Report to the Board of Trustees

November 4, 2026



The Garden Club's spooky pumpkin in our planter.



This Blackstone Library souvenir spoon was discovered in someone's attic and given to the library so we can display it! These spoons were created in the early days of the library's existence and this one has been added to our upstairs display case.



Laughs on Tap was a success! Featuring Billy Winn, Jane Condon, and Melvin George, the fundraiser generated more income than last year's Evening with the Spirits.

From the Director

October kicked off with a bang, when the balcony enclosure project began removal of the built-in shelving along the perimeter. Some shelves will be relocated to the side walls of the new meeting spaces and the rest has been moved to the Computer Lab, allowing us to return archival items to those shelves and providing surface space for future needs.

The project will pick up in earnest in November and December with steel and glass installation. We're excited to offer these new meetings rooms to the public in the new year! This project is made possible by a CT State Library Construction Grant award in the amount of $153,000 and from a bequest from the Estate of Linda J. Delaurentis.

Thanks to the Branford Garden Club for decorating our front steps planters with a giant pumpkin and witch. They made the library feel festive for the spooky season!

Thank you to all of the sponsors including Branford Building Supplies, New England Brewing Company, Small Batch Cellars and Avery's, Branford Jewelers, Pine Orchard Yacht and Country Club, Maria Barletta,



Construction began on the balcony of the auditorium. Built-in shelves were removed and relocated and carpet was pulled up for repurposing elsewhere. Steel and glass will be next, on our way to having TWO new meeting spaces for the public!

and other prize item donors, volunteers, and attendees to the first ever Laughs on Tap fundraising event. Congratulations to Rhea and the Development Committee for putting on a successful event that out-raised last year's Evening with the Spirits!

The Facilities Assessment subcommittee met with the architects to continue refining the tables and summaries that will be part of the presentation of the study to make it easy to follow and understand.

I attended a LION Board Retreat at the Wallingford Library, facilitated by consultant Maureen Sullivan. We had an extremely productive daylong session and came away with 3 clear areas for our organization to work on in the coming years. It was a great retreat, and hopefully the first of a new annual tradition.

We then had a very long LION Board meeting the following week to begin implementing some of the changes discussed at the retreat. We have work to do, but have a very engaged and talented group of members who are dedicated to improving.

We hosted 4 private events in October, which was tricky with the logistics of moving furniture for back to back weddings, but The Woodwinds staff stepped up to help and we really appreciate them for it!

Thanks to the Friends of the Library, I was able to attend the New England Library Association conference in Burlington, CT. The 3 day conference had lots of great opportunities for learning and networking.

— Katy McNicol

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—September





Sarah from Elm Shakespeare Company works with children during a workshop to learn excerpts from Shakespeare's plays.



Cake pop "ice cream" cones.

We had lots of unique and creative programs this September in the Youth Services department. The highlight was a program led by educators from A Place Called Hope, a birds of prey rehabilitation center in Killingworth, CT. We met three different birds from the center and learned some fascinating facts along the way. They taught us the rhyme "Eyes in front, born to hunt. Eyes on side, run and hide" to help us distinguish predators from prey animals. We then met a peregrine falcon, which is the fastest animal on the planet, reaching speeds of over 200 miles per hour when diving for their food. The presenters also brought a red-shouldered hawk and a great horned owl. We learned that the long feathers on the top of the owl's head are called plumicorns, and that similar to dogs' ears, the plumicorns' position can tell you whether the bird is relaxed or upset. The rehabilitators shared that great horned owls love to eat skunks, and often smell horrible when they are rescued because of this preference! We had a great turnout for this program, and are grateful to the New Haven Bird club for sponsoring the visit.

The learning continued when an educator from the Whitney Water Center visited our Homeschool Meetup to teach us about estimation using water-based experiments. We estimated the number of drops of water we thought could fit on a penny and were surprised to find that it was much higher than we had guessed. As we learned more about water and the way it behaves, our guesses became more accurate. This program was a great introduction to the concept of estimation and how scientists use it when they are conducting experiments.



Birds from A Place Called Hope visited the library for an educational session that was fun for all ages.

Later in the month, an actor and educator from Elm Shakespeare Company led a workshop for kids featuring the fairies and spirits from Shakespeare's plays. The children were assigned roles from A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest, and then chose a costume to match their character. They practiced the scene, complete with music, blocking, and the original text. After discussing the meaning of the script line by line so they could better understand the plays, the children performed the excerpts on the stage in the auditorium. The kids had a blast and afterwards one participant asked if we could do the class again tomorrow and another asked if we could do it on their birthday! Teens will also have a chance to take the stage with another workshop by Elm Shakespeare Company in October, this time featuring the witches, ghosts, and demons from Shakespeare's plays in time for Halloween.

In addition to our monthly volunteer orientation, teen advisory group, and dungeons and dragons campaign, teens had a cooking program this month, making cake pops that looked like ice cream cones. We used the crumbs of chocolate and pumpkin muffins as the base, mixing them with icing until they formed a dough-like texture. After forming our mixture into balls and placing them in the freezer to cool down, we attached them to miniature cake cones by dipping them in candy melt. Once everything was frozen in place, we dunked the whole creation in white candy melt and decorated them with sprinkles to make a treat that resembled ice cream but tasted like cake! We had so much fun learning and playing this month and are looking forward to the other creative activities we have in store this fall!

— Emily Yates

Highlights from the Reference Department—September

The Reference department has had a very busy couple of months of genealogical inquiries. One question came from a researcher who was trying to verify the children of Joseph Tyler and Rachel Tuttle who lived in Branford in the late 1700's. There were records of their three young sons dying within 10 days of each other in 1776, two on the same day. Although we weren't able to definitively determine their cause of death, we were able to share with the patron that there was a terrible smallpox outbreak at that time and many families lost multiple children. Because the couple then left the Branford area, we didn't have any additional information to share but were able to refer the patron to records in other states.

Another patron emailed, hoping to find marriage, birth, baptismal, probate, sexton and land records for his family as well as photographs of the family home. Thanks to Jane Bouley, our Town Historian, we have numerous finding aids and indexes that allowed us to help the patron locate these records. In addition, we have a finding aid to the Branford Historical Society photographs collection as well as scanned copies of the approximately 15,000 photographs in the collection, which the patron was able to view when visiting the library.

The library has a decades long partnership with Jane who has spent a lifetime working on Branford history and genealogy. She has always shared her work with us and this allows us to provide an unprecedented amount of information to our patrons who are researching their Branford families. We have finding aids on our website for the archives and photographs as well as a separate Digital Archives website where we feature photographs, newspaper articles, city directories and Branford High School yearbooks. We are working to expand this collection, adding additional photographs and yearbooks.

The library recently had a local author event with Nadia Bowers, who launched her debut memoir "Dear Dealer" at the library. We had 148 people in attendance to see Nadia in conversation with author Dani Shapiro and editor Aimee Bell. Nadia grew up in Branford with her sister Sasha, who died from a fentanyl overdose in 2015. Her wrenching account details her investigation into her sister's death through a series of letters addressed to the unknown drug dealer who supplied the drugs to her sister, along with reminiscences of her childhood and the effect her sister's addiction had on her family.

— Deborah Trofatter



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, offering free or discounted admission to area museums like Beardsley Zoo, Mystic Aquarium and Seaport, Florence Griswold Museum, Mark Twain House & Museum, Shore Line Trolley Museum, and many more!

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.

FRIENDS OF BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

November 2026 Program Highlights

CT Poetry Society Fall Festival | Saturday, November 7 @ 12–4 pm
Join us for an inspiring afternoon of poetry and community, open to all Connecticut Poetry Society members and the public! Enjoy a buffet lunch, browse poetry book sale tables, and sign up for our lively open mic. Don't miss this celebration of poetry and fellowship! Presented by the Connecticut Poetry Society.

Gladius Flamenco Guitar Concert | Sunday, November 8 @ 2–3 pm
Raised in Atlanta, Georgia, pupiled by Andrés Segovia's protégé, and driven to obsession by Eddie Van Halen—Gladius is an award-winning composer and accomplished classical/flamenco style guitarist mesmerizing audiences nationwide with his electrifying live act since 2016. Inspired by the great composers, Spanish guitar maestros, and much more, this award-winning 'musical mad-scientist' fuses the elements into a refreshing formula.

Navigating Social Security & Medicare | Wednesday, November 11 @ 6–7:30 pm
Join the American Financial Education Alliance for an informational session on navigating Social Security and Medicare. This course offers real world strategies and methods designed for those who are preparing for retirement or are in the early stages of retirement and planning on filing for Social Security benefits.

CPR Training Class | Thursday, November 12 @ 5–7 pm
Join us for a free, hands-only CPR class led by Yale New Haven Hospital instructors to learn the life-saving skills needed in the event of a cardiac arrest emergency! Please note this is not a certified course and registration is limited.

Autumn Seed Swap | Saturday, November 14 @ 2–4 pm
Join Library staff and volunteers from the Branford Garden Club for an Autumn Seed Swap! We will swap any seeds you've already saved and learn how to save seeds, if you're new to the process. If you will be bringing seeds to the event, be sure they are mature and dry and not from hybrids or invasives. All ages and experience welcome!

Pete Kilpatrick Concert | Sunday, November 15 @ 2–3 pm
Join us for an afternoon with musician Pete Kilpatrick, whose music bridges folk, rock, and Americana. Sponsored by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

Schuyler Bailar Talk | Saturday, November 21 @ 2–3:30 pm
Schuyler Bailar, internationally renowned inspirational speaker and inclusion advocate, will be joining us to tell his groundbreaking journey as the first transgender athlete to compete on an NCAA D1 men's team in an engaging and uplifting presentation and discussion. Schuyler is also the bestselling author of *He/She/They: How We Talk About Gender and Why It Matters* and *Obie is Man Enough.* Sponsored by the John Loeb Lecture Fund.

Musical Arts Society Presents: Pavlo Gintov | Sunday, November 22 @ 2–3 pm
Join us for a musical afternoon with pianist Pavlo Gintov. Sponsored by the Daro Foundation.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

September 2026 Statistics—Circulation Department

Physical Items Circulation (checkouts + renewals): 10,926
September 2025: 13,711

borrowIT: 1,915
August 2025: 3,154

Computer Sessions: 633
WIFI Logins: 3,869
Website visits: 14,083

MailChimp: 7,370 subscribers
Facebook: 3,215 followers
Instagram: 1,842 followers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,262
Libby audiobooks: 1,473
Libby magazines: 871
Palace App: 44
HOOPLA: 1,289
Kanopy: 356

Transparent Languages: 13
Ancestry Library: 390
New Haven Register: 17
Branford History Scrapbooks: 22

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 133

Children's Programs:
28 programs/606 attendance

Teen Programs (12+):
6 programs/20 attendance

Adult/All Ages Programs:
37 programs/550 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 465
Days Open: 28