



February 7, 2024

Report to the Board of Trustees

From the Director

Happy 2024 and welcome to a new year. January was a great month for strengthening community partnerships.

In early January, the Legacy Theatre announced a joint project that Angela and Jordan have been working on. We are partnering with them to host some talks by film experts during their annual fall film festival. We're so excited to be part of this great event.

We are partnering with a Southern CT State University (SCSU) student to help him conduct research on video game cataloging in libraries, by publicizing his focus group recruitment and hosting the focus group sessions.

We also began a hosting new intern from SCSU's graduate MLIS program. Julie will be interning with us this spring to learn more about public libraries, and will help out with projects in the Reference and Youth Services departments.

We hosted our second Community Volunteer Fair, with 19 organizations coming out to staff tables. Hundreds of community members came out during the fair to learn about those organizations and sign up to volunteer. We have heard rave reviews from the organizations and attendees and will plan more fairs in the future.

We worked with the Town of Branford to plan a welcome re-



State Representative Robin Comey came out to celebrate Branford's inaugural Poet Laureate, Dr. Judith K. Liebmann. First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove was also on hand to welcome Judith, along with many community members, filling the Reading Room.

ception for the Town's inaugural Poet Laureate position. Together, we issued a press release announcing the position and inviting the community to the reception, which was hosted at the library on January 27. We worked with Branford Parks & Recreation and the Friends of the Blackstone to sponsor the event, and worked with Branford High School Culinary Arts classes to cater cookies for the event. BCTV came out to film, and State Representative Robin Comey and First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove were on hand to speak. Over 50 members of the community came out, including Alice Pentz from the Willoughby Wallace Library, and filled the Reading Room, listening to Dr.

Liebmann speak about poetry, what drives her and inspires her, and heard two original poems that she read. The establishment of the Poet Laureate has already spurred great collaborations, and we look forward to many more in the years to come.

I attended a virtual eBooks information session, hosted by the Connecticut Library Association. They discussed the proposed eBooks legislation that was worked on last year. They hope to continue raising awareness of the issues and hope to bring the legislation forward next year. More information about the issue is available at: ctllibraryassociation.org/Advocacy. This is a huge issue that affects all communities and their libraries.

— Katy McNicol



New lighting installed in the Youth Services department brighten the space without overwhelming it.



The Community Volunteer Fair hosted 19 organizations and was attended by hundreds of interested community members.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December

One of our favorite ways to connect with families is through our weekly storytimes. We offer five storytimes each week for children from birth to age five, and this month we had two special storytimes as well. We kicked off December with a visit from Music Together, an early childhood music and movement class for families. There was a huge turnout for this event and everyone enjoyed learning new songs! We also said goodbye to Miss Mary at her final storytime this month. After 21 years of connecting with generations of children at the library, Mary is retiring so she can spend more time with her family. For Mary's last storytime, we invited the community to come celebrate her lasting impact on the Youth Services department. We will miss her immensely, and wish her the best in her retirement!

We also said goodbye to our fall semester intern, Kacie, who is pursuing her MLIS from Southern Connecticut State University. Kacie has been a huge help the last few months, helping us develop new signage for the children's area, weeding books in the nonfiction section, and culminating her experience by planning a Hot Cocoa Crafternoon program. Kacie taught the children how to make winter animal snow globes from mason jars, and participants had fun arranging their polar animals, trees, and snow!

We had some fun learning opportunities this month for elementary age children. We hosted Claudia from Coolology for a Super Science Saturday program all about



Families participate in a Hot Cocoa Crafternoon.

Leonardo DaVinci. Participants first learned interesting facts about Leonardo DaVinci, like how he liked to write backwards and loved drawing cats! The children then put his scientific ideas to the test by creating invisible ink messages with acid and base solutions, making parachutes based on DaVinci's designs, and building octahedrons using marshmallows and toothpicks.

Our Homeschool Meetup this month was also enlightening as we learned all about the winter solstice! After reading a picture book about the solstice and watching a video about why it is the shortest day of the year, we created paper lanterns to bring light to the darkest day. Nicolette also hosted a Lego challenge program this month, which got children thinking in innovative and creative ways. With challenge prompts as inspiration, participants made boats, houses, robots, and even bananas out of Legos!

We offered Teen Book Boxes again this month and they were a big hit! Fourteen teens signed up to receive the

boxes, which included library books picked out based on their interests, along with snacks, stickers, bookmarks, and other goodies. The boxes were ready to pick up right before school let out for winter break, so teens had some new reads to enjoy in their free time! I also connected with both the middle and high schools this month. I visited Walsh Middle School at the beginning of December to introduce the fifth graders to the resources and programs that the library has to offer. Students were especially excited to hear about the Nintendo Switch tournament that will be happening in February! Then an English class from Branford High stopped by the library for a tour. We love seeing the new and familiar faces when we do school visits!

Finally, we celebrated the transition to the New Year with our Take-N-Make this month: a New Year's noisemaker made from paper plates, popcorn seeds, and a popsicle stick. We are looking forward to all of the great events we have planned for 2024!

— Emily Yates



Teen book boxes, ready for pickup!

Highlights from the Reference Department—December

We wrapped up the year in December with our usual monthly book clubs, support groups, trivia nights and game night as well as a number of interesting one-time programs, including a play reading, an autism discussion, an adoption story, and concerts by the Branford High School Music Makers and the Ukeladies, presented by the Musical Arts Society.

Jenna is working hard to seek out diverse and interesting adult programs and is beginning to decide on spring and summer events. She has another volunteer fair coming up, which has attracted a lot of interest from local organizations. She oversees the auditorium equipment and is happy to have an additional two channels in the sound system for microphones, allowing us to keep both handheld and lavalier microphones synced at all times.

Christina continues to catalog all adult materials and works closely with Jordan to enter our new Library of Things collection in the catalog. She is holding twice monthly tech drop in sessions with Jordan, is hosting a trivia night with Angela at Caius Brewery, visits the Senior Center for tech help at least once a month and holds many individual tech help appointments. She will continue to perform all of these tasks and is adding some classes this year on mobile devices and other computer related topics. She is attending webinars and programs to expand her cataloging knowledge.

Jordan has made a number of new purchases for our Library of Things collection, including an

electric guitar, keyboard, cake pans and cookie cutters, an automobile code reader, digital film scanner, travel kit and GoPro camera. He is planning to add additional items over the next several months and is considering the purchase of additional lawn games, a second Nintendo Switch, an easel, a portable white board, Bluetooth speaker, CD player, Blu-ray player, board games and acoustic guitar. He also provides tech help to many of our patrons, hosts the tech drop-ins with Christina and joins her at the Senior Center and hosts trivia night at Caius Brewery as well.

Stephanie has been busy creating new content for TikTok, working with several staff members, but especially with Jared. Our patrons continue to respond with positive comments on their efforts! They have lots of ideas for future videos and will continue to support and promote library and Friends events.

Debby continues to work on adding collections to our Digital Archives and recently arranged for a demo of a new overhead scanner which we hope will allow us to work on additional in-house scanning projects. She oversees the current scanning projects being worked on by Jared, Moira, Jordan and Christina which include scanning the Branford Neighbors magazines, The Sound, photographs from newspaper clippings, selected articles from the Shore-

line Times, and the Branford High School yearbooks.

Jordan responded to an email last month from a young man in Stockholm, who is collecting library cards from libraries around the world for his sister, who has serious health problems. We were pleased to be able to send him a Blackstone Library card for her collection, and they sent us a picture when it arrived!

— Deborah Trofatter



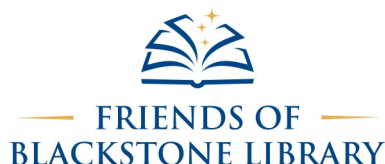
A photo confirming that our library card was received in Sweden. The card was sent in response to a request from a young man collecting cards from around the world for his very sick sister.



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Branford, CT 06405

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reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
instagram.com/blackstone_library

Join our email list for more
information about programs
www.blackstonelibrary.org



SAVE THE DATES

2024 Spring Warehouse Book Sale



Saturday and Sunday
May 4th – 5th

2024 Fall Tent Sale on the Green



September 19th – 22nd

For great books at great prices
in the meantime, shop the
Friends Book Sale Cart in the
Library or Virtual Book Cart
online. More info:
blackstonelibrary.org/friends

February 2024 Program Highlights

Community Conversation: Branford's Police Social Worker Monday, February 12

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Learn about the pioneering
Police Social Worker position
and what it's done for the
community. **Presented by
Branford Counseling and
Community Services.**

Pizza in New Haven: History Explored

Sunday, February 11 @ 2–3 pm

Join author, historian, producer
& pizza guru Colin M. Caplan on
a journey into Branford and New
Haven pizza history! Learn the
how, when, who and why pizza
made it big here, followed by a
Q&A and a book sale/signing for
his book, *Pizza in New Haven*.
Come early for a free tasting of
some of Branford's best apizza!
**Sponsored by the John Loeb
Lecture Fund.**

50 States of Mind: A Journey to Rediscover American Democracy

Thursday, February 15

@ 6–7:30 pm

Is America as divided as it

seems? Oxford University
graduate student Ryan Bernsten
took a 23,000-mile journey
through all 50 states of his home
country to answer that question.
**Sponsored by the Friends of the
Blackstone Library.**

Amore: Classical & Contemporary Songs of Love Saturday, February 17

@ 2–3 pm

The Synergismus Duo will be
performing a concert to
celebrate Valentine's Day with
classical and contemporary
music about love on the violin
and cello. **Sponsored by the
Friends of the Blackstone
Library.**

On Health and Politics Saturday, February 17

@ 2–3 pm

Join Dr. Dean Robinson to learn
about the political and policy
dimensions of racial and class
inequalities in health in the
United States. Dr. Robinson is an
Associate Professor of Political
Science at the University of
Massachusetts, at Amherst and
Ph.D. from Yale University in

political science. **Sponsored by
the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King
Jr. Heritage Foundation.**

Daybreak: Author Talk with Matt Gallagher & Adrian Bonenberger Wednesday, February 21

@ 6–7:30 pm

Join local author and Army
veteran Adrian Bonenberger in
conversation with author Matt
Gallagher. They'll be discussing
Matt's new novel, *Daybreak*,
inspired by a trip they took to
Ukraine to train Ukrainian
citizens in March of 2022.

The Black & Brown Wealth Gap Sunday, February 25

@ 2–3 pm

Paul C. Wilusz addresses the
persistent wealth gap between
Black and Brown communities
and their white counterparts in
the United States, in order to
shed light on the deep-rooted
causes that sustain this wealth
gap and to propose actionable
solutions for a future of equity
and prosperity. **Sponsored by
the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King**

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

December 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,827

December 2022: 6,660

borrowIT: 1,752

December 2022: 1,525

Renewals: 4,358

Computer Sessions: 724

WIFI Logins: 3,709

Website visits: 6,931 sessions

Facebook: 2,660 followers

Instagram: 1,299 followers

MailChimp: 7,780 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,221

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 806

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 718

Palace App: 40

HOOPLA: 1,056

Kanopy: 303

Pronunciator: 797

Ancestry Library: 385

New Haven Register: 181

Branford History Scrapbooks: 130

Creative Bug: 125

Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 144

Children's Programs
24 programs/500 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
10 programs/255 attendance

Adult programs
31 programs/355 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 338
Days open: 29