



# Report to the Board of Trustees

April 12, 2023

## From the Director

March was a busy month at the Blackstone. Emily, Mary, Tina and I participated in Read Across America, with each of us visiting Branford elementary school classrooms during March 6-10 and reading books to the class. The books were then given to that classroom as a gift from the United Way.

The Branford Lions Club invited me to speak at the March meeting, so I attended and talked about the history of the library and my vision for its future. The Lions Club will be making a gift to the Blackstone to fund the purchase of books about various aspects of Black history.



Speaking at the Branford Lions Club meeting in March.



We received our new outdoor furniture — 4 Adirondack chairs and 3 wrought iron tables and chairs — made possible with funding from the bequest of Linda DeLaurentis.

The Big Y Community Bag Program generated \$106 in donations that Big Y will make to the Blackstone. Thank you to Big Y for choosing us to be the February community partner!

Jenna implemented a post-program survey system for attendees, which was a goal that came out of the Strategic Plan. We will use survey data to help us learn more about the community and how they benefit from various programs we offer.

I am so pleased to announce that Emily Yates is our new head of Youth Services. She will continue to work with teens in this new capacity,

but will also help lead the department as they support the youth and families of Branford.

Tina has sold out all mini golf hole sponsorships and score-card ad sponsorships. Congratulations! The event title sponsorship is still available, and we are accepting items for the silent auction.

Congratulations to the Friends for a very successful special one-day sale of art and philosophy books! The Friends were able to quickly organize this special sale after a large donation of these books came in, and the resulting proceeds of over \$2,000 indicate that their efforts were worth it.

Kathy and I presented the FY2024 budget request to the Branford Board of Finance. Thank you to trustees Janice Kochanowski, Treasurer, and Matt Roth for being in the audience for support and helping answer questions.

Emily, Jordan, Alondra and I attended a virtual Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) mini-conference offered by the CT State Library Association. The speakers were authors, activists, and librarians and reaffirmed the importance of libraries serving and supporting the entire community.

— Katy McNicol

Save the Date

**Mini Golf**  
at Blackstone Library

+ **MINI GOLF:**  
*After Hours*

**April 29 & 30**

TICKETS ON SALE NOW. Visit  
blackstonelibrary.org or stop by the  
library to purchase in person!

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—February

We had a busy February in Youth Services, starting off the month by celebrating Take Your Child to the Library Day with the launch of Kimberly Behre Kenna's debut middle-grade novel, **Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade!** We had an amazing turn out for this event, with around sixty patrons in attendance. Kenna's book features a girl named Art who helps save a local salt marsh, and so the event included lots of activities to help inspire children to protect the natural world. Some of these activities included making activist buttons and decorating inspiration flags which were displayed in the Youth Services department. We even had a special guest; celebrated author of more than 400 books for children and adults, Jane Yolen, came to show her support of the author.

We celebrated Black History Month throughout February with our book displays and with our Take and Make activity. In each Take and Make kit, families received a mini canvas, paint, and paint brushes, along with a biography of African-American artist, Alma Thomas. Children and teens were encouraged to create a piece of art inspired by Thomas's work and bring it back to the library to be placed on display. We were so excited to see all of the beautiful art the children created! If you missed the Take and Make, you can still learn about Alma Thomas by checking out her biography, **Ablaze with Color: a story of painter Alma Thomas**, in the Youth Services department.

Later in the month we had a few special programs to

celebrate Valentine's Day. Teens had a blast creating beautiful desserts by dipping pretzels in chocolate and sprinkles. At the end of the event, they were able to take home their treats in goodie bags to give as a gift. We also had a Valentine's day card making station set up in our teen room, and kids and teens alike enjoyed stopping in to make a holiday card. Our

Mini-Maker Table activity this month transformed these Valentine's Day cards with technology! We learned about electric currents, and then used conductive copper tape, batteries, and LED lights to create cards that lit up when a circuit connected.

At the end of the month we had another great author talk from local author and assistant principal at Branford High School, Joseph Briganti. He spoke about his writing process and his new young adult novel, *Moral Demise*. He encouraged teens to be persistent and not give up on their dreams, and offered some tips to overcome writer's block. This was a motivating and inspiring event for aspiring young writers. Briganti also shared how his book has a connection to the Blackstone Library! In 2008, he entered the book into the Shoreline Arts Alliance's Tassy Walden Awards for New Voices in Children's Literature, and was selected as a finalist. The finalists' celebration was hosted in the Blackstone auditorium, and it was there that a judge encouraged him to pursue publication. It was powerful to



February's Take & Make Program celebrated Alma Thomas, an African-American artist known for her bold and beautiful abstract paintings.

see Briganti in the Blackstone auditorium, holding the book that got its start in the same room over a decade ago!

Mary and I got some great ideas by tuning in to a professional development session this month called **ADA and Beyond: Making Programs Accessible for All** offered by the Connecticut State Library. We learned about ways we can make our programs more accessible and welcoming for all patrons. The session's panelists shared lots of useful resources to make sure we are meeting our patrons' needs.

Lastly, this month, we said goodbye to the Associate Librarian for Youth Services, Miss Carly. She is now the new Assistant Director at the North Branford Libraries. We are sad to see her leave, but we are so excited for this next chapter for her! We had a special party to celebrate her last week at the Blackstone Library, and she appreciated seeing all of the patrons she has helped over the years!

— Emily Yates



A happy patron after visiting our Valentine's Day card-making station.

## Highlights from the Reference Department—February

Programs in February included our monthly book groups, poetry, Latin classes, coloring group, library tour, knitting group, Awakening to Change, Saturday Cinema and Game Night; The Oystering Life, presented by the Stony Creek museum, a program on Women, Wealth and Well-Being, a computer basics class, and an evening of classical guitar.

We had an inquiry from an out-of-town patron who planned to visit the library in hopes of finding out more about her family's farm. We were able to locate some advertisements in old

newspapers on our Digital Scrapbooks website.

This resource is freely available to all at [https://branford.advantage-](https://branford.advantage-preservation.com)

**preservation.com** and includes a selection of newspapers and articles from a range of years, 1878 to 1980, including the Branford Review, New Haven Evening Register, Branford Opinion, New Haven Journal and Courier, Branford Gleaner, Suburban Spokesman, and Branford Semi Weekly Record.

**CHRISTMAS TREES —** Select your Christmas tree before it is cut at the Gross Tree Farm, Queach Road, Branford. Large selection of fir and spruce. Retail only. 488-3352. BR48-1t

Our patron was also interested in gathering information about a relative who mistakenly drank poison, thinking it was soda, and unfortunately died. We were able to find several articles relating to this incident in the same collection.

— Deborah Trofatter

### SAVE THE DATES—FRIENDS BOOK SALES

**Spring Sale: May 12 – 13** (Fri – Sat) – Children's books and Adult fiction (ONLY)

Held at the Friends warehouse, 59 School Ground Road Unit 4 (River Run Plaza)  
Friday, 12 – 6 pm; Saturday, 9 am – 3 pm

**Fall Sale on the Branford Green:** September 14th – 17th (Thurs – Sun)



## Seed Library is Now Open

Stop in anytime we're open and browse the current seed offerings; seeds are separated by herbs, ornamentals, vegetables, and fruits. Take up to 3 packets of seeds per household. Feel free to divide packets, and take only what you intend to use. Envelopes and pens are provided for labeling.

Questions on how to start your seeds? We also have gardening books available in the regular collection. If you have leftover seeds, you can return them to the seed library (labeled).

After your seedlings grow, consider saving seeds and donating back to the seed library so seeds can be shared seeds next year.

Please share pictures of your seed-growing journey! We'd love to include your pictures on our website and social media accounts. Send any images you are willing to share to [alopez@blackstonelibrary.org](mailto:alopez@blackstonelibrary.org).

With generous donations from Seed Savers Exchange, High Seed Mowing, UConn Master Gardeners/Ocean State Job Lot, Natureworks, and Branford community members, we are able to offer a wide variety of seeds for free. The idea for the seed library was initially proposed by Branford resident Ivy Kim, and she has partnered with staff on development and implementation.

If you or your organization has seeds to share, please consider



donating them. We welcome donations of any ornamental or vegetable seeds. Simply place your seeds in an envelope or container with the type of seed, variety, and date of harvest.



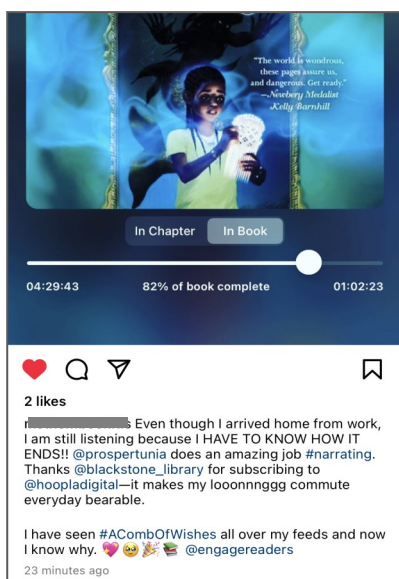


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...more than books

Join our email list for more  
information about programs  
[www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org)



The library was tagged in an Instagram post thanking us for offering Hoopla for streaming/downloadable content. Thanks to the Friends for helping us fund Hoopla, making even titles accessible to the community.

## April 2023 Program Highlights

### Awakening to Change: Social Justice Discussion Group

Thursday, April 13 @ 7–8:30 pm

**Online.** Be part of these important conversations designed to help unify our community by developing a shared understanding of the history, policy, and experiences shaping contemporary discussions of social justice issues. We tackle a new topic each month. All are welcome to join.

### Express Yourself Writing Workshop

Thursdays, April 13 to May 4 @ 6–7:30 pm

**In person.** This 4-week writing workshop is led by Amy J. Barry of Branford, an award-winning columnist, published poet, children's book author, editor, and certified expressive art and writing facilitator. Amy will use creative prompts and exercises that encourage right-brain creativity to help you get the words flowing. We will explore short-form writing genres—including poetry, prose-poetry, and flash fiction—in a supportive group exchange.

**Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### Wild Plant Foraging in Spring

Thursday, April 13 @ 6:30–7:30 pm

**In person.** Learn how to identify, sustainably harvest, and prepare the wild foods of spring, from invasive bamboo shoots to the lemony tang of fresh wood sorrel, including some of the early edible fungi of the season. Join The 3 Foragers as they discuss the edible plants and fungi of spring, with their original photos and recipe ideas featured in an educational slideshow. **Sponsored by the David Hughes Memorial Fund.**

### Earthmind Nature Journal Workshop

Saturday, April 22 @ 10–11:30 am

**In person.** An Earthmind Journal is a creative-expressive mixed-media record of your experiences in the natural world in word and image. It is not a scientific, traditional nature journal, but rather a personal and reflective journal that calms your mind, connects you with spirit and helps you find joy as you spend time in deep connection with self and nature.

In this workshop you will learn what goes into this type of journal, how to focus your mind when you are in the natural world, and we will play with materials and create a journal page with art and words. All materials provided. **Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.**

### The Art of Aaron Kurzen

Monday, April 24 @ 6:30–7:30 pm

**In person.** Learn about the surprisingly diverse artist that was Aaron Kurzen - and about how Paul Rhoads is trying to protect the artwork and the story of a unique Stony Creek artist. **Presented by the Stony Creek Museum.**

### Land Records for Genealogy Research

Wednesday, April 26 @ 6–7 pm

**In person.** Town historian Jane Bouley presents the How-To of using land records and the wealth of historical and genealogical information they provide. **Presented by the Branford Historical Society.**

*Check our website for more programs and registration details!*

## February 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 6,829**

February 2022: 6,966

**borrowIT: 1,251**

February 2021: 1,266

**Renewals: 4,362**

**Computer Sessions: 602**

**WIFI Logins: 3,418**

**Website visits: 8,879 sessions**

**Facebook: 2,537 followers**

**Instagram: 1,176 followers**

**MailChimp: 7,653 subscribers**

**Average Daily Visitors: 325**

**Days open: 26**

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,316**

**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 872**

**Overdrive/Libby magazines: 128**

**Palace App: 22**

**HOOPLA: 1,162**

**Kanopy: 360**

**Pronunciator: 704**

**Ancestry Library: 434**

**New Haven Register: 101**

**Branford History Scrapbooks: 260**

**Creative Bug: 12**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 166**

**Children's Programs**

23 programs/550 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**

8 programs/43 attendance

**Adult programs**

36 programs/410 attendance