



Report to the Board of Trustees

April 8, 2026

From the Director

March was another whirlwind month at the Blackstone!

I attended the LION Board meeting, which had been postponed due to snow in late February. I also co-chaired the CLC New Director’s Roundtable at the EC Scranton Library. It’s always great to take the opportunity to visit a neighboring library and see what is new there!

I attended a retirement party for Jim Finch, former Branford Finance Director, at The Woodwinds. Jim was a fantastic steward of Branford’s finances over his 28-year career, and hundreds were in attendance to wish him well.

We received two bids for the balcony enclosure project, and are in the process of reviewing the bids.

We held a Facilities Assessment Kickoff Meeting get an overview of the process and determine a start date. We settled on May 4 to start the assessment, which should take no longer than 2 weeks. A draft report of assessment results and recommendations should be available by August/September.

Rhea was able to secure sponsors for all 18 mini golf holes! The event is shaping up to be another success. Ticket sales went live and both daytime and evening events are seeing strong sales so far.



Randye Kaye and staff discussing communication and teamwork.

Christine attended a Nonprofit Finance Summit held by the CT Nonprofit Alliance, which offered workshops and networking opportunities during the full-day conference.

The Friends sponsored an inservice training for staff. We walked over to the Volunteer Services Center and got tours of the Branford Food Pantry, Community Dining Room, and Clothing Bank operations. It was highly impactful to see behind-the-scenes at these different organizations, knowing that we serve many of the same people. After the tour, we came back to the library to participate in a workshop from speaker Randye Kaye. Randye presented an interactive workshop called “Teamwork at the Blackstone: Building Bonds Through Connected Communication.” It was a wonderful workshop that got staff talking and thinking about how we use words to

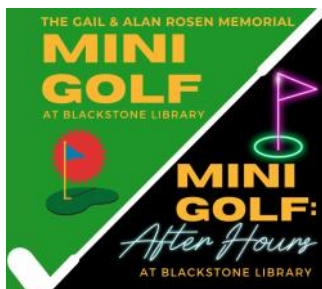
communicate with each other and with patrons.

Christine and I presented the library’s FY2027 budget at the March Board of Finance budget hearing meeting. Thank you to Janice, Larry, Michelle, and David for attending and helping answer some questions after the presentation. I look forward to presenting to the RTM Education Committee at their May 4 meeting.

For the CLA Mentorship Program, Allison Murphy (Director, EC Scranton Library) and I opened up the statewide applications for mentees and mentors, and we worked to match people up based on experience and interests. We were able to make 22 mentor/mentee matches, and are still confirming 4 additional matches. The mentor session runs for 6 months and will hopefully strengthen skills and facilitate connections for all involved.

— Katy McNicol

**MINI GOLF AT BLACKSTONE:
APRIL 25 & 26**



**Tickets available at:
blackstonelibrary.org/
mini-golf**

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—February

This February we had lots of activities celebrating the winter season in the Youth Services department! Our Home-school Meetup theme was the Winter Olympics. Kids learned about the history of the Olympic Games and explored the different sports featured in the winter competitions. They then took part in their own “minute-to-win-it” challenges, including rolling ping-pong balls into targets, building the tallest cup tower, and keeping a balloon in the air as long as possible. We had lots of fun and friendly competition with these challenges!



CT scientist and author Ainissa Ramirez leads a hands-on learning activity highlighting Black inventors.

Teens enjoyed a cozy afternoon making cute cookies that looked like melting snowmen. We started by making our own icing from scratch using vanilla, icing sugar, and milk. We then covered sugar cookies in the icing and used marshmallows, m&ms, and twizzlers to give our snowmen personality. Another fun food activity this month was Nicolette’s Valentine’s Slime program. Kids created completely edible slime from marshmallows, and then decorated the slime using food dye and sprinkles. This was a messy activity, but a huge hit.



Melting snowmen cookies.



Edible slime being made.

Another highlight was a special program on Black inventors led by local author and scientist Ainissa Ramirez. Her latest children’s book, “Spark” tells the story of the African American inventor behind the microphone. Kids learned all

about some amazing everyday objects that were designed by Black inventors and got to complete several hands-on activities connected to the inventions. The presentation was very inspiring, and the kids and parents were engaged throughout the event.

During this month’s Science Saturday, we explored the fascinating traits of owls. Kids listened to the calls of different owl species and learned how adaptations like asymmetrical ears and large eyes help owls see and hear. They created owl masks to experience how owls perceive the world and built food chains to understand their role as predators. We also celebrated Take Your Child to the Library Day, where kids enjoyed making their own buttons using our button maker as part of a

statewide effort to encourage families to visit their local libraries.

Teens had even more opportunities to connect this month, including our ongoing Dungeons & Dragons campaign and a Nintendo Switch tournament featuring Super Smash Bros. I also attended the Young Adult Librarians Roundtable through the Connecticut Library Consortium, where we shared programs that have been successful with teens. We’re always working to strengthen the events and services we offer, and these conversations with other librarians help us continue to grow.

— Emily Yates

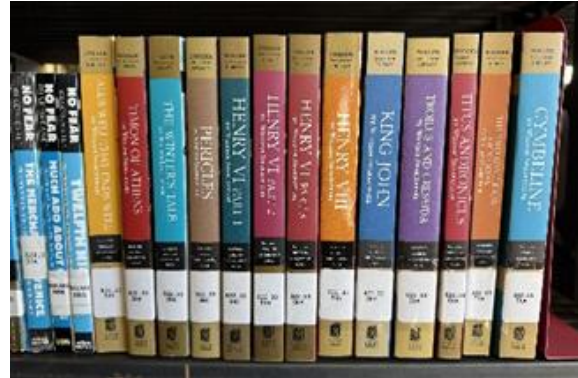
Highlights from the Reference Department—February

In addition to our numerous ongoing programs, we had great attendance at several programs in February. We had 37 people attend a program on Connecticut Wineries, 60 people joined our conversation with Connecticut Secretary of State Stephanie Thomas, and we also had 60 people attend our Branford Land Trust sponsored program on singing and listening to whales.

The reference team has continued to work on a number of projects. Jordan’s focus was on getting the Spring calendar designed and printed; Ryan is working on both sustainability and civic involvement programming; Gilligan continues working on learning ASL and creating accessible digital documents; Amy has been creating our community newsletter and is presenting several technology classes with Gilligan; Jenny has re-

ceived thousands of seed packets for the seed library and the propagation station continues to be very popular; Deb has been working with Katy and the town historian to get ready for the balcony project by planning out how, when and where to move all of the materials (maps and architectural plans, about 15,000 photographs in 70+ boxes and hundreds of scrapbooks) currently housed in the Branford Room.

The entire reference team has been spending extra time on keeping the nonfiction stacks in order, replacing older books and updating collections. Recently, a young student was asking about information on Shakespeare, a section that Jordan recently up-



The updated Shakespeare section.

dated. Ryan assisted the student and his mother in finding relevant texts, explained what an index and bibliography entailed and Nicolette was also able to pull together some books from the Youth Services collection. We are always happy when we can help local students and this was definitely a team effort.

— Deborah Trofatter

Friends Spring Book Sale

Date: Saturday May 2

Time: 9am - 2pm

Location: 20 Thompson Rd, Branford

Featuring:

Adult fiction, Children’s books, Civil War and History Books, Puzzles, DVDS

Hardcover \$3, Trade Paperback \$2, Mass Market Paperback \$0.50, Children’s Books start at \$0.50, DVDS \$1 each or **25 DVDs for \$10**

More info: friends@blackstonelibrary.org





James Blackstone Memorial Library
758 Main Street
Branford, CT 06405

203.488.1441 | blackstonelibrary.org
reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
instagram.com/blackstone_library

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

April 2026 Program Highlights

Medical Insurance Info Session Thursday, April 9 @ 5:30–7 pm

Join medical biller and coder Lauren Ganino as she explains how to avoid common mistakes that people make in regards to medical insurance. Questions are welcome!

Musical Arts Society Presents: Opera Theater of Connecticut Sunday, April 12 @ 2–3:30 pm

Join us for a musical afternoon with the Opera Theater of CT! Presented by the Musical Arts Society of Branford.

Titanic and Her Sister Ships Wednesday, April 15 @ 6–7 pm

Join us for a presentation by Philip Vitiello, a longtime member of the Titanic Historical Society and noted historian, who will take us back to the age of the great ocean liners

with the story of the Titanic and her sister ships, Olympic and Britannic. We all know the Titanic disaster, but Phil uncovers the dramatic stories of her sister ships and their surprising Connecticut connections, including the amazing story of Violet Jessop who sailed on all three Olympic class ships.

Library Digital Resources Tech Workshop Friday, April 17 @ 2–3 pm

Want to learn about how to borrow free ebooks, audiobooks, movies, and more with your Blackstone Library card? Join us for a tech workshop to learn the basics of some of our digital resources, including Libby, Hoopla, and Kanopy! Attendees MUST bring their own devices and library cards to this workshop.

Echoes Across Horizons: American Voices in Classical Piano

Saturday, April 18
@ 2–3:30 pm

International pianist Junwen Liang brings a unique perspective to a program that celebrates underrepresented voices and diverse traditions within American classical music. Featuring works by pioneering women such as Amy Beach, trailblazing African American composer Florence Price, and contemporary voices like Tan Dun and Paul Harvey Aurandt, the program traverses cultural landscapes shaped by immigrant experiences, African American heritage, women's contributions, and the post-20th-century spirit of romanticism. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

February 2026 Statistics—Circulation Department

Physical Items Circulation: 6,889
February 2025: 7,511

borrowIT: 2,665
February 2025: 2,037

Renewals: 4,365

Computer Sessions: 617
WIFI Logins: 3,235
Website visits: 8,338

MailChimp: 7,670 subscribers
Facebook: 3,060 followers
Instagram: 1,765 followers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,275

Libby audiobooks: 1,396

Libby magazines: 966

Palace App: 42

HOOPLA: 1,040

Kanopy: 351

Transparent Languages: 29

Ancestry Library: 153

New Haven Register: 34

Branford History Scrapbooks: 27

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 131

Children's Programs
23 programs/667 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
5 programs/23 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
38 programs/421 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 324
Days open: 25

Learn, Connect, and Create with the Library of Things



This collection includes many different non-traditional items for you to borrow: lawn games, sewing machines, musical instruments, travel kits, tools, and so much more.

Visit [the Library of Things on our website](#) or scan the QR code for more info:



Made possible by:



FRIENDS OF
BLACKSTONE LIBRARY