

Report to the Board of Trustees

November 3, 2021

From the Director

Our community survey closed in October and Katy worked throughout the month to create charts from the data collected from the interviews and the survey responses. Katy and Sarah also interviewed a group of students in the ESL class at Shoreline Adult Ed, incorporating those results as well. The Strategic Planning Committee will meet on November 17 to review progress, and the entire board will receive a report at the December meeting.

We received notification of a generous bequest from a former patron's estate. The entire amount has not been received yet, and staff have created a preliminary list of recommendations for the funds for the finance committee, and the board of trustees to review.

The Pine Orchard Association delivered their records to the library, except for the volumes to be scanned.

Over 70 donors attended a reception on our terrace on a beautiful Sunday afternoon this month. We were treated to music performed by award-winning cellist William Suh. It was wonderful to close out the summer season in person with fellow supporters of the library.



The old chiller comes down, the new chiller goes up. Photo by Kathy Oxsalida

The new chiller was delivered and installed in the last week of October—thank you to Kathy for expert coordination, and for being there at the right moment to capture an image of the old chiller being removed. Thank you to the chiller for 25 years of service!

Storytimes on the lawn continued this month and will move indoors once the weather turns colder. In-person programs have gone very well, with a performance featuring Christopher Campbell as Edgar Allan Poe drawing a sold-out crowd and rave

reviews.

The Friends of the Library met and are planning a holiday basket sale to begin December 2. Donations to the sale are very welcome, and we can also help by shopping!

I attended a meeting of CT library directors, the Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development, and a LION meeting this month. The Friends also held a volunteer appreciation reception at Donovan's Reef, which I was very honored to attend.

Karen Jensen



SCARECROWS ON THE GREEN

This Friend represented the library at the Branford Garden Club's (BGC) 11th annual Scarecrows on the Green. As part of our display, we gave away free books. This annual event coordinated by the BGC raises funds that help beautify Branford, including the flower baskets on the Green, flowers, wreaths and holiday decorations at the library, and the daffodil project.

The scarecrows were on the green through Halloween.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—September

This month we began to offer a combination of in-person and online programs. Miss Mary and I were able to hold all of our regularly scheduled storytimes outside as well as online for those that are not comfortable coming back into the building. The outside program has been extremely successful and continues to grow. So many families have told us how much they have missed in-person programming and how being able to read, sing and dance with other families has brought them so much joy. Miss Mary and I meet on the right side of the library lawn every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and still maintain our Friday films through ZOOM. Our other regularly scheduled ZOOM storytimes are dwindling. Once families heard we were conducting class outdoors they quickly jumped ship and joined us outside. We are maintaining these ZOOM storytime slots for the time being because we may have to run class back to back once the weather gets too cold to remain outside. Having two classes will allow us to maintain a manageable group size while also reaching as many families as possible.

The department as a whole has also been refreshed with 6 new gaming computers and tables and seating for kids/teens that are interested in working collaboratively. We have also created a couple of tutoring areas for those looking for quiet spaces to work one-on-one. Our hope is to have all of our play areas fully operational once all ages are

eligible for the vaccine. For now everyone has been respectful about masks and it is nice to see the older kids coming together to complete projects, study or socialize. Miss Carol has also reached out to a handful of middle/high school students that were looking for community service hours last year. We want to get our volunteer program back up and running and have set aside an hour each day for a student to fill. Miss Sarah calls it their first “mini” work experience since they have to report at a certain time and remember to call us if they cannot make it for any reason. Being able to offer these basic services really livens up the space and makes our department feel that much closer to normal.

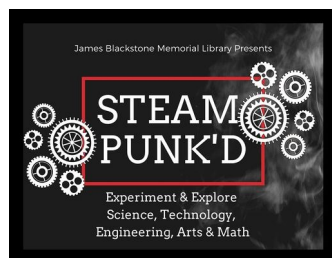
We also heard from the high school’s life skills class and have arranged for a small group of teens to volunteer with their paraprofessionals every Monday morning. This program has worked with us in the past and allows students with special needs to gain onsite training that can be referenced when searching for a job in the future. The students will begin volunteering in October and will work with us throughout the school year.

We also started a new program this month entitled STEAM Punk’d, meant for elementary-aged students. The idea came from our Take & Make days and uses a combination of hands-on and virtual components. Our first program used every day pantry items to create ice cream.

Participants used ice and salt within a bag to force the temperature of coconut milk down. Everyone shook their materials for a good ten minutes and watched in amazement as their milk began to harden, creating the consistency of ice cream! Rather than creating a series of edited videos and uploading them to YouTube we decided to offer this program virtually in real time so that everyone could share in the experiment at the same time. I also included supporting components - a picture book about freezing points and a cartoon short about mixtures and how they cannot be “unmixed.” We also made predictions prior to the experiment and talked a little about how we thought it would work. Everyone really enjoyed the process and it was nice to see so many families come together for the love of science.

Miss Sarah also brought back both her advisory groups who have been patiently waiting to meet in-person. Each group helps the youth services department with various tasks as well as selecting materials for the teen collection. Miss Sarah is also enlisting both groups to take part in the Teens Top Ten, created by the Young Adult Library Association. If selected Sarah’s advisory groups will become an official Teens Top Ten book group and will be sent pre-released YA titles throughout the year that they will read and then report back on.

Carly Lemire



Homemade Ice Cream!

Highlights from the Reference Department-September

September's programs included book groups, knitting, Latin classes, Poetry discussions, a well-attended Zoom program on home composting, an in-person guitar concert, an in-person book signing and a Branford Forum Zoom event titled "God States of Mind." September was also another busy month for tech appointments; Christina held 12 in the library and she and Katy helped eight people at the Senior Center Tech Drop-In event. Christina is scheduling regular drop-in events both at the library and at the Senior Center as these are proving to be very popular.

We received an email this month from the registrar for the John Goode Chapter of the National Society of Colonial Dames XVII Century. She was working with a lady in Clarksville, VA who is tracing her family to the Beach family of Connecticut. In order to use this man as her qualifying ancestor, she is required to provide proof of service in the colony and one way to do this would be to show land ownership. The registrar reached out to us because she found a book on the Beach family in our catalog and hoped to find more details for her patron.

Although we were not able to prove land ownership, we were able to provide additional information on the Beach family and where they lived. In addition, we found an electronic copy of our Beach book and forwarded the link to her so that she could continue to investigate.

Deb Trofatter



The 1897
City Directory

A Monumental Feat of Endurance

Many thousands of books have passed through the Blackstone Library's collections over the years, but today we're presenting you with one of the most special titles we own. It's not the fanciest, not a classic or a best seller. It's not the most valuable, the oldest book in the building, or even the first book we ever purchased. Today's 125th Anniversary Fact is about the oldest recorded, continuously owned, book in the Blackstone Library's collection—a monumental feat of endurance! It's never been damaged beyond repair, lost, or needed to be replaced. For 124 years it has remained on the shelf for the

people of Branford to use and enjoy. That book is...the 1897 Branford City Directory!

Some of you may remember our Accession Records from several Anniversary Facts ago. They are a running list of every title added to the collection dating back to 1897. This book is the first one listed in the earliest Accession Record book we have. Its internal book plate proclaims that it was added to the collection on the 29th of April in 1897, which matches the date in the Accession Records. Most importantly, the entry for the 1897 City Directory was never marked as "Condemned" — the word

used to describe books that were removed from the collection for any reason. Every other title on the page was condemned, but not this little City Directory!

Now a part of our local history collection, the Branford City Directories are similar to phone books and list people and businesses located in town. They can be handy for genealogy, and are also just fun to look through. With the proper care and a little luck, this book should remain on the shelf for another 124 years.

Jenna Anthony



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...more than books

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November/December 2021 Program Highlights

Drop-in Tech Session

November 4 @ 2 - 4:00 pm

Confused about your new iPhone or iPad? Need help formatting a Word document? Drop in to get your tech questions answered. First come, first served. Sessions will be limited to 15 minutes per person.

Writer's Law School

November 6 @ 2 - 3:00 pm

Learn to navigate the challenging realm of copyright law from attorney and author Jodé Millman. In this workshop designed for writers, we'll cover the basics of copyrights, trademarks, and key provisions of publishing contracts so that you'll understand the fine print without having a law degree.

Witness Stones Project**

November 10 @ 6:30 - 8:00 pm

Learn how the Witness Stones Project in Guilford is restoring the history and honoring the humanity and contributions of enslaved individuals who helped build our communities through research, education, and civic engagement. *Presented by Branford Historical Society.*

Civic Journalism

November 21 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

Presented by the Branford Forum, a community organization that brings nationally renowned figures to the Shoreline.

Best Seller Book Club**

November 27 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Have you ever thought about joining a book club? It's a fun

way to get connected, make new friends, and read more books! This month we're reading *The Paper Palace* by Miranda Cowley Heller. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Meet Ainissa Ramirez Award-Winning author of *The Alchemy of Us*

December 11 @ 2 - 3:00 pm

Meet Dr. Ramirez and hear the colorful stories behind society-shaping inventions. Copies of the book will be available for purchase and signing.

An Introduction to Opera

December 19 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

Presented by the Branford Forum.

All programs except drop-in tech require registration—see our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org

September 2021 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,704

September 2020: 3,923

borrowIT: 1,623

September 2020: 597

Renewals: 5,142

Computer Sessions: 575

WIFI Logins: 2282

Facebook: 2027 Likes

Instagram: 1060 Followers

MailChimp: 7560

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,606

Overdrive audiobooks: 768

Overdrive Magazines: 161

HOOPLA: 1,007

Kanopy: 200

Pronunciator: 569

Ancestry Library: 565

Total Downloadable: 4,876

Children's Programs

20 programs/159 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

5 programs/11 attendance

Adult programs

35 programs/331 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

78 meetings/312 attendees

Average Daily Visitors: 266