

Marble Columns



Newsletter of the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library

Friends Annual Fall Book Sale will be at the Branford Train Station



We are excited to announce the new location for the 2026 Annual Fall Book Sale: the Branford Train Station at 35 Maple Street! The sale will take place September 17–20 under two tents, bringing one of Branford's favorite community events to a new location for this year with parking and a safe pedestrian walkway to the sale.

The Fall Book Sale is the Friend's largest fundraiser, supporting library programs, materials, and activities for children, teens, and adults throughout the community. Volunteers spend the year collecting, sorting, and organizing thousands of donated books and media for the event.

Shoppers can browse under two tents (one for children's books and media such as CDs, DVDs, vinyl records, audiobooks, puzzles, and more; and a big tent for over 30 categories and 100+ subcategories of books). Whether you're looking for bestselling fiction, history, cookbooks, children's favorites, or hidden treasures, signs, maps and volunteers will guide the way to helping you find something for every reader and collector. The map of the sale layout is included in this newsletter.

The sale opens with a Friends Members Preview on Thursday, September 17, from 5:00–7:00 p.m., followed by public admission from 7:00–9:00 p.m. Hours continue Friday & Saturday from 9:00 –7:00 p.m. and concludes Sunday, Sept. 20, with the popular Fill-a-Bag Sale from 10:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m., when shoppers can fill a provided bag for just \$10. Cash, credit and Apple Pay accepted, and snacks and water will be available for purchase.

2026 Friends Annual Meeting

The 2026 Friends Annual Meeting was held at the Blackstone Library on June 16th. Thanks to a very successful fundraising year, Friends President Barbara Barrett presented a check for \$90,000 to Blackstone Library Director Katy McNicol — the largest annual contribution to the library ever. In accepting the gift, Director McNicol praised the Friends, saying, "The Friends work so incredibly hard all year long to raise enough funds to continue to enhance everything the Blackstone offers to the community. Thank you, Friends!" More about what that \$90,000 represents is covered in the article on page 3.



At the meeting, the Friends also ratified three new board members: Paula Grimm, Pat Bourne, and Susan Stackpole. Friends President Barrett welcomed the new board members and thanked the volunteers, members, sponsors, community supporters, and Blackstone Library staff for their commitment and support.

Following the business portion of the Annual Meeting, attendees enjoyed a special presentation, *Women of '76*, a theatrical tribute to lesser-known women of the American Revolution. The solo performance by actress and playwright Rita Parisi of Waterfall Productions brought history to life through dynamic storytelling and richly detailed costuming. Through the powerful stories of five remarkable women — some patriots and some loyalists — the production introduced the audience to voices too often left out of history. It was an exciting, thought-provoking, and timely performance.

Upcoming Friends Sponsored Programs at Blackstone

ADULTS:

- **Saturday Cinema: Saturdays 2:00–4:00 pm (11am–1pm for the first screening on the double features)**
September 26: *Project Hail Mary* (2026, PG-13, 156 mins.)
October 31: *Obsession* (2025, R, 109 mins.) & *Backrooms* (2026, R, 110 mins.)
November 28: *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006, PG-13, 109 mins.) & *The Devil Wears Prada 2* (2026, PG-13, 119 mins.)
- **Third Thursday Movie Matinee: Thursdays @ 10:00 am – 12:00 pm**
September 17: *Paths of Glory* (1957, 88 mins.)
October 15: *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* (1947, 104 mins.)
November 19: *Desk Set* (1957, 103 mins.)
- **Best Sellers Book Club**
September 26: *Under the Falls* by Richard Russo
October 31: *Hollow Bones* by Jodi Picoult
November 28: *Partita* by Barbara Kingsolver
- **250th Anniversary of American Beer: Wednesday, September 23 @ 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**
To mark America's 250th anniversary, illustrator, author, and Advanced Cicerone Em Sauter will give an illustrated presentation discussing the role of beer and brewing in American history. *Registration required.*
- **An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe: Thursday, October 15 @ 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm**
The master of the macabre, Edgar Allan Poe, returns for an evening of mystery and horror. Enjoy your favorite stories and poems performed live by actor, Campbell Harmon. *Registration required.*
- **Music Among Friends: Saturday, October 17 @ 11:30 am – 12:30 pm**
Enjoy the glorious spectrum of chamber music involving string and wind players from the Yale Medical Symphony Orchestra...from the iconic Schubert Octet to The Beatles! This program is being held in honor of Edward Maloney. *Registration required.*
- **Double Play Concert: Thursday, October 22 @ 6:00 pm - 7:00 pm**
Join us for an acoustic music concert featuring double bass, guitar and vocals! Performers will switch instruments throughout the show. There will be a mix of Americana oldies along with pop and blues favorites. *Registration required*
- **Gladius Flamenco Guitar Concert: Sunday, November 8 @ 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm**
Gladius is an award-winning composer and "accomplished classical/flamenco style guitarist."
Registration required.



Kids:

- **Annual Halloween Parade - Friday, October 30 @ 10:00 am – 10:30 am**
- **Kid Craft: Pumpkin Painting! - Wednesday, October 21 @ 4:00 pm – 4:45 pm**
- **Kid Craft: Shrinky Dinks! - Wednesday, November 4 @ 4:00 pm – 4:45 pm**
- **The Story of Inventions - Wednesday, November 11 @ 4:00 pm- 5:00 pm**
How do space rockets help us get home? How do balloons act like microphones? How does a plant make Halloween candy possible? In this hands-on STEM children's program, Ainissa Ramirez will share the story of inventions made by little-known inventors that shape our everyday lives.
- **Homeschool Meetup - Once a month on Mondays | September 14, October 5, November 9 @ 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm**
- **FALL Family Take-N-Makes - Once a month on last Wednesdays | September 30, October 28, November 25 @ 9:00 am to 8:00 pm**



Teens:

- **Pizza and Board Games - Tuesday September 8, October 13, November 10 @ 5:30 pm - 6:30 pm**
- **Teen Kitchen Creations: Cake Pop Cones - Wednesday, September 23 @ 4:00 pm - 4:45 pm**
- **Teen Take and Makes: Mini Pumpkin Pie - Monday, November 2 @ 9:00 am to 8:00 pm**
- **Personalized Book Box for grades 5-12 - Register by November 16 to pick up a box the week of 11/23**
- **Macrame Rainbows for Grades 5-12 - Wednesday, November 18 @ 3:30 pm - 4:30 pm**

The Journey to the Tent - Part II

Our behind-the-scenes look at how gently used books make their way to the big sale tent continues in this issue of *Marble Columns*. Part I, in the summer issue, followed the process from donations to sorting, categorizing, and temporary warehouse storage. Now that the books are ready for transport, Part II explains how they get to the tent.

The color-coded, labeled bins containing the sorted and categorized books are stored on pallets in the warehouse by color. Once a pallet is full, it is inventoried, recorded in spreadsheets, shrink-wrapped, and covered in jumbo bags to stabilize the load during transport and protect the books from adverse weather during tent setup. Under the tent, each book category has designated tables that mirror the warehouse color-coding, making it easier to deliver each bin to the correct location. Category sorters label their tables with sub-categories ahead of time, and then unpack the books and arrange them accordingly. While the process may sound complicated, this logical and efficient system moves the books from sorting to storage to transport to sale-ready tables, helping create an easy and pleasant shopping experience for book lovers. We can't wait to see you at the Branford Railroad Station upper parking lot from September 17-20 for another exciting fall sale!



The Milestone Gift of \$90,000 - The Details

It is the largest annual amount ever gifted by Friends to the Blackstone Library! We are pleased to share with you how the money was raised, how such a gift is used and the impact on the community.

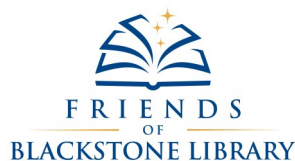
Before each fiscal year (FY) begins the Blackstone Library and Friends agree to a wish list of library needs for the upcoming year. Monies to support these needs are raised by Friends through various community activities. Dedicated volunteers organize, manage and stage events such as the Fall and Spring Book Sales and The Basket Sale - all of which are very successful - and also sell books online and from the in-house Library Cart to happy customers. Library expenses for programs such as lectures, concerts, movies, book clubs, kids/teens crafts and games are funded by Friends from the proceeds of the events and sales. In fact, during FY'26 over 3,400 people attended 144 programs! Friends funding regularly provides for patron access to popular digital content platforms (audio books and ebooks, movies, TV, music, etc.) through Hoopla and Kanopy, discounted museum passes and contributes to important behind the scenes Library activities.

Blackstone Library Director Katy McNicol acknowledged the impact of such a substantial gift, "In big and small ways, libraries change lives. For over 125 years the Blackstone Library has served Branford evolving to meet ever-changing community needs. Friends helps to supplement our overall library mission. If not for Friends, we could not provide a majority of the programs significantly impacting our ability to engage and inspire."

Membership Renewal Reminder!

September is coming up fast and the Fall Book Sale will soon be here. Just a reminder to those who have not yet renewed their membership. You don't want to miss out on the Members Only Preview which is from 5-7 pm on Thursday, September 17th and is for Friends members only! Look at the upper right corner of your mailing label on this copy of *Marble Columns*. If it reads "EXP 2026-06-30" your membership **IS DUE** for renewal. (If it reads "EXP 2027-06-30" your membership is **NOT** due for renewal.)

Memberships can be mailed, dropped off at the Library (a renewal form and mailing envelope is enclosed) **OR** you can pay with PayPal online at <https://blackstonelibrary.org/support-the-library/friends>. This is also the perfect opportunity to tell your friends and family about this special bonus so they can become members of the Friends and join you at the Fall Sale Preview. See you under the tent!



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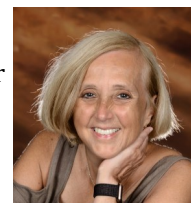
Susan Stackpole

From the President Friends,

Thank you to everyone who attended the Friends Annual Meeting on June 16th. It was a wonderful celebration, highlighted by our \$90,000 gift to the library this fiscal year. This contribution was made possible by more than 70 dedicated volunteers, as well as the generous support of our members and sponsors. We are especially grateful given that much of our income comes from selling books for \$2 and \$3.

As we prepare for the 2026–2027 fiscal year, our Fall Sale will have a new venue because the Branford Green is unavailable this year. Since December 2025, the book sale leadership team—Bob Deschamps, Jon Bloom, Stan Abramowitz, Pat Bourne, and Joe Genua—has worked with Town leadership, including Josh Brooks and Perry Maresca, to secure State of Connecticut approval to use the expansion lot at the Branford Train Station. The team is finalizing details to preserve the same

welcoming under-tent shopping experience, and our sponsors have generously continued their support.



The sale will offer the same great selection, categories, prices, and hours, with two tents of books and other curated items. Sunday will include an advertised \$10 Bag Day from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and a map is included in this issue to help shoppers navigate the sale.

We look forward to seeing everyone at the sale!

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support of the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Warm regards,

Barbara

Barbara Barrett, President
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