



Report to the Board of Trustees

October 7, 2026

NEW MEETING ROOMS ARE COMING

Visit blackstonelibrary.org to learn more about the renovation project that will begin October 6 and continue through to the end of the year, resulting in 2 new meeting rooms for public use! The library may be noisy during this project, and we ask for your patience while we make improvements to benefit our community. Thank you!

From the Director

Congratulations to the Friends of the Blackstone Library for successfully holding another great book sale. The annual book sale took place at the Branford Train Station and brought in approximately \$78,000 — the same amount as last year. With a change in venue and a day of heavy rain, the success was not guaranteed, but the Friends did a great job getting the word out and people continue to say it's one of the best library book sales they've been to! Funds raised at the book sale support the many enrichment activities offered by the Blackstone—special collections, programs, and so much more. Great job, Friends, and thank you!

I received the first application for the next Branford Poet Laureate and expect a few more in the next couple of weeks (due Oct. 16). The committee will then meet to review all submissions.

Delivery of materials to/from LION libraries has been impacted recently by a number of factors. LION libraries contract with an outside vendor who has experienced issues with staffing, equipment, and surging gas prices, all of which affects their weekly regular delivery schedule. The LION board is working to address the issues so that delivery of materials between libraries can be consistent and reliable. I had many discussions in

September with other LION directors about this topic, including during a lunch and learn session with member libraries, a New Member Committee meeting, and in an Executive Committee meeting with a representative from the Connecticut State Library. We will continue to look for positive solutions that benefit our patrons in a fiscally responsible way.

As the balcony renovation project gets closer to starting, we began having regular meetings with the architect and construction company so we are all prepared for what is coming. Construction will take place from October-December, and the result will be 2 new meeting rooms for the public. This project is a direct result of findings that came out of the 2022 strategic plan and is partially funded through a Library Construction Grant from the CT State Library.

We also met with the architects to discuss the Facilities Assessment draft report and associated tables. Progress toward a final report and recommendations is being made, and there is a lot to review, digest, question, and discuss along the way before we get to a final report.

We had three private rental weddings. One was a last minute pivot here due to the nor'easter! Thank you to staff who are able to cover these after hours events, especially on short notice!

— Katy McNicol

A new fall fundraiser features 3 comedy acts (and maybe a little magic), cash bar (beer, wine, soft drinks), lite fare, and auction items.

Seating is limited! Tickets are \$40 per person, for ages 21+ only, and include one free drink! All proceeds directly benefit the Blackstone Library, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit library.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

We enjoyed the last few weeks of summer in the Youth Services department! The Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center visited our Homeschool Meetup this month to teach us about fossils and how they are formed. The educator brought examples, including fossils of fish, ferns, and shells. Participants also learned about large prehistoric animals like giant turtles, beavers, and dragonflies, and got to meet some live animals from the nature center, including a painted turtle, a black rat snake, and a Madagascar hissing cockroach. Finally, kids made their own fossils using dinosaur figurines and salt dough. Kids also enjoyed a special Music Bingo event, led by Nicolette and Rodcel. With playlists curated with kids in mind, everyone won bingo at least once and was able to take home a prize. Other events for kids included Lego Club, a visit from Oscar, the Therapy dog, and a kite-themed Take and Make.

Teens had the opportunity to flex their creative muscles at a workshop titled Writing an Opening Hook led by local author Catherine Egan. We read several examples of opening paragraphs from middle grade and young adult books and discussed what elements of the openings made us want to read more. Teens then worked on their own opening hook, impressing us with the creativity and variety of their stories. Afterwards, Catherine shared a little bit about her own writing process, and everyone got to pick out one of her books to take home. Teens had a few more fun events this month,



Charlotte was this year's Friends-sponsored teen intern and presented a program for children about helping the environment. Great job, Charlotte!

including a Pizza and Board Games event, a Dungeons and Dragons campaign, a teen volunteer orientation, and a "campfire cone" Take and Make that included ice cream cones, marshmallows, and chocolate to create a s'mores-like treat.

We were very lucky to have a paid teen intern this summer, funded by the Friends of the Library. Charlotte joined the youth services team and got experience making book displays, designing posters, selecting books to purchase, and assisting with many other projects. She has an interest in the environment, and designed a program for elementary aged students teaching them about the dangers of microplastics. She then helped them create a sensory bottle using recycled materials that mimicked the concept of plastics in the ocean. We are so grateful to the Friends for funding this program, and to Charlotte for all of her hard work this summer.

We partnered with a few community organizations for events this month as well. I visited Branford Parks and Recreation's Little Explorers camp for kids ages 4-5 to do a special storytime. We also hosted one of the Community Dining Room's family dinners on the library grounds, and put out lawn games and an architecture scavenger hunt to make the evening special. Finally, I attended the Branford Early Start Partnership for Children's Summer Splash event at Foote Park. This was a great event featuring lots of community partners, and I shared our upcoming events with parents while making "magic" reading wands with the kids using popsicle sticks, foam stickers, and adhesive rhinestones.

As you prepare for the beginning of the school year, know that the library is always here to help provide resources and fun activities to wind down after the school day. We are looking forward to fall!

— Emily Yates



Teens attend the "Opening Hook" writing workshop.



Getting hands-on snake experience.

Highlights from the Reference Department—August

Amy and Gilligan continue to help many patrons with a diverse array of requests in our weekly Tech Help. They receive ongoing, very positive comments from our patrons. Amy continues work in her assigned nonfiction sections, added identifying stickers to our Library of Things collection and creates our weekly Community Events newsletters as well as targeted ones highlighting our various databases and collections. Gilligan attended additional webinars last month, works on our nonfiction displays and continues archives scanning.

Jordan and Angela partnered with New England Brewing Company for a successful Music Bingo outreach event that had about 55 people in attendance. We are very happy to report that our Ask-A-Lawyer drop-in event is back for the 2nd Wednesday of

the month from 5:30-7:30pm. This is an especially important addition, since these events are no longer being conducted at Madison, New Haven, North Branford or East Haven as they had been over the past few years. Jordan is now co-chair of the Connecticut Library Consortium Programming Roundtable.

Ryan continued working on a broad range of tasks, including cataloging, updating and correcting existing records, Library of Things organization, collection maintenance, Social Media content, reviewing and correcting website links, Senior Center Tech Help and purchasing OverDrive audiobooks and ebooks.

Jenny has an interesting story to report about the Plant Propagation Station, which helped out with a plant sitting situation this summer. One of our patrons was plant

sitting for a neighbor, and through no fault of their own, ended up with a dead plant. They were able to replace it with the same kind of plant from one of our cuttings and grow it nice and big before their neighbor's return! Thanks to everyone who has donated houseplant cuttings - the Station is really going strong!

The Seed Library has begun its migration to its new home in a beautiful old card catalog that the Library recently acquired. Over the fall and winter, we will be moving Seed Library operations to its new location in the area right outside Youth Services, near the DVD room. The Seed Library will officially be stocked and open for the season on February 1st, 2027.

— Deborah Trofatter



The Reference and Circulation team helped design and coordinate changes in the computer lab. LION IT staff came out to reconfigure network connections, and the result is a new layout featuring the staff desk front and center of the doorway, with patron print station and accessible workstation on either side. Additional patron computers are closer to the walls. The new configuration makes the room feel completely different — more open and yet more private. This is in preparation for potential new furniture to further support sound absorption and patron confidentiality. Thank you to everyone for their thoughtful input and efforts to improve this space.



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

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

Passes have been generously provided by the Friends of the Blackstone Library and the Allan Louis Loeb Foundation.



October 2026 Program Highlights

Blackstone Library Tours

Saturday, October 10 @ 10–11 am
Take a tour of the Blackstone, learn historical tidbits, and get an insider's peek behind the scenes.

Piece by Piece: A Community Puzzling Group

Saturday, October 10 @ 11 am–1 pm
Join us for a casual puzzling group! Various jigsaw puzzles will be available to work on as a group or individually. Feel free to bring your own puzzles, or participate in a puzzle swap with other attendees!

The Web They Wove: Women & Their Wardrobes During New England's Revolution

Wednesday, October 14 @ 6–7:30 pm
This program delves into the significant yet often overlooked contributions of women during the Revolutionary era, highlighting how their choices in textiles and clothing production played a crucial role in supporting families and communities while the fight for independence unfolded. Costumed historians from The Dirty Blue Shirts will present

fascinating stories, showcase reproduction garments, and display historical fabric samples, offering insights into the daily lives and creative resilience of women during this transformative period. Sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe

Thursday, October 15 @ 6–7 pm
The master of the macabre, Edgar Allan Poe, returns for an evening of mystery and horror. Learn the truth behind the life, death, and legacy of this American legend. Enjoy your favorite stories and poems performed live by actor, Campbell Harmon. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

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! Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library in dedication to Edward Maloney.

An Afternoon with Gustav Klimt
Saturday, October 17 @ 2–4 pm
Join us for a screening of the SAG Award-nominated film *Woman in Gold* starring Helen Mirren! After the screening, there will be an art show and reception at the BACA Art Gallery from 4–5:30 pm featuring pieces inspired by the painting style of Gustav Klimt. Presented by BACA.

Double Play Concert
Thursday, October 22 @ 6–7 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. Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.

Evening of Guitar at the Blackstone
Thursday, October 29 @ 6–7:30 pm
Guitarist and Branford resident Neal Fitzpatrick will present a regular, monthly program of music for classical guitar. Each session will feature a different era, genre, or style.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

August 2026 Statistics—Circulation Department

Physical Items Circulation (checkouts + renewals):

13,862
August 2025: 15,072

borrowIT: 1,471
August 2025: 3,527

Computer Sessions: 745
WIFI Logins: 4,090
Website visits: 9,915

MailChimp: 7,406 subscribers
Facebook: 3,195 followers
Instagram: 1,822 followers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,482
Libby audiobooks: 1,533
Libby magazines: 849
Palace App: 45
HOOPLA: 1,382
Kanopy: 339
Transparent Languages: 28
Ancestry Library: 114
New Haven Register: 49
Branford History Scrapbooks: 65

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 140

Children's Programs: 19 programs/469 attendance

Teen Programs (12+): 5 programs/28 attendance

Adult/All Ages Programs: 35 programs/409 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 442
Days Open: 26