



Report to the Board of Trustees

June 10, 2026

From the Director

In May, I attended the grand re-opening of the Hagaman Memorial Library in East Haven after a year of their closure, during which time staff at the Blackstone acted somewhat as a branch for East Haven residents. We made Hagaman cards, took their books back, and checked out many of our own books to their residents. We're happy they're open again, but are always happy to help our neighboring communities get the materials and services they need.

The Facilities Assessment study kicked off, with a few days of sitework. Engineers scoured the building, inside and out, checking the structure, mechanicals, roof, and more. A full draft report will tell us what needs addressing now and in the future, so we can be prepared ahead of time.

We also prepared for a June parking lot repaving project by cutting and filling a piece of asphalt in the front lot. Thank you to Christine for handling the tree emergency we had at the end of May, and to Branford Public Works and Police for their support. A sugar maple on our property broke in half, with a huge piece landing along the sidewalk and into Main Street. No one was hurt, and no cars were damaged. An additional tree was removed preventatively. We wrapped up the Passport to Libraries program at the end of April by stamping or giving out a total of 385 passports! Those people visited at least one CT library, and likely many more!

I gave a tour of the library to a



A crane was onsite for the Facilities Assessment kickoff.



Parking lot repairs.



At the Hagaman Library re-opening (Director Sarah Mallory, speaking, is a former teen librarian from the Blackstone!)



A plaque honoring the memory of Adam Spilka was placed.



Jenny and I staffed the library's table at the Garden Club's annual Plant Sale.

group from the Schiller Shoreline Institute for Lifelong Learning, covering the library's founding, history over the years, architecture and services offered today. The group indicated that they learned a lot from the tour, even though many had been in the library many times.

We participated in the Great Give, which is organized by the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. This acted as our spring appeal, resulting in \$4,450 in donations, the highest amount we've raised since we began participating in the Great Give. Thanks to Rhea sending emails out to let people know about the opportunity!

Branford Community Foundation approved the full amount of our summer reading grant that Emily had applied for. BCF has a competitive grant process and we appreciate that they continue

to provide support for our summer learning programs. These funds will be supplemented by funds from the Friends, and the Allen Louis Loeb Foundation (which is sunsetting). We are looking forward to a great summer learning kickoff on Saturday, June 13, on the library lawn from 1-3. The Friends and Ashleys are sponsoring the all-ages event, which will include live music, crafts, lawn games, and free ice cream (while supplies last). Everyone is invited!

The garden club hosted their annual plant sale on the library's lawn again. It was a great day to be outside and the event was well-attended. They also filled the library's front planters with flowers and palms. Thank you, Garden Club!

I installed a plaque honoring the memory of Adam Spilka, who died while holding the office of Board President. It is placed in his favored spot within the library.

— Katy McNicol

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—April

This spring, we were thrilled to host Mikaela, an intern from Southern Connecticut State University's Library Science program. Throughout the semester, Mikaela supported programs for kids and teens, assisted with collection development, and even joined me for an outreach event at a local elementary school. For her final project, she designed and led a tissue paper suncatcher craft, where children created colorful window decorations using tissue paper squares. It was wonderful having Mikaela with us for the semester, and we can't wait to see her grow as a librarian! Nicolette also ran several creative programs for kids this month, including a shrinky-dink craft where children colored designs and watched them get smaller in the toaster. She also hosted a Mario Kart tournament, a Lego Club, and reading sessions with Oscar, the therapy dog.

At this month's Homeschool Meetup, a local Pediatric Therapy office, More to Say, offered a hands-on weather program. Kids created rain sticks out of paper tubes, rice, and aluminum foil, while learning about weather patterns. We also had the opportunity to share our Homeschool Meetup model with librarians across the state at the Connecticut Library Association conference in Mystic. Nicolette and I presented on how our monthly Homeschool Meetup program has helped us build lasting relationships with families while showcasing the library's resources. We shared sample lesson plans and strategies for how to launch or strengthen homeschool programming at other libraries.



Outreach table at the YMCA's Healthy Kids Day.

Spring break was packed with fun events for teens. At our pizza and board game night we had eighteen teens participate! We played Liar, Liar, Apples to Apples, and Clue while enjoying pizza and snacks generously provided by the Friends. The Food Explorers also joined us for a homemade pasta workshop, where teens learned to make fresh fettuccine from scratch. While the dough was resting, we played food-themed bingo, and at the end the teens were able to enjoy their pasta with parmesan cheese and marinara sauce.

We also partnered with the Community Dining Room to host a Teen Job Fair, which brought in fifty teens. Local employers—including Branford Parks and Recreation, Stop & Shop, and Evergreen Woods—shared job opportunities and answered questions. Thanks to the Friends of the Library, we are hiring a teen intern for the Youth Services department this summer, so I promoted that position at the job fair as well.

During spring break, I offered another round of Teen Book Boxes. The teens who sign up share a few of their favorite

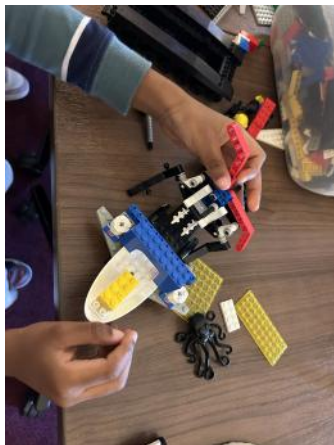
books and genres, and I use that information to make personalized recommendations from our collection. Each box includes those books, along with bookmarks, fidget toys, snacks and other goodies for them to take home. The book boxes are a great way for busy teens to stay connected with the library even when they can't attend programs.

We had two great outreach opportunities this month. I attended the YMCA's Healthy Kids Day event and brought the library's button maker, which was a fun way to connect with kids and families while sharing information about our resources. Nicolette also led a special storytime during the Week of the Young Child celebration at the Community House. In addition, Rodcel participated in a book repair workshop this month and has already begun putting her new skills to use. With warmer weather on the way and summer approaching, we're excited about all the learning experiences we're planning for you at the library.

— Emily Yates



Homemade pasta from a teen workshop.



Lego club creation.



Tissue-paper suncatchers, from an intern-led program.

Highlights from the Reference Department—April

Jordan finished booking summer programs and is organizing a partnership with NEBCO (New England Brewing Company) for a musical bingo night. The Banned Book Club had its first in-person author visit and it went very well! Kyle Lukoff visited the Banned Book Club and discussed his book *Too Bright to See*. Kyle discussed his writing inspirations and answered questions that attendees had. He also informed the group of his upcoming book, which will be both a sequel to *Too Bright to See* and a crossover with another one of his books.

Amy had a varied month of tech help sessions, including how to upload photos online, switch messaging apps on a phone, general iPhone questions, how to transfer photos from a phone to a laptop, connecting Bluetooth headphones to different devices, freeing up space on

Google drive, and removing ads from an Android phone.

Gilligan shared a very interesting reference question from a patron regarding Canadian citizenship. The patron wanted to know if they could apply for Canadian citizenship as their father was born in Canada in 1917 (and had moved to the United States before Canada became free from the British). Gilligan learned about a bill that allows citizenship for both “Lost Canadians” (who were unable to technically acquire citizenship during the many changes to Canadian citizenship law) and their descendants past the first generation. The patron then updated Gilligan a week later saying that their whole family was applying for dual citizenship which was very exciting!

Ryan continues his work on sustainability, the civic Saturday program, cataloging and most recently on updating our Library of

Things collection. He is also going to be working with a library intern over the summer (along with Jordan) and is beginning to mentor a librarian new to public library service. Jenny has been preparing for the Garden Club’s event on the library lawn and is working with Youth Services on this year’s summer reading theme, which is Plant a Seed, Read.

The library recently received a package containing one of our nonfiction books, from United Airlines! Our patron apparently left the book behind on the plane after landing at Chicago’s O’Hare Airport and the staff at the airline’s lost & found department were kind enough to send it to us, along with a note saying they were returning it “on behalf of your library patron - hopefully avoiding a lost/late book fee!”

— Deborah Trofatter

Shop the Friends Book Carts



Can't wait for the next book sale? Don't wait—shop at the Friends Book Carts at the Library now!

Now located on the bottom floor across from the Circulation Desk.

One cart for adults, one cart for children and teen books. Puzzles, too!

Selection changes frequently. Items at the same great low book sale prices.

Cash, check, and charge are accepted for payment.



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NEW ITEMS ADDED to the Library of Things:

- * Acoustic Guitar
- * Adjustable Net (for racquet sports/volleyball)
- * Bag Toss Game Set
- * Home Energy Assessment Kits
- * A new Karaoke Machine
- * Kubb Game Set
- * Lawn Darts (Nerf)
- * Lawn Domino Set
- * Portable Jump Starter
- * Washer Toss Game
- * Photo Scanner

Visit the **Library of Things** on
our website or scan below to
reserve your items today:



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June 2026 Program Highlights

Violin Recital with Ilana Zaks Thursday, June 11 @ 6:30–7:30 pm

This recital explores the rich and diverse repertoire of violinist-composers, featuring works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Lauren Bernofsky, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, Chen Yi, Henryk Wieniawski, and Fritz Kreisler. The program highlights the unique voices of these composers, from Baroque masterworks to contemporary expressions, showcasing the violin's versatility and expressive range. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

Summer Reading Kickoff Event Saturday, June 13 @ 1–3 pm

Drop-in event. Join us on the lawn for an afternoon of fun for all ages, featuring live music by the Keith Cooper Trio, crafts, face painting, lawn games, and free ice cream (while supplies last!). Be sure to grab your summer reading challenge card

to complete throughout the summer for a chance to win prizes in late August as well! Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library & Ashley's Ice Cream.

Shakespeare's World : Seeing the Plays through Elizabethan Eyes (Part II)

Monday, June 15 @ 5–7 pm

Join author and Producing Artistic Director Rebecca Goodheart in four fascinating discussions about how the world looked to Shakespeare and his audience and how that worldview shaped the plays. Each evening will look through a different lens at Shakespeare's world, accompanied by mini-performances of Shakespeare's poetry and lively discussion about their meaning today.
Part II: The Great Chain of Being
What if everything in the universe had its own special place? What happens if that

order is broken? What happens if we look at each play as being driven by a break in cosmic order and the endeavor to restore it? Join us for parts III & IV in the fall!

Fireside Chat with Local Author Shannon White Saturday, June 20 @ 1–2 pm

Join us for readings and discussions with local authors in front of the fireplace in our Reading Room! This week we will be joined by Shannon White, author of *The Invisible Conversations With Your Aging Parents*. During this author talk, we will consider the real consequences of not having conversations between adult children and aging parents, and discuss ways to enter or re-enter conversations which are vital to healthy relationships. Books will be available for sale for \$10.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

April 2026 Statistics—Circulation Department

Physical Items Circulation: 7,474
April 2025: 8,227

borrowIT: 3,094
April 2025: 2,243

Renewals: 4,526

Computer Sessions: 838
WIFI Logins: 4,135
Website visits: 9,465

MailChimp: 7,577 subscribers
Facebook: 3,111 followers
Instagram: 1,792 followers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,448

Libby audiobooks: 1,448

Libby magazines: 977

Palace App: 29

HOOPLA: 1,182

Kanopy: 345

Transparent Languages: 34

Ancestry Library: 254

New Haven Register: 138

Branford History Scrapbooks: 2

Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 102

Children's Programs
36 programs/983 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
7 programs/89 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
39 programs/501 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 484
Days open: 29