



Report to the Board of Trustees

March 6, 2024

From the Director

At the beginning of February, Trustees Michelle Blank, Janice Kochanowski, and Pat Sanders joined me to speak with the RTM Education Committee about the library — its history, operations, recent accomplishments, and plans for the future.

Laura Gunneson began working as the new Children's Programming Specialist and has been joining Nicolette for storytimes. We're excited for this new beginning and are pleased to welcome Laura to the team!

I attended a new CLC Roundtable for Association Libraries. There were about 30 library administrators on the Zoom meeting, and we all shared a little about our libraries and discussed the challenges and opportunities we face. This is a great way to learn and share with similar organizations.

Poet Laureate Judith Liebmann hosted a special Valentine's Day program on the poetry of love. This open mic-style program offered flowers and chocolates, and had about 40 people in attendance!

I submitted the Blackstone Library budget request to the Town of Branford. Later in the month, Janice and I met with First Selectman Jamie Cosgrove and Finance Director Jim Finch to discuss highlights of the budget request.

Pat Sanders and I joined Friends President Barbara Barrett and



A huge thank you to Trustee Michelle Blank and her husband Fred Jackson (at right) for their generous gift of a hand-crafted, custom-built wood train table for the Children's Room! We are grateful for this labor of love!



and to the Friends for their continued support.

The Friends also sponsored the purchase and installation of new end panels for shelving in the Children's, Fiction and Nonfiction areas. These end panels are beautiful, warm up the space, and will allow us to offer book displays and signage on each of the slatted panels. Thank you, Friends!

I attended a library advocacy workshop at the main Stamford Library. John Chrastka, from the EveryLibrary PAC which builds support for libraries and helps Americans fight book banning in their communities. He spoke about various ways to advocate for our own libraries, and the importance of having conversations with various groups in the community, highlighting how the library address issues important to each group.

Friends Board Member Joe Genua at the new Friends warehouse for a tour of the facility. The new space on Thompson Road is extremely well-organized and efficiently and thoughtfully laid out. The Friends completed the move to the new space in a short amount of time and did it well!

We received a special gift from Dr. Michelle Blank and her husband: a new train table! Fred and Michelle put their skills to work, creating a wonderful new train table that is custom-built to fit the space and community needs, and includes a scene from the mural and a tunnel for children to crawl through. They also donated storage bins to hold train sets and tracks, which were sponsored by the Friends of the Library. We're so grateful to Fred and Michelle for the love that went into this project,

— Katy McNicol



John Chrastka from EveryLibrary, speaking at the Ferguson Library in Stamford, CT.



New shelving end panels were installed, thanks to a very generous gift from the Friends of the Library!



The library went red for Heath Month.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—January

We welcomed the new year in the Youth Services department with lots of creative and educational programs!

January started with two engaging science activities to spark our curiosity about the world around us. Our monthly homeschool meetup group had a special guest this January, Dr. Jenn Coughlan, an assistant professor of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Yale University. Dr. Coughlan taught us about the importance of pollination, explaining how flowers attract different pollinators based on their color, shape, and smell. Dr. Coughlan also shared their journey to become a scientist and offered advice to the attendees on how to pursue their interests and passions.

For our Science Saturday program this month, Claudia from Cool-ology taught us all about animal adaptations. We learned about how animal eyes are adapted for sight, and explored various animals' vision by using toilet paper tubes to see like an owl, kaleidoscopes to see like a fly, magnifying glasses to see like a spider, and mirrors to see like a frog. We also learned about the difference between physical and behavioral adaptations, including mimicry and camouflage. Finally, participants got to engineer a new animal with some of the adaptations we learned about by sketching out their ideas and then making model animals with cups, pipe cleaners, feathers, and cardboard tubes.



Claudia from Cool-ology teaching a group of children about animal adaptations.

Penguins made an appearance in both kids and teen programs this month! Nicolette hosted a children's step-by-step painting program, featuring a cozy penguin in a winter landscape. This is the second painting program Nicolette has hosted and both sessions have been incredibly popular. Kids enjoyed adding unique details to their penguin paintings, including hats, mittens, and accessories, to make the scene their own! Teens celebrated the winter season by making delicious penguin cookies. These cookies were made out of cookie butter sandwiched between crackers, then dipped in chocolate and decorated with M&Ms for feet, tic tacs for the nose, and a white chocolate melt for the tummy. Even better than making the penguin cookies was enjoying the taste of our hard work!

Our Take-N-Make kits this month also celebrated winter, with a snowflake made out of beads and pipe cleaners. Many thanks to the teens in our Junior Teen Advisory

Group, who counted out 100 beads for each kit! This monthly volunteer group is for intermediate students, and participants get a community service hour for the work they do for the library.

We hosted two 3D printing workshops this month, one for kids in grades 2-5, and one for teens. Participants learned all about 3D Printing, practiced designing their own 3D files, and picked out a design to print on their own. We were busy printing files for the attendees the week after the event, and created an airplane, sea shells, a frog, a dolphin, and more!

We know this is a busy time of year, and are always happy to make things easier by helping with research for a school project, offering a fun event to escape the rush, or providing a book recommendation. Stop by the Youth Services department and let us know how we can help!

— Emily Yates



The homeschool meetup group learning about plant biology.



Children loved painting penguins!

Highlights from the Reference Department—January

I'd like to feature our book purchasing process for this month's report. Everyone in Reference is actively involved in the process and a lot goes on behind the scenes to allow us to provide a wide-ranging and diverse nonfiction collection. Especially now, with the spate of book banning news from around the country, it's important for us to continue to purchase titles of interest to all of our patrons.

Our process begins with the budget. Debby takes the total nonfiction and Reference budget, deducts the cost of the materials that we receive every year (which includes titles such as the Branford City Directory, newest edition of Medical Diagnosis and Treatment, JK Lasser's Income Tax, Branford high school yearbook, and others), analyzes our previous year's circulation by call number range and reviews past purchases by call number to assign a specific dollar amount to each book selector for the year's purchase in their subject areas.

All five Reference librarians and Katy maintain specific areas of the collection. We are each responsible for evaluating our subject areas, maintaining the stacks, weeding where necessary and purchasing new titles.

We read Publishers Weekly and Library Journal, look at the New York Times bestseller lists, review top requested titles in the library catalog and specific patron requests. We then meet monthly to discuss the titles we are purchasing and to share our thoughts with each other on those titles that we are considering for purchase. This process

allows us to stay current on all subject areas and to keep our colleagues informed on what new items will be added to the collection. We all review memoirs and biographies together (this is our highest circulating category in the nonfiction collection).

Debby reviews the high demand holds list for Blackstone patrons on a weekly basis so that she can purchase multiple copies of the most popular items to reduce the wait time for our patrons to receive a copy of these new books. She and Deirdre

also discuss nonfiction purchases for the OverDrive Advantage collection, which supplements LION's OverDrive (Libby) collection of eBooks and eAudiobooks and gives Blackstone patrons priority for new and most requested titles.

We strive to maintain a wide-ranging collection of nonfiction books and work hard to provide our patrons with books that they know about and request, as well as those titles they may not be aware of.

— Deborah Trofatter



Programming Librarian Jenna Anthony reviewing copies of Publishers Weekly and Library Journal for potential book titles to purchase.



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

March 2024 Program Highlights

Foster Family Info Session

Tuesday, March 12 @ 6–7 pm

Are you interested in making a difference for a child or youth in foster care? Consider becoming a foster parent! The Children's Community Programs of Connecticut is looking for potential foster parents. Learn more about their mission, services offered, and if you would be a good fit for their foster parent program.

Medicare Made Clear

Wednesday, March 13

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Would you like some clear information about Medicare, the difference between all the plan types, and learn specifics to look for when choosing a plan? Join Christie A. Bondos, a local Medicare Insurance Specialist who will guide you through the Medicare Maze.

VA Medical Foster Care Info Session

Thursday, March 14 @ 6–7 pm

Sarah Jane Dailey, a Clinical Social Worker with the VA, will discuss Medical Foster Homes. Serving as an alternative to a nursing home,

they may be appropriate for Veterans who require nursing home care but prefer a non-institutional setting.

Teen Spa-tacular: DIY Sugar Scrub & Lip Balm

Thursday, March 14

@ 4–4:45 pm

Come join us for a relaxing afternoon of self care! We'll learn how to make our own lip balm and sugar scrub to take home. **Sponsored by the Friends of Blackstone Library.**

"Joan Joyce: The Wonder Girl" © Local Author Story Time

Saturday, March 16

@ 10:30–11:15 am

Join us for a storytime that celebrates the incredible career and life of Joan Joyce. Enjoy a reading of the book, and hear songs it inspired, with local authors Keely Baisden Knudsen, Lauren Salatto-Rosenay, and Tony Renzoni. Recommended for ages 4 to 8, but all ages are welcome to participate. Copies of the book will be available for purchase.

Sprout Your Success: A Beginners Guide to Seed Starting

Monday, March 18

@ 6–7:30 pm

Get ready to take the first step towards a successful gardening journey with our Seed Starting Success class. Expert gardener Mark Gostkiewicz of Tri Gable Lea Farm will guide you through the basics of starting your own seeds. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Celtic Celebration

Saturday, March 23 @ 2–3 pm

Judy Handler & Mark Levesque present an entertaining program of music from Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

Get Ready for the Spring Sky

Tuesday, March 26

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Learn how to safely view the upcoming Solar Eclipse and explore the sky this spring, observing events and objects from within our atmosphere to beyond our galaxy. Presented by the Astronomical Society of New Haven. Families welcome!

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

January 2024 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 7,918

January 2023: 7,595

borrowIT: 1,630

January 2023: 1,574

Renewals: 4,687

Computer Sessions: 729

WIFI Logins: 3,600

Website visits: 8,572 sessions

Facebook: 2,678 followers

Instagram: 1,315 followers

MailChimp: 7,796 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,375

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 948

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 813

Palace App: 39

HOOPLA: 1,127

Kanopy: 359

Pronunciator: 810

Ancestry Library: 538

New Haven Register: 134

Branford History Scrapbooks: 140

Creative Bug: 18

Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 143

Children's Programs
26 programs/579 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
7 programs/37 attendance

Adult programs
51 programs/910 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 357
Days open: 28



SAVE THE DATES

2024 Spring Warehouse Book Sale

Saturday May 4th

9 am–2 pm

20 Thompson Road, Branford, CT
Adult fiction (hardcovers and trade), Sci-Fi, paperbacks, Children's books and Cookbooks



2024 Fall Tent Sale on the Green



September 19th – 22nd

For great books at great prices year-round, shop the Friends Book Sale Cart in the Library or Virtual Book Cart online.

Learn more at:

blackstonelibrary.org/friends