



# Report to the Board of Trustees

February 1, 2023

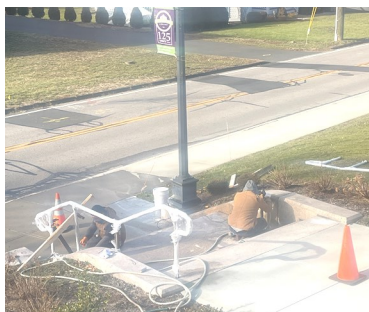
## From the Director

We began January with a packed auditorium: over 100 people attended the swearing-in ceremony of Chuck Tiernan, the newly elected Branford-North Branford Judge of Probate.

Liz Celotto installed her artwork in the Upper Rotunda Art Gallery and held an opening reception, with over 30 people attending. She will give a demonstration of her equipment and technique on February 5 at 1:30 pm.

Carly and I met with Andrea Savino of the Community Dining Room to discuss partnership opportunities. We participate in their Family Literacy Night in March, and the library will play host to a Family Dinner night in the auditorium in April.

Jared created a display on the history of the Blackstone Library from existing prints of the building construction and dome panels. The display features fun facts about the library's history.



New stairway railings were installed on the steps leading out from the terrace.



Alondra has been working with local gardener Ivy Bigelow to start a seed library. Now accepting seed donations. Visit the website to learn more.

On January 16, I virtually attended the 38th Annual MLK Jr. Breakfast, featuring the inspiring Vanessa Roberts Avery, the first Black female U.S. Attorney for Connecticut. Thank you to the MLK Jr. Heritage Foundation of Branford for organizing a great event.

As part of the LION EDI (Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) Committee, Alondra and Angela helped create a survey given to staff at LION libraries. The results will help the committee address EDI training needs at member libraries.

Tina sent out mini golf sponsor invitations to all of last year's sponsors. We're looking forward to a great event in April, and expect another sell-out crowd!

Thank you to Yale SOM Fellow Alyson for her ongoing work to create a draft Emergency Management Plan for the library.

A huge thank you to Kathy for all of her work to prepare the FY2024 budget draft documents. Her wisdom and experience are deeply appreciated as we begin moving through the budget process.

— Katy McNicol

## In Memoriam: Adam Spilka, Board of Trustees President

Library staff and Board of Trustees members are deeply saddened to announce the sudden loss of our Board President, Adam Spilka.



Adam joined the Board in 2019, shortly after he and his wife moved to Bran-

ford. In his work on the Board, on various committees and as President, Adam was a thoughtful leader and respected colleague. He approached his work with the library with passion, grace, sincerity, a warm smile and a wonderful sense of humor.

Adam's leadership and dedication to the library were visible through his service as a Trustee and volunteer at various events. He was thoughtful and thorough and relied on his extensive experience and intelligent insights to help ensure the library continued to make

the greatest impact in our community while remaining fiscally responsible.

His joy in connecting with others was evident. He was a regular visitor to the library, at work in the mezzanine or stopping by a desk to chat with staff, always remembering each person's name. His curiosity about and compassion for his fellow human beings showed in everything he did.

Adam was a kind, supportive friend and trusted mentor. He will be deeply missed by us all.

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December

### LUCY THE LIBRARY ELF

We had a blast in Youth Services this December, hosting our own version of Elf on the Shelf, with Lucy the Library Elf. Participants were encouraged to look for Lucy around the Youth Services department. If they found her, their names were entered into a prize drawing. We moved Lucy daily and there were a few moments where we thought we lost her! At the close of the month, we drew 5 winners who then chose from an assortment of prizes. The winners were thrilled, and it turned out to be an excellent way to spread some holiday cheer throughout our department.

### WINTER BREAK

During school break, we offered some special programs. Thanks to the Friends of the Library, we hosted two “food-centered” programs that brought in quite a crowd. The first was a hands-on cookie decorating program that Miss Mary and I took on. During the hour-long event we shared some fun dessert-themed books and then set each family up with their own decorating station. They could mix frosting with food coloring, use piping bags, and add marshmallows, chocolate chips and/or M&Ms. The kids could not wait to taste their creations and everyone left smiling with full bellies.

The following day Emily and I hosted our first family movie showing since the pandemic! We went with the animated movie *Abominable* since it is set in the snowy mountains but is not associated with any particular holiday. Over 30 people attended and enjoyed the cookies and hot cocoa that were on offer. Families

truly enjoyed watching together and got a kick out of the movie’s humor and message.

### NOON YEAR’S EVE

Our most successful event happened on New Years Eve. We had over 80 community members participate, and brought in two middle school volunteers for assistance. The event is a fun way to ring in the New Year with toddlers since they will not be staying up till midnight. During the program we use a combination of music and movement activities to create a party-like atmosphere and hand out some fun giveaways like horns, glow sticks, and hats. We also take advantage of the balcony in the auditorium. Family and staff help blow up many, many balloons, and after stories and songs, when the clock strikes noon, we release the balloons from the balcony into the waiting arms of the crowd below, with “Celebration” playing on our wireless speaker.

Every year it is a huge hit with the littles. They chase the balloons throughout the room and it is a nice way for families to celebrate. Also, the addition of two middle school volunteers was a great way for them to get a taste of what goes on during large scale events. Both volunteers came early to set up the space and discuss their to-do list. They were in charge of welcoming families, counting the number of participants, and handing out our giveaways before the balloon drop. We even convinced them to participate in our hand rhymes and movement activities! They really enjoyed the morning and said they want to help



Cookie-decorating programs are always a hit.

with larger events in the future.

### EXPANDING COLLECTIONS

Emily has expanded the teen collection by purchasing a small set of Nintendo Switch games for circulation. During the month of December, Emily was able to visit a few neighboring libraries and spent time in their teen spaces. The Scranton Library actually has a video game system and screen that is hooked up for after school play. She was able to talk to their teen librarian about the checkout process as well as which games and systems would give us the most bang for our buck. Emily then cross-referenced these suggestions in our library catalog to see other library’s circulation statistics. All this legwork led to her first 4 gaming purchases which started circulating on day one! Who knows, this small collection could lead to a video gaming program of our own.

– Carly Lemire



One of five prize-drawing winners.



## Highlights from the Reference Department—December

### YEAR IN REVIEW

It has been another year of change for the Blackstone Library and the Reference Department. We said goodbye to our reference librarian, Brendan, and welcomed Jordan and Stephanie, who joined us this fall. Both have acclimated quickly to their jobs and we are really delighted to have them with us.

At the Blackstone Library reference desk, we have always provided all manner of Reference help and we continue to do so; whether providing a telephone number, an article from Consumer Reports, a quick tutorial on using Ancestry Library, help placing a hold for a book in LION or ordering one through interlibrary loan from another library in the state, looking up the credentials of a physician, or finding a photograph of a patron's home in our photo archives.

### TECH HELP IN-DEMAND

One specific task in our department that continues to increase in importance is technology help. We currently provide quick assistance at the Reference desk, one-on-one extended appointments with one of our librarians, drop-in tech help in the library (we are increasing this program from once a month to three or four times a month) and at the Senior Center. We are adding outreach tech help at some of our local senior living facilities as well.

This technology assistance could be as simple as showing a pa-

tron how to bookmark a website on their laptop or how to send a photo from their phone. It could be showing them how to install an app on their iPad or how to set up an email account with Gmail or Yahoo. We have librarians who are trained in how to help patrons obtain free or low-cost Internet with the Affordable Connectivity Program. We try to stay as current as possible on what technology is available and how we can best provide for our patrons, whether in the library building or outside of it. We fully anticipate that this will continue to be a significant part of our work flow.

When speaking of technology, I would be remiss if I didn't give a shout out to the circulation staff who continue to staff the PC Lab and provide daily assistance to our patrons. Everyone on the circulation staff has worked hard to learn new tasks and increase their knowledge to be able to provide this assistance and we are very grateful to them.

### ARCHIVAL WORK

On the opposite side of the spectrum, our work in preserving the past continues as well. We have numerous scanning projects still underway. We continue to work with Jane Bouley, the Town Historian, on her scanning project of the Branford Historical Society Archives, we will continue to add collections to our own Digital Archive, and Christina is maintaining our Community Webs Archive of local websites.



Liz Celotto's Camera Obscura artwork is on view now through the end of February in the Upper Rotunda Art Gallery. She'll offer a discussion and demonstration of her work on Sunday, February 5 @ 1:30 pm.

### CALENDAR SOFTWARE

The Reference staff, along with Carly, Emily and Katy, worked for several months to make the switch to our new calendar this fall. We learned the calendar program itself, made numerous decisions on design and appearance, set multiple parameters for event registrations and room reservations, and much more. We are very grateful to the Friends of the Library for their generosity in paying for the implementation of the calendar and the first year's cost. The new calendar has worked out very well; we are happy with the design, the capabilities, ease of use for both patrons and staff and we expect to be able to provide statistics for the Director and State Library quickly and easily.

— Deborah Trofatter





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...more than books

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



We've been selected as the February Partner for Big Y's Community Bag Program, meaning that every time you purchase a community bag in February at Branford's BIG Y location, we will receive a \$1 donation.

## February 2023 Program Highlights

### Take Your Child to the Library Day: Join the Brigade & Meet Artemis Sparke!

**Saturday, February 4  
@ 1:30–2:30 pm**

**In person.** Help us celebrate the launch of Kimberly Behre Kenna's debut middle-grade novel, *Artemis Sparke and the Sound Seekers Brigade*, the first book in her new *Brave Girls Collection* set on the CT shoreline. We'll have snacks, make some crafts, and learn about ways that you can make the world a better place.

### Liz Celotto: Camera Obscura Sunday, February 5

**@ 1:30–3:30 pm**

**In person.** Just what is a Camera Obscura? Come and find out from local photographer Liz Celotto. View some of her work and take a turn using a camera obscura device.

### The Oystering Life Monday, February 6 @ 6:30–7:30 pm

**Online.** This feature-length documentary tells the story of

oystering along the southern New England coast, from the early days of the native Americans and European settlers to the boom times of the late 19th century and the collapse of the early 20th century, to today's rebound—and the people who are making it happen. **Presented by the Stony Creek Museum.**

### Chocolate Dipped Pretzels Thursday, February 9

**@ 3:30–4:30 pm**

**In person.** Just in time for Valentine's Day, we will be making chocolate dipped pretzels! These delicious chocolate covered pretzels are a great gift, or a fun treat for yourself. **Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.**

### Awakening to Change Social Justice Discussion Group Thursday, February 9

**@ 7–8:30 pm**

**Online.** February topic is **Antiracism: Allies, Accomplices & Co-conspirators.** Historically, it's been people of color who have pushed back most strongly against

racism, racial injustice, and white privilege. However, for real systemic change to occur, white people – who still hold the majority of institutional power within those systems – must join with people of color by becoming Allies, Accomplices and Co-conspirators to effect that change. We will discuss what we can do in our everyday lives to become one.

### Meet Me @ The Mini Maker Table Monday February 13 @ 4–5 pm

**In person, drop-in event.** During this informal hour we will try out equipment, build things out of various materials and test our creations all in an effort to help YOU learn How To do something! **ACTIVITIES:** February: Circuit Cards for V-Day. Grades 2-8.

### The Seven Wonders of the Universe Sunday, February 26 @ 2–3 pm

**Online.** In the sky above our head are wonders too numerous to count. But what are the seven most remarkable objects visible with just our eyes, with a simple pair of binoculars, or a small telescope? Seven objects which we might call, "The Seven Wonders of the Universe." **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

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

## December 2022 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 6,660**  
*December 2021: 6,393*

**borrowIT: 1,525**  
*December 2021: 1,347*

**Renewals: 4,367**

**Computer Sessions: 586**  
**WIFI Logins: 3,264**  
**Website visits: 7,243 session**

**Facebook: 2,266 Likes**  
**Instagram: 1,156 Followers**  
**MailChimp: 7,655 Subscribers**

**Average Daily Visitors: 307**  
**Days open: 28**

### Downloadable Circulation:

**Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,416**  
**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 692**  
**Overdrive/Libby magazines: 184**  
**Palace App: 25**  
**HOOPLA: 1,092**  
**Kanopy: 323**  
**Pronunciator: 666**  
**Ancestry Library: 308**  
**New Haven Register: 478**  
**Branford History Scrapbooks: 127**  
**Creative Bug: 11**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference  
Room Usage: 126**

**Children's Programs**  
*28 programs/529 attendance*

**Teen Programs (12+)**  
*8 programs/58 attendance*

**Adult programs**  
*23 programs/286 attendance*