



# Report to the Board of Trustees

May 6, 2026

## From the Director

April kicked off with Passports to Libraries month, where participants visit as many libraries as possible and get a stamp at each one. Thanks to Pasquale for organizing our passports and giveaways.

I attended the virtual Public Library Association conference this year, which offered a number of interesting programs and I have some ideas for improving our Code of Conduct policy, borrowing from the Seattle Public Library changes to make the policy friendlier and easier to enforce.

Jordan and I attended a legislators breakfast meeting at the Guilford Community Center, organized by Branford/Guilford Community Foundation. We saw many community partners in

attendance, discussing impacts of the current legislative session on the nonprofit world. We got a shout-out from Robin Comey about an upcoming Civic Saturday program she is hosting here (May 23 @ 10 am on navigating the CT General Assembly site). Thanks to Ryan for organizing the May program, and for working to begin a series of civic education programs here in the coming months.

A huge thank you to Rhea, who was the center of the



A huge thank you for the new Princeton Elm that was planted by the Town of Branford on Arbor Day, as part of their Tree City USA commitment.

Mini Golf hurricane that hit the Blackstone this month. Thank you to the Development Committee, trustees, and volunteers who worked hard to make the event run so smoothly. This fundraiser could not happen with your efforts. Thank you to Amy Rosen, who was the title sponsor, honoring her parents with this amazing event, and who led strong marketing efforts to get the word out. Thank you all of the sponsors and auction/prize donors who helped this event have a record income level this year! It raised almost \$21,000, directly benefitting the Blackstone Library and our programs and services. Thank you to the community for coming out to support us AND have some fun in the process! We hope to see you back next year!

We had two private rental events happen this month, a fundraiser for a local nonprofit and a bridal shower. Both

events went smoothly, thanks to Facilities Manager Stephen Brady being onsite to supervise.

The CT Library Association conference took place April 26-28. 11 staff members attended daytime sessions on the 27th and 28th. Congratulations to Nicolette and Emily on their presentation about their creating a well-attended homeschooling program that happens monthly. I hosted a CLA mentor/mentee meetup and conducted resume reviews for those needing a spruce-up. The conference is a great way to meet other CT library staff and learn about what others are doing well to serve their communities. We'll be comparing notes to see what ideas we can bring back to Branford!

A Princeton Elm was planted at the Blackstone on Arbor Day, thanks to the Branford Forest Commission and Branford Public Works, as part of the town's Tree City USA initiative.

— Katy McNicol

The April 25-26 Gail & Alan Rosen Memorial Mini Golf fundraiser was a huge success! Below (top): The 18th hole starts at the top floor and rolls down to the next floor! (bottom): Pasquale went all out with a golf outfit that matched the library's colors!



## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

March was a busy month for the Youth Services team, with plenty of opportunities to connect with kids and teens both inside and outside the library. This month's Homeschool Meetup focused on astronaut Mae Jemison and the path she took to pursue her dream of becoming a scientist. Participants explored the skills and training astronauts need to travel to space, as well as what daily life and research look like aboard a spacecraft.



Everyone loved Poppi's Planet!



White hare art



A Mini Library creation.

Science Saturday was all about slime! Claudia demonstrated how to make three different kinds of slime: fluffy slime with a shaving cream base, bouncy ball slime using glue and liquid starch, and thermochromic slime that changes color with heat.

The exploration continued with a visit from an educator from Steward Outdoor Day School who presented a program called Migrate, Hibernate, Adapt. Kids sorted animals by their winter survival strategies and learned about torpor and how it differs from hibernation. Inspired by the hare, whose coat changes color in winter, participants created watercolor backgrounds for their own white hare art.

Thanks to the Friends of the Library, we were thrilled to welcome children's performer Erin Shea for her high-energy, interactive show Poppi's Planet. With songs, puppets, and lots of audience participation, Poppi was a crowd favorite.



Emily (third from the right) in attendance at a Read Across America event at a Branford elementary school.

Teens enjoyed an evening of pizza and board games, featuring the fast-paced word-and-deception game Chameleon. They also spent a relaxing afternoon creating miniature libraries inside small tins. With tiny books, mugs, plants, picture frames, cardboard shelves, and library-themed backdrops, teens made cozy miniature spaces that celebrated their love of reading.

We participated in several outreach events this month, including Tisko's Literacy Night, Murphy's Multicultural Family Night, and Branford High School's Community Service Fair. Rodcel and I also joined the United Way's Read Across America events at Murphy and Sliney Schools, visiting classrooms to read picture books that were later donated to each class. The kids were excited to have special visitors and had lots of questions about what it is like to work in a library.

I attended a helpful professional development session at the Middletown Library Service Center focused on preparing for summer reading. We explored connected-learning models for engaging teens and discussed strategies for making the library more welcoming for neurodivergent children and their families.

Next time you visit the Youth Services department, be sure to check out our new Middle Grade collection in the Teen Room. These books, geared toward ages 10–14, were previously shelved in Juvenile Fiction or Young Adult. By creating this dedicated section, we hope to help middle schoolers find books more easily and feel more at home in the Teen Room.

— Emily Yates

## Highlights from the Reference Department—March

One of the great things about working in the Reference department at the Blackstone Library is the variety of tasks and projects that we all work on. Every day is different and we learn new things all the time.

Attending webinars and training sessions is an important part of our work, to improve our knowledge and skills so that we can provide better service to our patrons. In March, Ryan attended a webinar on legal resources for librarians, I attended a webinar on team building, Gilligan continues to work on ASL and creating accessible documents and a number of Blackstone staff attended a wellness workshop together.

Tech help continues to be an important part of our work; our Tech Help Tuesdays sessions are popular and well attended.

Last month, Amy and Gilligan helped patrons with their Mac-Book, how to use GPS, deleting texts and voicemails from a smart phone and iPhone voicemail assistance. We help drop-in patrons as well and Gilligan and Ryan go to the Senior Center once a month to provide tech help to Branford seniors.

Jenny is maintaining the Seed Library and Propagation Station. Patrons are choosing packets from the Seed Library every day and they have been donating cuttings to the Propagation Station as well. Jenny is working with the Garden Club to participate in their plant sale event on the library lawn on May 16; she will be available to tell people about the Seed Library and Propagation Station. The theme for this year’s Summer Reading is “Plant a Seed, Read!” so we have an opportunity to include that as well.

Jordan has reorganized the entire nonfiction poetry collection. All poetry books have been put into their own section to make it easier for patrons to browse. The collection was formerly shelved by the Dewey Decimal System, which separated the collection by language, time period and region. This new system puts them all together on the same shelf. They are labeled with a purple "Poetry" sticker and the online catalog now lists "(Poetry)" in the call number.

— Deborah Trofatter



The updated Poetry section.



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## May 2026 Program Highlights

**Branford Poet Laureate Book Launch**  
**Saturday, May 9 @ 2–4:30 pm**  
Join Branford’s poet laureate, Judith Liebmann, as she celebrates the release of her new book!

**Tango and Jazz Concert**  
**Sunday, May 10 @ 2–3 pm**  
Join us for a musical afternoon with The Broken Reed Saxophone Quartet! This concert will feature original songs as well as recomposed tango classics using characteristic tango touches along with a modern jazz harmonic sensibility, phrasing and improvisation. Sponsored by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

**Access to the Outdoors: Disability, Grit, and Belonging in Nature**  
**Monday, May 11 @ 5:30–7:30 pm**

Join us for the Branford Land Trust’s annual meeting, featuring a presentation by Justin Brownell. Presented by the Branford Land Trust.

**Jenny Lind’s America**  
**Thursday, May 14 @ 6–7 pm**  
Coloratura soprano and Welsh triple harpist Zoe Vandermeer will be performing music Miss Lind sang in her concerts in America, from late 1850 to mid-1852. Staying true to Jenny Lind's program concepts, Ms. Vandermeer will be singing dazzling Bel Canto opera arias, heartfelt Scottish folk songs, beautiful Art Songs composed expressly for Jenny Lind, and a fun polka about 'Lindomania'. Harp solos and entertaining anecdotes will be interspersed throughout the evening. Sponsored by the John Loeb Lecture Fund.

**Musical Arts Society Presents: Lisa Yui**  
**Sunday, May 15 @ 2–3:30 pm**  
Join us for a musical afternoon with pianist Lisa Yui! Presented by the Musical Arts Society of Branford.

**Civic Saturday : How to Use the CT General Assembly Website**  
**Saturday, May 23 @ 10–12 pm**  
Join Representative Robin Comey to learn how to stay engaged and informed by following bills, statutes, committees, and your local representatives. Rep. Comey will also show how to make your voice heard in state government processes. The League of Women Voters of the East Shore will also be in attendance for voter and election education.

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

## March 2026 Statistics—Circulation Department

**Physical Items Circulation: 7,804**  
March 2025: 7,960

**borrowIT: 1,800**  
March 2025: 1,907

**Renewals: 4,635**

**Computer Sessions: 824**  
**WIFI Logins: 4,655**  
**Website visits: 9,456**

**MailChimp: 7,660 subscribers**  
**Facebook: 3,085 followers**  
**Instagram: 1,771 followers**

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Libby ebooks: 1,453**

**Libby audiobooks: 1,540**

**Libby magazines: 1,084**

**Palace App: 45**

**HOOPLA: 1,214**

**Kanopy: 435**

**Transparent Languages: 24**

**Ancestry Library: 55**

**New Haven Register: 35**

**Branford History Scrapbooks: 9**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 158**

**Children’s Programs**  
27 programs/858 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**  
7 programs/89 attendance

**Adult/All Ages programs**  
42 programs/746 attendance

**Average Daily Visitors: 442**  
**Days open: 31**

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