



July 12, 2023

# Report to the Board of Trustees

## From the Director

In June, I completed the 3-part Library HR course offered by ALA. It covered the foundations of writing job descriptions, setting policies and benefits, onboarding and evaluations, terminations and exit interviews.

The Branford Garden Club and Friends of the Library co-sponsored new spring plantings from Van Wilgen's in the library's front steps planters. Thank you, Friends and Garden Club for filling those planters — they look wonderful!

The Children's Play Area Mural was installed on June 9. The mural was created by artists Brooke Sheldon and Lena Fransioli. Brooke was on hand to oversee the installation and add some finishing touches. The mural adds a spectacular warmth to the area, and people who come in are in awe of how gorgeous it is. It is whimsical and timeless, and a perfect addition to the play area.

On June 10, we hosted our annual Shred-A-Thon fundraiser. Thank you so much to our volunteers: Connor, Pastor Greene, Nancy, Anna & mom, and Maryann. Thank you to Justine from Card My Yard Madison for the free rental of the yard sign. And thank you to Maryann Amore, the Law Offices of Christian P. Edmonds, and Mike Leonard of Physical Fitness for sponsoring the event. And thanks to The Shredding Source for another job well done. This year's event netted a record high of almost \$2500. Congratulations, Tina, and thank you!



At the Branford Festival



Food donations for the Branford Food Pantry



Sign promoting the Shred-A-Thon



Receiving the honorary check from Friends President Barbara Barrett at the Friends Annual Meeting. Photo: Diane Puchalski.

Jenna, Mary, Nicolette and Friends volunteers staffed our booth at the Branford Festival. Located near the children's area, the booth saw a lot of traffic. People got to make buttons and get information about the library, plus the Friends gave out free children's books.

I attended the Friends of the Library's Annual Meeting and was presented with a giant check for \$70,000, representing the total amount of support the Friends have given the library over the course of the year and including a special year-end gift. Thank you to the Friends for all of their hard work and very generous support throughout the year!

We held our first ever Volunteer Fair with 13 different local organizations hosting tables throughout the rotunda and

reading room. Community members were able to stop in and learn about organizations and sign up on the spot for volunteer opportunities. People were thrilled for the connections, and we plan to hold future volunteer fairs at least once per year, if not more often. Thank you, Jenna, for organizing and promoting this fantastic event!

We received the \$100,000 grant check from the State Historical Preservation Office for the final part of the recent renovation project: major repair work done on the dome. The close-out documents were submitted in October, but the SHPO office was backlogged until now. We turned the funds over Town of Branford as reimbursement and closed out that project.

— Katy McNicol

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—May



Mary reading to children at the Child Development Center.

We are so excited to be heading into summer, and were busy this May planning for our summer reading programs. We received a grant from the Branford Community Foundation to help fund programs all summer long for kids and teens, and will be kicking off the summer with an event on June 30th with storyteller Sara deBeer. Other upcoming highlights include a Backstage at the Ballet event with the Connecticut Ballet, a “Chopped” style cooking program for kids, and a concert by children’s performer Michele Urban to close out the summer in August.

Our StoryWalk® on Main is back again for another year! This event bridges walking, reading, and conversation and is provided with help from Branford’s local merchants and the Friends of the Library. Each year we choose a children’s book to display that fits our summer reading

theme, and this year’s theme is Find Your Voice. We are so grateful to Angela in circulation for her help disassembling the inspirational picture book, I Am One. These pages will be hung in storefronts on Main Street from June 16-August 11 so families can stroll down the street to read the entire book.

Our new children’s librarian, Nicolette, started this month, and we are so excited to have her join the youth services team. She was most recently the Marketing and Technology Librarian at the Otis Library in Norwich, and has experience working with children at the Disney Store. Miss Mary has been busy training Nicolette on all of the storytimes that happen at Blackstone, sharing tips and letting her give the storytimes her own personality as well. Mary and Nicolette will share responsibility for these popular weekly storytimes; some of them draw a crowd of over forty children and adults! Stop by the Youth Services department to introduce yourself to Nicolette!

This month we had lots of fun and interesting programs for teens. In one program, teens received a journal to keep and cut out images and words from magazines to create a beautiful collage design on the cover. Later in the month, an educator from the Connecticut Humane Society came to give a presentation about all the careers that are available for animal lovers, and offered teens tips on ways they can get experience to prepare themselves for these jobs. Teens got another opportunity to think about their futures during a virtual

program, How to Win the College Admissions Game. A presenter from Big Green College Prep gave teens insight into what colleges are looking for in applicants and how they can make themselves stand out in a competitive applicant pool.

We were happy to reconnect with one of our community partners this month, Shoreline Adult Education. The organization visited with one of its English for Speakers of a Second Language classes for families. Parents brought their children in for a special Storytime with Miss Mary and Nicolette, and then used the teen room to host their class for the morning. It was great to see some new and familiar faces!

We also participated in professional development this month, attending the Connecticut Library Association conference in Groton. We are very grateful to the Friends who made our attendance possible. It was a wonderful chance to gather new ideas and connect with colleagues from around the state. Members of the Youth Services department attended several sessions that we will put to good use, including a session on teen librarianship post-pandemic, toddler art projects, and innovative ways to partner with schools and community organizations.

— Emily Yates



Collage journals



## Highlights from the Reference Department—May

May's programs included our monthly book groups, writer's group, grief support group, knitting, poetry and coloring groups, Awakening to Change discussion, Saturday Cinema, two drop-in tech sessions, Friday Game Night, a library tour, an art reception, a Branford Forum program on protecting the natural beauty of Branford, and two concerts.

Our reference librarians attended a number of interesting webinars this month, including assistive technologies, digital equity, statistics and AI. Jenna, Christina and Jordan attended "Data For Community Action: How to Use the 2023 Community Wellbeing Index." The Community Index provides an extensive set of statistics on the wellbeing, equity, and quality of life in the greater New Haven area.

Jenna attended "Preparing for Program Challenges at Your Library." Book challenges are not the only ones that libraries are currently facing; programs

such as these help us to be prepared should we face a program challenge as well.

Artificial intelligence and ChatGPT are very much in the news these days and we understand the importance of being knowledgeable on these topics. Jordan and Christina attended AI Literacy: Using ChatGPT and Artificial Intelligence Tools in Instruction; they learned about new resources and how ChatGPT and other chat services work, what they include, how they differ from each other, how to use them effectively, what not to do, etc. Jordan and Christina both feel that they can make use of AI to assist with technology instruction in their own work doing tech training and are interested in offering a class on it.

Jordan attended an Assistive Technology Petting Zoo. This event at the Middletown Library Service Center demonstrated different technologies and resources that could be helpful

for our patrons, including braille e-readers, audiobooks for blind/low-vision patrons, browser extensions, accessibility settings on iOS, and tech for children. He recommended we include the browser extension Read & Write on our public computers and is looking to purchase a couple items for our Library of Things collection.

— Deborah Trofatter



**"Absolutely loved this performance - I hope the JBML finds more musical programs for that lovely space!"**

**"So glad I belong to friends and can support this fine programming for all to enjoy."**

**"We have enjoyed all 3 Sunday afternoon concerts that we have attended."**

—Post-program survey feedback from May's Carnaby Street Duo, sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library

## SAVE THE DATE FRIENDS BOOK SALE

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



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**"Thank your entire  
staff for their  
efforts to create and  
implement these  
special programs."**

**"Something  
everyone needs to  
know more about  
and then keep up  
with any new  
developments and  
changes."**

—Post-program survey  
feedback from June's  
Keeping Family Informed:  
How to Get Your Estate  
Organized program.

## July 2023 Program Highlights

### StoryWalk® On Main

**On display along Main Street from  
Friday, June 16 – Friday, August 11**

This summer's StoryWalk® on Main is all about finding your voice and making a difference! Gather your friends and family to read this year's picture book, *I Am One* by Susan Verde, in the store windows down Branford's Main Street. This event bridges walking, reading, and conversation, and is provided with help from Branford's local merchants. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### Donald Alfano in Concert

**Saturday, July 15 @ 2–3 pm**

Donald Alfano will present a solo piano recital with a commentary for further appreciation and understanding of the selections. The recital will consist of music from the Baroque through the 20th century and will include such diverse works by Domenico Scarlatti, Franz Jos. Haydn, Frederic Chopin, a short selection of music by Spanish composers such as Granados and Falla and works by Claude Debussy. **Presented by the Musical Art Society of Branford.**

### Protecting Your Assets

**Wednesday, July 19 @ 2–3 pm**

Learn to protect your assets from lawsuits, nursing homes and predators.

The cost of long-term care is on the rise. Proper planning can determine the amount of care an individual needs & how to pay for it while protecting their legacy! Presented by Shoreline Elder Care Alliance in conjunction with Drazen Law.

### How to Crush your College Essays

**Tuesday, July 25**

**@ 6:30 pm–7:30 pm**

Online event. For high school students and parents. College Admissions Consultant David Wtorkowski of Big Green College Prep presents an informative Zoom discussion about how to ace your college application essays, including your main "Personal Statement" and the supplemental "Why Us?" essays. Highlights include: Why the essay is so important for admissions, what makes for a great essay topic, common mistakes to avoid, plus case studies of essays that worked. 30-minute presentation followed by Q&A.

### Beauty and the Beast Storytime with Legacy Theatre

**Thursday, July 27 @ 10–10:30 am**

Families: be our guest for Legacy Theatre's Beauty and the Beast! Join the company of Legacy Theatre's upcoming production of Beauty and the Beast for music and meet-and-greets with your favorite characters. The actors will perform classic songs from the Disney musical and take pictures with attendees. Don't forget to wear your favorite Disney outfit, and get ready to sing along!

### Saturday Cinema

**Saturday, July 29 @ 2–4 pm**

Join us for Saturday Cinema and see a highly anticipated new release on our big screen in the auditorium. This month we're watching **The Fabelmans** (2022, PG-13). Growing up in post-World War II era Arizona, young Sammy Fabelman aspires to become a filmmaker as he reaches adolescence, but soon discovers a shattering family secret and explores how the power of films can help him see the truth. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

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

## May 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 6,930**

*May 2022: 6,871*

**borrowIT: 1,390**

*May 2022: 1,422*

**Renewals: 4,339**

**Computer Sessions: 755**

**WIFI Logins: 4,232**

**Website visits: 8,776 sessions**

**Facebook: 2,572 followers**

**Instagram: 1,200 followers**

**MailChimp: 7,760 subscribers**

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,241**

**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 925**

**Overdrive/Libby magazines: 160**

**Palace App: 30**

**HOOPLA: 1,230**

**Kanopy: 204**

**Pronunciator: 745**

**Ancestry Library: 753**

**New Haven Register: 272**

**Branford History Scrapbooks: 140**

**Creative Bug: 26**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference  
Room Usage: 174**

**Children's Programs**

*23 programs/547 attendance*

**Teen Programs (12+)**

*7 programs/31 attendance*

**Adult programs**

*24 programs/440 attendance*

**Average Daily Visitors: 341**

**Days open: 29**