



# Report to the Board of Trustees

December 6, 2023

## From the Director

Last month, I submitted two different annual reports: one went to the State Library, with library statistics from 2022-2023. This ensures we continue to be eligible to receive state grants; the second report went to the Town of Branford, and gets added to the Town's comprehensive Annual Report. This year, I was pleased to note that foot traffic in the library is up over 30% over the prior year!

I also submitted our Collection Development policy to the State Library for review. A new law is in effect that restores a grant giving \$1,200 to each CT library, providing the library has a current policy that follows certain criteria. Our policy, which was revised September 2022, meets the criteria, and payments are anticipated to arrive March/April 2024.

The Shoreline Chamber of Commerce partnered with the YMCA to host a Wellness Fair with various local organizations, and we were invited to host a table. I staffed our table and shared with attendees the various ways that the library supports the health and wellness of our community, including Memory Kits from our Library of Things and Early Literacy backpacks.

We also partnered with the Shoreline Chamber to host a Legislative Forum event at the library. Senator Christine Cohen, Representative Vincent Candelora, and Representative Moira Rader were in attendance, joined by approximately 30 com-

munity members and representatives from local businesses and organizations. Attendees had the opportunity to meet in small groups with each of the legislators for a discussion on a topic of the attendee's choice. It was a great way to have meaningful conversations with local leaders.

Christina and I attended the CLC Vendor Expo, which took place at Southern CT State University. We had the opportunity to sit in small groups with various vendors who contract with CLC to offer discounts on services. We are exploring some new potential alternatives to services we offer, and Christina won a free Toniebox®, which allows children to insert different characters into the box, which then play different children's audiobooks. This will be added to our Library of Things for circulation.

Tina organized the mailing of our fall appeal letters, and donations have begun coming in. We rely on the fall appeal as a major part of our larger annual fundraising efforts. Contributions made to the annual fund are tax deductible and have a direct impact on the programs

and services the library offers the community.

A big shout-out to Blackstone staff, who contributed their own funds to help support the Branford Counseling Center's Secret Santa program, and who donated items and gift cards to support the Friends Gift Basket Sale. Thank you, Blackstone staffers!

After 21 years of service at the Blackstone, Mary Lockery, aka Miss Mary, is retiring. As the library's storytime specialist, Mary has been a part of the lives of countless children and parents in Branford. We will miss her dearly. We are planning a celebratory send-off for her last day, December 16, after her final Saturday Storytime. More details to come.

— Katy McNicol



Christina holding the Toniebox® she won at the CLC Vendor Expo.



Thanks to the Branford Garden Club for helping the library get into the festive spirit of the season!



Thanks to a gift from the Friends, the Youth Services department has 4 new display units, at just the right height for young children!



Blackstone's table at the Shoreline Chamber Wellness Fair.

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—October



Emily, Nicolette, and Mary get ready for the Halloween storytime and parade.



Science Saturday attendees learned about the sun and moon.



Teen attendees got hands-on learning at the Halloween makeup workshop.

October was full of fun events and community connections in youth services! Nicolette and I were excited to attend several outreach events this month. Nicolette visited Murphy, Sliney, and Tisko Elementary Schools, and I visited Branford High School, where we introduced ourselves to students, shared information about the Blackstone's services and programs, and made library cards. Nicolette also attended Tisko School's Family Literacy Night, sharing resources with parents and children about how the Blackstone Library can be a part of their literacy journey. Later in the month, I attended Branford Counseling and Community Center's Family Day on the Branford green, which featured a magician, juggler, slot car racing, face painting and more! It was so much fun seeing many familiar faces and introducing families to the resources at the library.

Nicolette led several crafty and educational programs this month for kids. After attending a professional development session on the science of solar eclipses, Nicolette led a Science Saturday program all about the sun and moon. Children completed activities related to astronomy as they prepared for the solar eclipse on October 14. Nicolette also led a beading activity for our Mini-Maker Table program and a paint night for kids with step-by-step instructions on how to make a beautiful pumpkin.

Our second meeting of our new Homeschool group was a success! This month we focused on art as we learned

about painter Alma Thomas. After reading a biography of Thomas and watching a short documentary about her life, we used the natural beauty on the grounds of the library as inspiration for our own pieces of art. We plan to continue offering this homeschool meetup once a month, providing a chance for homeschool students and parents to connect while completing an educational activity.

Teens had two special events this month. The first was a presentation about the benefits of community college with Bernie Shea, Outreach and Recruitment Specialist for CT State Community College. Bernie shared his insights on Connecticut's community college system with families and teens, highlighting how community college can be an affordable and customizable option for students. The Stamford Nature Center also visited this month for a wizard-themed science program. Dressed in wizard robes and sporting a wand, the Center's educator taught participants how to make their own magical snow, slime, and exploding elephant toothpaste!

October wouldn't be complete in Youth Services without a few special events celebrating Halloween! Teens enjoyed a Halloween makeup workshop



Storytime at the annual Halloween parade.

with a student from the Branford Academy of Hair and Cosmetology, Hannah. Hannah demonstrated several techniques, including a ghost eyeshadow, a spider web eyeliner, and a fake blood look. While Hannah created memorable and spooky makeup looks, teens had the opportunity to test their own skills with the tools and prosthetics Hannah supplied.

Our annual Halloween parade was a hit, with over 100 children and their family members in attendance. Children arrived in costume for a themed storytime with Mary and Nicolette, then paraded to the various service desks in the library to collect Halloween treats. We also hosted a showing of the classic Halloween film *Hocus Pocus*, and children made a spider from pipe cleaners and a lollipop for our October Take-*N*-Make kit. We can't wait to see what November has in store!

— Emily Yates



## Highlights from the Reference Department—October

In addition to our monthly book groups, knitting, coloring, grief support and poetry groups, Latin classes, Game Night, Trivia Night, Tech Help and Awakening to Change, we had some interesting and well-attended programs this month; two on developing a movie script, one on Alden Young of Pine Orchard, a talk on local native seeds as well as a seed discovery walk at Jarvis Creek Farm, a talk on Oktoberfest and our monthly guitar group has returned.

Kudos to Jenna for organizing, booking and overseeing our adult programs. Many of our programs have been recorded and can be viewed on our YouTube channel.

Our poetry group reported that they had a poet from Scotland join one of their discussions.

Ryan Van Winkle is an award-winning poet who grew up in Branford and is the author of *Tomorrow, We Will Live Here*, *I Chose to Listen*: New translations from Reel Festivals: Syria, Lebanon and Scotland and *This Room Is Waiting*: Poems from Iraq and Scotland.

I'd like to give a special shout out to our Social Media committee this month, especially to Stephanie and Jared. They have been busy making TikTok videos highlighting special events and library offerings. These videos have been really well received by patrons of all ages. We are presently being followed by Barnes & Noble, had a young woman come in to the library to get a library card simply because she's been following us on social media and thought that we looked like a fun place, and we receive positive comments from

numerous patrons about the videos.

— Deborah Trofatter




Stephanie highlighting our free library services in a social media video.

**FRIENDS  
OF  
BLACKSTONE  
LIBRARY**

*Holiday Basket Sale*

**December 7th - 10th**

Begins 12PM on 12/7/23



**Dec 8-10th (Library Hours)**

Questions: [friends@blackstonelibrary.org](mailto:friends@blackstonelibrary.org)

### Come out to support the Friends of the James Blackstone Library Holiday Gift Basket Sale

Sale begins at 12 PM on Thursday, December 7, kicking off with Branford's Shop, Sip & Stroll, and going through Saturday, December 10.

#### Sale Hours

December 7th - Thursday 12 pm - 8 pm  
December 8th - Friday 9 am - 5 pm  
December 9th - Saturday 9 am - 5 pm  
December 10th - Sunday 1pm - 3 pm



James Blackstone Memorial Library  
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Branford, CT 06405

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### Holiday Stroll and Wreath Extravaganza, a Benefit for "Feed Branford Kids"

We are participating once again in the Wreath Extravaganza, where local merchants and organizations decorate a wreath. Anyone can bid on a wreath, with bids closing at Noon on December 9th.

At that time, the winner will be contacted to pick up the wreath directly from the store and make payment. Feed Branford Kids accepts cash, or a check payable to "Feed Branford Kids".

Wreaths have been generously donated by Vaiuso Farms and all proceeds are to benefit Feed Branford Kids during the holiday season. The mission of Feed Branford Kids is to see that all of our children have enough to eat every day—be it a school day, a weekend, a holiday or summer vacation.

Stop in anytime the library is open, between now and December 9 at Noon to place a bid.

## December 2023 Program Highlights

### Permafrost: Play Reading Monday, December 4

@ 6–8 pm

New England premiere reading of **Permafrost**, the final full length script in award-winning playwright Gina Russell Tracy's Climate Crisis Trilogy.

### Branford High School Music Makers Seasonal Concert Sunday, December 10

@ 2–3 pm

Join us for a special concert presented by the Branford High School Music Makers.

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

### Paths to Autistic Empowerment Monday, December 11

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Jeremy K. Farrell, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Advocate and a proud person on the spectrum, will help attendees understand the common barriers autistic individuals have with empowerment, and how to

make the most of the paths to success. Sponsored by the **Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### From Foster Care to a Family Home

Wednesday, December 13

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Hear the incredible story of Michael Howard, a member of our Branford community, who was born into foster care, and learn about the life-changing power of adoption. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### Trivia Night at Caius Farm Brewery

Thursday, December 14

@ 6:30 - 8:30pm

Join us for monthly trivia nights at Caius Farm Brewery in Branford, hosted by our librarians. It's free to join and we'll have prizes for the winners. Are you smarter than a librarian? Come find out!

### Blackstone Library Tour Saturdays @ 10–11 am

December 16

Take a tour of the Blackstone, learn historical tidbits, and get an insider's peek behind the scenes. Registration recommended, but drop-ins welcome.

### Snacks & a Film: The Little Mermaid (2023)

Thursday, December 28

@ 2 pm

All ages drop-in event. Looking for something to do over the winter break? Bring your friends to a showing of The Little Mermaid (2023). Snacks are on us! Rated PG. Run time 135 minutes. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

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

## October 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 7,444**

October 2022: 6,762

**borrowIT: 1,749**

October 2022: 1,588

**Renewals: 4,871**

**Computer Sessions: 671**

**WIFI Logins: 4,353**

**Website visits: 8,557 sessions**

**Facebook: 2,648 followers**

**Instagram: 1,290 followers**

**MailChimp: 7,836 subscribers**

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,268**

**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 842**

**Overdrive/Libby magazines: 752**

**Palace App: 30**

**HOOPLA: 1,147**

**Kanopy: 363**

**Pronunciator: 784**

**Ancestry Library: 926**

**New Haven Register: 153**

**Branford History Scrapbooks: 165**

**Creative Bug: N/A**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 164**

**Children's Programs**  
36 programs/1325 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**  
8 programs/128 attendance

**Adult programs**  
47 programs/560 attendance

**Average Daily Visitors: 364**  
**Days open: 29**