

Marble Columns



Newsletter of the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library

**Save the Dates
for Upcoming
Book Sales**

Spring Sale

**May 12-13 (Fri /Sat)
Adult Fiction
Children's Books
ONLY**

**Friends Warehouse 59
School Ground Road
Unit 4**

FALL Tent SALE

**Sept 14– 17th
Branford Town Green**

In Memoriam

Adam Spilka, President of the Blackstone Trustees, sadly passed away unexpectedly last month. Adam was a strong partner and supporter of Friends. He will be greatly missed.

Friends of the Blackstone Library Enrich Lives in Branford

Ever wonder what our Friends organization does to support the library and the impact it truly makes within our community? Read the article below from Blackstone's Library Director, Katy McNicol, to find out.

In the 12 years that I have worked at the Blackstone Library, I have seen firsthand the impact the Friends make. When 3D printers were becoming widespread, the Friends were there, giving a gift enabling the library to purchase not only a 3D printer, but sewing machines, circuitry kits and more, supporting countless hours of educational Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programming and hands-on experiences for our community. The Friends continue to help expand our Li-

brary of Things, offering even more varied hands-on experiences for people at home and in the library.

Special purchases like the 3D printers and the library's new fish tank (which delight parents and children alike each time they visit Youth Services), give our community new opportunities to expand their horizons and ignite their imaginations. That is the true gift the Friends give to Branford.

In addition to special purchases, the Friends help support other expenditures the library makes, things that are not part of our operating budget but that we rely on, year after year, to make our collection and staff as dynamic and responsive to the community's needs as possible.

The Friends help the Blackstone pay for streaming services including Kanopy, Pro-

nunciator and Hoopla; museum discount passes; children's, teen and adult programs; books for the Best-seller book club and Friends Quick Picks; continuing education opportunities for staff; furniture; software to support the museum pass program and event registrations; and more.

The Friends of the Blackstone work extremely hard year-round to raise funds that support so many in the community. Your efforts help contribute tens of thousands of dollars to the library each year, but the impact the Friends have on what the library can offer, year after year, is immeasurable. We are so grateful for all that you do — thank you.

Katy McNicol
Library Director

Know someone that would like to become a Friends Member to help us continue to support the Blackstone Library?

It's easy. Annual memberships start as low as \$10. Visit www.blackstonelibrary.org/friends to join.

Upcoming Friends Sponsored Programs

Mailing Label

Did you notice the mailing label on this newsletter?

The mailing label now reflects your membership term. For example, "EXP 06-30-2023" means that your membership is good until June 30, 2023.

Friends Memberships are on an annual basis (July 1—June 30th).

Look for your renewal in May-June timeframe.

Virtual Book Cart is Open

Shop for new books

Go to:
[blackstonelibrary.org / friends](http://blackstonelibrary.org/friends)



From the monies that Friends raise from our book sale activity, funding programs at the Library for our community is an important focus. Check out the upcoming programs listed below. Visit the Blackstone Website for more details, additional programs and registration.

Upcoming Adult Programs

- **The Seven Wonders of the Universe**, exploring the seven most remarkable visible objects of the universe. Sunday February 26 at 2:00 PM on Zoom
- **Jolly Beggars** celebrate St. Patrick's Day with a Celtic concert. Sunday March 5 at 2:00 PM
- **Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame**—a program of women inducted into the Hall of Fame for persisting in preserving their culture, Monday March 27th at 6:30 PM
- **Amy Berry**—Expressive Writing (Poetry/Short Fiction) -Thursdays April 1, 13, 27 & May 4
- **Carnaby Street**: a 1960s musical experience from the British Invasion - Sunday May 21 at 2:00 PM

Upcoming Children's and Young Adult Programs

- **Kitchen Creations**: February 9 at 3:30-4:30 for grades 5-12
- **Take-N-Makes**: February 15 for grades K-4, 5-12, March 22 for grades K-4 April 26 for grades K-4. All events from 9:00 AM-8:00 PM
- **Mindful Making: Origami**: February 15 at 3:30-4:30 for grades 5-12
- **Super Science Saturdays**: March 4, April 1, May 6 from 10:00-1:00 for grades K-4
- **Decorated Tote Bags**: March 15 at 3:30-4:30 for grades 5-12
- **Edible Adventures with Peeps**: March 27 from 3:30-4:30 for grades 5-12
- **Personalized Book Box**: April 6 from 9:00 AM to 8:00 PM for grades 7-12
- **Peeps Stem Challenge**: April 7 from 2:00 PM-4:00 PM for ages 0-5, grades K-4
- **DIY Bath Bombs**: April 19 from 3:30 PM-4:30 PM for grades 5-12
- **Collage Journals**: May 17 from 3:30 PM-4:30 PM for grades 5-12

Our Volunteers Are Busy

Thanks to a small team of hard-working volunteers, our warehouse has been reconfigured to be even more efficient and work friendly. We have setup multiple stations for organizing our categories and a more streamlined process to sort books.

A spring book sale will be held inside our warehouse this May. When you shop, you can peek and see how we've organized our operations. As you know, we are a 100% volunteer organization. Our volunteers all have a love for books, love to learn new things, and truly enjoy helping support our library. We can't thank our volunteers enough – without our volunteers, we simply can't do what we do.

The planning for our Tent Sale on the Green is also under way. We will have plenty of great and interesting books for your shopping in September. Changes to improve your shopping experience include: all fiction (hard cover and soft cover) will be alphabetized together so you don't need to look in two places for your favorite author. Also, smaller paperback books will be grouped alphabetically by author (A to G, H to N, O to Z).

These improvements and others will be waiting for you when you come to shop.....

Friends—Volunteer Spotlight

Each issue a special volunteer is recognized for their contribution to Friends.

Neil Titcomb

It is with great pleasure that we celebrate Neil Titcomb for our Friends Volunteer Spotlight this month! Neil, his wife, Carol, and his sons, Chris and Nate, moved to Branford in October of 1987 for job related reasons. His career as an electrical engineer specializing in systems interfacing spanned 24 years; Neil later managed global resources for United Healthcare for 16 years, retiring in 2014. Neil and Carol began volunteering with the Friends in the fall of 2019 as a team. Sadly, Carol Titcomb passed in 2021. Neil has continued to contribute his time, and he feels strongly that his work as a volunteer is something that demands his attention and utilizes his skills to benefit the community. Currently he packs and ships on-line Amazon and eBay orders for the JBML

Friends. Online sales are an important aspect of our contribution to the James Blackstone Library, with sales of over \$58,000 for the fiscal year ending 6/30/2022. Neil regularly processes orders on Mondays, Fridays, and Saturdays as well as helps to set up for the annual Friends Book Sales on the Branford Green.



(Neil at the Book Room where all the online inventory is stored and where all the mailing is done.)

An avid sailor with a 40' sail-

boat, Neil sailed from Bar Harbor, Maine to Florida, living on the boat with Carol from September 2018 to March 2019. Neil became interested in and adept at repairing and restoring wood boats and woodworking in general, and has crafted incredibly beautiful wooden bowls and vases as well as toys for his grandchildren, Hailey, 8, Sarah, 6, and Charlie, 4.

A man of many talents, Neil was a member of the New Haven Chorale for 5 years and now sings Bass with the First Congregational Church choir in Branford.

We thank Neil for his commitment to the success of the Friends. As a valued member of our team his hard work and efforts have been instrumental in helping our organization to meet its goal to support the James Blackstone Library.

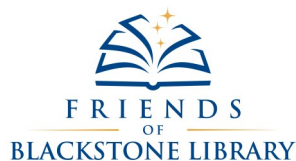
Music of Bill Evans Concert on January 29th

The Friends of the Blackstone Library sponsored a concert by the Shoreline Jazz Quintet (SJQ) on January 29th in the library auditorium. It was a great turnout. SJQ highlighted the music of Bill Evans who lived, for a time, in Short Beach. We were fortunate to have Debby Evans, Bill's niece, to introduce. Among the songs they played, was "Waltz for Debbie" which Bill wrote for her. I heard many people, who had not been to the library before, admiring the beauty of the building and the band really liked the acoustics. A good time was had by all and the concert finished with a standing ovation.

The Shoreline Jazz Quintet at the Blackstone Library



From left to right: Steve Roane on acoustic bass, Deepak Cyril D'Souza on saxophones, Debby Evans, Steve Wood on electric guitar, Mike Bimonte on drums and Rich Meyers on vibraphone.



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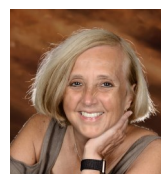
Return Service Requested

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Leslie Becker
Sandra Brockett
Ann Davis
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Andy McKirdy
Jill Thomas
John Smith

Katy McNicol, Library Director
Member Ex-Officio

From the President



Welcome to 2023! I don't know about you, but I am wondering what happened to winter. While I am not complaining especially after that one day of freezing cold in early February, it just feels strange. Hopefully it won't be snowing in April!

I hope you have been checking out and enjoying some of the great Friends sponsored programs in the Library. The Music of Bill Evans concert was a great hit. We have the Jolly Beggars in March to get your Irish jig going and Carnaby Street in May to get you taking a trip down memory

lane. We strive to provide programs we feel will be of interest to the community.

While Friends has been very successful in raising money for the library over the last 35 years, Friends is finding itself fighting rising expenses like all of you in your daily life in the hosting of the book sale. We are working hard to look at ways to reduce expenses while at the same time attempting to increase our revenue. We are focused on keeping our book sale prices the same to continue to provide a

wonderful family affordable event every September at our book sale.

Lastly, again I would like to thank each one of our volunteers that give so much of their time and energy to making Friends successful. You all are the absolute best!

Look for our next newsletter in early May. Hopefully the flowers will be blooming and the warm spring sun shining upon us.

Barbara Barrett, President
friends@blackstonelibrary.org