Santas, and Christmas trees—while others went abstract. One child even crafted a self-portrait cookie! Hot chocolate made the afternoon extra cozy.

Nicolette and Rodcel's Noon Year's Eve Storytime was a huge hit, full of singing, dancing, and celebration. After a countdown to noon, balloons dropped from the balcony, bubbles filled the room, and fireworks played on the screen.

Families also picked up our New Year's Eve take-and-make craft: colorful cupcake-liner fireworks set on black paper to symbolize the night sky.

We can't wait to welcome everyone to the library in 2026!

— Emily Yates

Highlights from the Reference Department—December

As we complete another year of terrific service to our patrons, I'd like to take a moment to thank the entire Reference team for their dedication, expertise, hard work and collegiality.

As a team we work on cataloging and database maintenance, programming, book selection, collection development, general reference, outreach, statistics reporting, chairing roundtables, attending conferences and webinars, learning new tasks, planning classes, creating new initiatives, providing tech help in-house and to the public, creating book displays, running book groups, overseeing social media, updating the library's website, local history archiving projects and much more.

We look forward to another great year of service to our patrons!

One of our new initiatives, the propagation station, is a big hit. The Circulation staff report that the public is excited and pleased to see free houseplant cuttings. Patrons frequently stop by to ask what's going on. Jenny had two young children come up and ask what she was doing. When she asked them if they had any plants at home, they said they did not; she was very happy to send each of them home with their own cutting. It makes her really happy to think about encouraging a connection with nature, especially in children.

The Plant Propagation Station also needs donations! If you have plants at home, consider making a cutting that you can share with your community.

— 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!



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

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.



February 2026 Program Highlights

First Friday Book Discussion

Friday, February 6
@ 11 am–12 pm

February's title is **The River Knows Your Name** by Kelly Mustian. All titles are available for download from Hoopla.

Take Your Child to the Library

Day
Saturday, February 7
All day

Come check out everything the library has to offer. While you're here, stop by the Youth Services Department and make a button pin!

Connecticut Wineries with "The Nutmeg Nose"

Wednesday, February 11
@ 6–7 pm

Take a ride through Connecticut's wine country and learn about our state's 40+ wineries with our wine guide, Michelle Griffis! Michelle will discuss the array of fantastic,

award-winning wineries here in our state. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

Legacy of a Wealthy Slave

Saturday, February 14
@ 2–3:30 pm

Hear a newly unearthed family story told by a descendant and New Haven native, Denise Manning Keyes Page, founder of Ubuntu Storytellers and recent story artist on the Moth Main Stage. She will perform two true stories about this journey, "Mariah" and "The Archivist's Gift: A Family Reclaimed". Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

Fireside Chats with Local Authors

Saturday, February 21
@ 1–2 pm

Drop-in event. Join us for readings and discussions with local authors in front of the fireplace in our Reading Room!

Join Rita Ellen Stone, author of *Musical Women Marines – The Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band in World War II*.

MLK Heritage Foundation with Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas

Saturday, February 21
@ 1–3 pm

Join us to hear a presentation by the MLK Heritage Foundation with special guest Stephanie Thomas, CT's Secretary of State.

Branford Land Trust Lecture

Tuesday, February 24
@ 6–7:30 pm

"Raising our Future Ancestors" with Two Coyotes Wilderness School.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

December 2025 Statistics—Circulation Department

Physical Items Circulation: 7,170
December 2024: 6,735

borrowIT: 3,073
December 2024: 1,833

Renewals: 4,972

Computer Sessions: 763
WIFI Logins: 4,023
Website visits: 9,619

Facebook: 3,015 followers
Instagram: 1,734 followers
MailChimp: 7,958 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,388
Libby audiobooks: 1,419
Libby magazines: 920

Palace App: 36

HOOPLA: 1,027

Kanopy: 321

Transparent Languages: 25

Ancestry Library: 30

New Haven Register: 178

Branford History Scrapbooks: 2

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 152

Children's Programs
26 programs/710 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
6 programs/41 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
34 programs/315 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 446
Days open: 29