



Report to the Board of Trustees

January 3, 2024

From the Director

December was full of seasonal cheer. We participated once again in the Town's Holiday Wreath Extravaganza. Thank you to Angela for creating beautiful quilled paper decorations and to Jared for his gorgeous hand-drawn greeting cards for our wreath. Merchants and organizations in town decorated these donated wreaths, which were then auctioned off to the highest bidder. Proceeds benefit Feed Branford Kids.

Another worthy cause we helped support was Snuggles for Shoreline Seniors, a new initiative started by a community member, as a way to honor her late mother. She wanted to make sure seniors got the chance to receive a cozy gift this holiday season, and the community responded by donating over 125 new blankets, which were distributed in partnership with the Community Dining Room and other organizations.

The Friends held their Holiday Gift Basket Sale at the beginning of the month, to coincide with the Town's Sip, Shop and Stroll event. The lobby was filled with over 100 gift baskets, and on the Thursday kick-off day, shoppers were treated to free snacks and drinks from the Friends and the restaurant Los Charros, as well as music from local flautist Mimi Griffin Dudley and carols from Branford High School's Music Makers. Income from the sale was a record-breaking \$4,700! These proceeds help the Friends as they support enrichment projects and special



Angela and Jared made a beautiful wreath, with handcrafted decorations and a few engraved library bookmarks!

programs at the Blackstone. Thank you to everyone who donated and volunteered to staff the sale!

Along with over 60 librarians from around the state, I attended a Listening Session in Hartford, organized by Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz and Representative Christine Palm. Half of the discussion was dedicated to elected officials hearing about book challenges in public and school libraries in CT, and the other half was about ebook licensing and how expensive it is for libraries to build and maintain digital collections. The strong support will hopefully lead to future legislation around contracts and licensing term.

Mary conducted her last storytime at the library on December 16, and it was full of parents and children wanting to enjoy her cheer for one final time. After the storytime, everyone moved the party to the Youth Services area, where Mary was treated to cookies and hugs from friends, family, and staff.

The Poet Laureate Selection Committee chose Branford's first Poet Laureate: Dr. Judith K. Liebmann, a Branford poet with decades of experience writing, teaching and publishing poetry. The committee met with Judith to discuss ideas for her three-year term and to plan a meet & greet reception at the library for January, with support from the Town of Branford.

— Katy McNicol



Erin standing next to the blanket collection box, overflowing with donated blankets for area seniors.



Mary and helpers read to the group at Mary's farewell storytime at Blackstone.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—November

November flew by in Youth Services! As the weather turns colder and the days get shorter, we see more children, teens, and families visiting the library. We love having more visitors in the department and enjoy helping everyone pick out cozy reads this time of year.

We hosted several special events this month that featured hands-on learning. Nicolette invited Claudia, an educator from Cool-ology, for a Science Magic program. Kids learned magic tricks while exploring scientific concepts like magnetism, chemistry, surface tension, and gravity. The attendees were taught how to make water disappear using polymers, how to balance soda cans on their sides using their center of gravity, and how to make disappearing drawings using acids and bases. Our monthly Science Saturday program has a different theme each time, but it always focuses on making STEM topics fun!

The learning continued at our Homeschool meetup this month, where the theme was coding. Homeschool students learned about how algorithms work using a picture book called *How to Code a Sandcastle*. We then practiced our coding skills by breaking into teams to organize the steps needed to design a paper airplane. We tested our algorithms by swapping our instructions with the other team to see if they could successfully make a paper airplane using our



Teen Advisory Group members playtesting donated video games.

code. After this tech-free explanation of the principles of coding, we worked on laptops to explore the different educational lessons available on code.org.

Our last science activity for the month involved making slime at our mini-maker table event. Nicolette taught participants how the boric acid in contact solution activates the polymer chains in school glue to create a stretchy substance. She also had them test different types of glue and different amounts of contact solution to see how it would impact the texture and structure of the slime!

Fall is college application season, so we hosted Big Green College Prep for a virtual program this month on tips and tricks to improve SAT scores. Teens also celebrated the season with a fall cider and cookie decorating party. We had plenty of icing and sprinkles available to create festive decorations - some of the teens' designs included flowers, apple pies, and

seascapes! Our Teen Advisory Group had a treat this month as well. Recently, a patron donated a PlayStation console along with some video games, and the Teen Advisory group spent time at our meeting playtesting these games to make sure they worked. The reference department is considering adding this console to our Library of Things. The teens also helped put together our Take-N-Make kits for this month, "thankful pies" made out of paper plates to encourage practicing gratitude.

We have many more great events for kids and teens coming up this winter, and are looking forward to seeing you soon in Youth Services!

— Emily Yates



Science Saturday attendees explored the science of magic.



Cookies decorated by teens. Yum!

Highlights from the Reference Department—November

Our programs this month included our regular book groups, knitting, coloring, grief support and poetry groups, Latin classes, Game Night, two Trivia Nights, two Tech Help Drop-Ins and Awakening to Change. We also offered special programs on Winter Sowing for Native Plants, CPR Training, a Zoom program on The Sicilian Puppet Theater of Agrippino Manteo, an all-day drop-in Medicare program, a concert by Doox of Yale, a program on Caregiver Resources for Alzheimer's and Dementia, and a storytelling concert presented by Ubuntu Storytellers. A big thanks again to Jenna for providing such interesting, diverse programs.

One of the services that the library provides to Branford residents is home delivery, for those patrons who are unable to get to the library and do not have anyone who can pick items up for

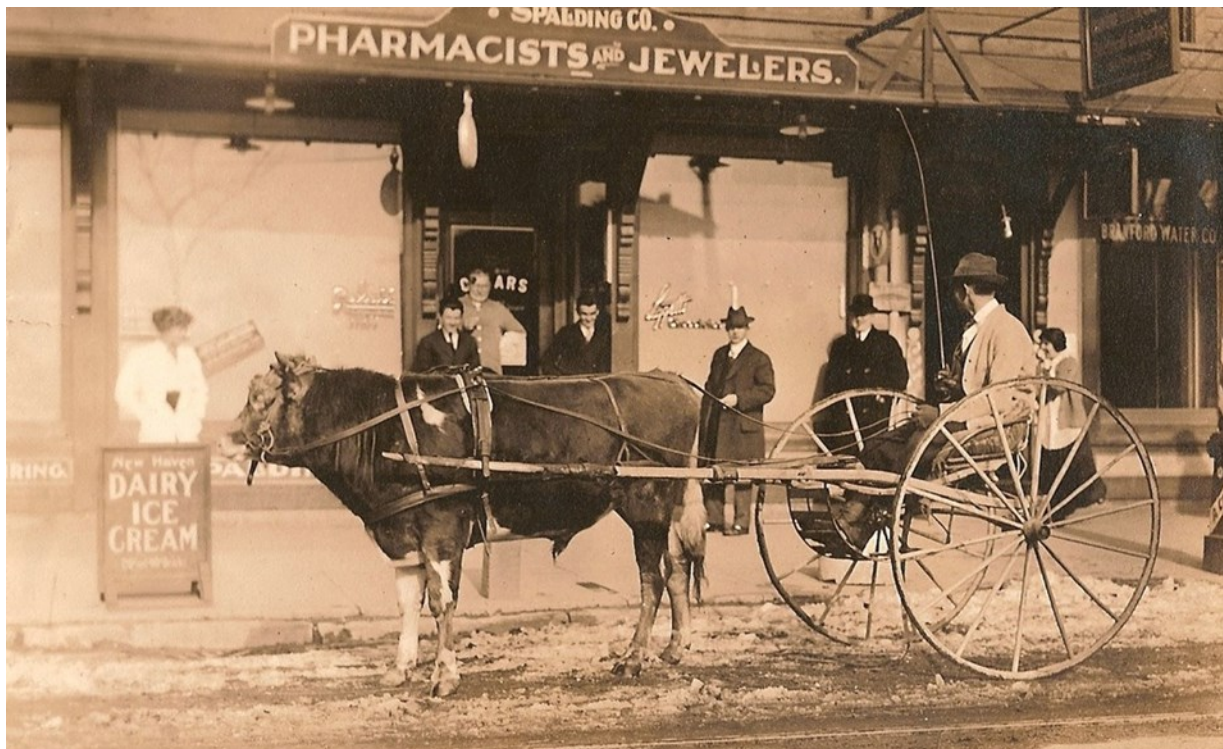
them. This service has been offered to Branford residents for many years and we have been in contact with some of our current patrons for over 20 years. We learn what types of books they like to read or listen to, speak with them by phone several times a month and often have contact with family members. All of us appreciate the ability to have meaningful interactions with our home delivery patrons as well as our in-person patrons.

Christina attended a Vendor Expo at Southern Connecticut State University organized by CLC, the Connecticut Library Consortium, which provides a wide range of discounted products and services to Connecticut libraries. She and Jordan also attended another AI webinar as they continue to educate themselves on the wide-ranging capabilities, and dangers, of AI in order to be able to educate our patrons and fellow staff.

Stephanie and Jared, with help from other library staff, continue to create content on TikTok to promote the library. Great job!

We added a new collection of photographs to our Digital Archives this month, featuring Main Street over the years. Included are photographs of residents, businesses (some with hitching posts out front), hotels, stately homes long gone and unusual weather events. The Main Street collection can be found at <https://blackstonelibrary.org/archives758/collections/show/27>

— Deborah Trofatter





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

MUSEUM PASSES AT THE BLACKSTONE LIBRARY



Looking for a fun outing for the whole family? Check out our museum pass collection! Passes offering free or discounted admission to museums all across the state (and beyond!).

Reserve passes online and get many passes sent directly to your smartphone or print from home.

More info: blackstonelibrary.org/museum-passes

Passes have been generously provided by the Friends of the Blackstone Library and the Allan Louis Loeb Foundation.

January 2024 Program Highlights

Intro to iPhone & iPad Wednesday, January 17

@ 11 am–12 pm

Get a new iPhone or iPad over the holidays? Confused about how to use it? Learn how to navigate your new device in this class covering downloading apps, emailing, texting, changing settings, taking pictures and more. Devices must be through the initial set-up. Class will cover Apple iOS devices only.

Branford Historical Society Wednesday, January 10

@ 6–7 pm

Join us for a presentation by Jeffrey Fletcher from the African American History Museum in Stratford. Presented by the Branford Historical Society.

Community Volunteer Fair Saturday, January 13

@ 10 am–1 pm

Do you want to give back to your community, but aren't sure how to go about it? Check out our Community Volunteer Fair! You

can chat with representatives from over a dozen local nonprofit organizations, find out what their missions are, and learn more about the skills they're looking for in their volunteers.

Want to volunteer as a family? Many organizations take volunteers who are under 18! Whether you're looking to save lives, help those in need, or just file some paperwork once in a while, you're sure to find a volunteer opportunity that works for you. No registration required.

Intro to Pilates Saturdays, January 20 – February 24

@ 12–1 pm

In this introductory series of classes, you'll learn the basics of Pilates from certified instructor Cindy Kondziela. Whether you're new to fitness or just trying to mix up your existing fitness routine, this class has something

for everyone. Please bring a yoga mat to class. ***Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.***

Swords & More with Laurel City Fencing Sunday, January 21

@ 1:30–3 pm

We're hosting Laurel City Fencing, a HEMA (Historical European Martial Arts) group from Winsted, CT. Learn what HEMA is, see demonstrations of different sword fighting techniques, and find out if you have what it takes to become a knight. All ages welcome.

Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Virtuosic Violin Concert Sunday, January 28 @ 2–3 pm

Violinist Michael Tropepe returns to perform works from Mozart, Walton, Bazzini, and Bach.

Sponsored by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

November 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 7,348

November 2022: 6,935

borrowIT: 1,965

November 2022: 1,743

Renewals: 4,612

Computer Sessions: 718

WIFI Logins: 4,195

Website visits: 7,202 sessions

Facebook: 2,659 followers

Instagram: 1,299 followers

MailChimp: 7,763 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,208

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 853

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 754

Palace App: 36

HOOPLA: 1,021

Kanopy: 302

Pronunciator: 788

Ancestry Library: 1,195

New Haven Register: 261

Branford History Scrapbooks: 111

Creative Bug: 200

**Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 152**

**Children's Programs
25 programs/639 attendance**

**Teen Programs (12+)
7 programs/46 attendance**

**Adult programs
45 programs/733 attendance**

**Average Daily Visitors: 337
Days open: 29**