



# Report to the Board of Trustees

November 1, 2023

## From the Director

In October, we were able to purchase a new bookshelf for the lobby with funding from the Friends. This allowed us to make a mobile bookshelf unit available for the Friends in-house ongoing Mini Book Sale cart. Look for the cart on the first floor rotunda, across from the Reference Desk — you'll find pre-owned books for all ages and interests at excellent prices.



Jenna has signed up through CLA to become a mentor to a new-to-the-field librarian in CT. She will meet with this mentee over the coming months and will help guide this person at the beginning of her library career.

Jenna has also taken over the weekly Community Events email and has started a new Blackstone Library Perks email series, showcasing various resources we offer that our community can take advantage of, for free, with their Blackstone card.

Tina has been helping plan staff appreciation events this year, and put together a delicious Sundae Bar in the staff room for a few days in October, with funding from the Friends of the Library. These sweet treats are a special way to thank staff for all they do.

Jordan and Angela met with a representative from the Legacy Theatre to discuss potential film festival partnership opportunities. Talks are ongoing to find the best way to collaborate. The Blackstone was rented out



Attendees sampling offerings from distributors during An Evening with the Spirits.

for 3 private events this month (two rehearsal dinners and a wedding). We currently have a corporate holiday party booking coming up in December.

The other special event this month was An Evening with the Spirits. Thank you to Tina for organizing this sold-out and hugely successful event. Attendees had a wonderful time. Thank you to the Board for donating to the silent auction, buying tickets, and coming out to volunteer. Volunteers for these events are critical for ensuring they run smoothly. Our wonderful volunteers for this event were: Michelle Blank, Johanna Capozzoli, Heather Falzano, Lynette Gannon, Harvey and Nancy Goldstein, Jane and Tony Kenealy, Mary-Rita Killelea, James Maclean, Jonathan McNicol, Pat Sanders, Jared Torello, Sue Wharfe. Thank you for your

hard work to help make a fun event for all. An Evening with the Spirits raised over \$9,000 for the Blackstone's programs and services.

The Branford Poet Laureate Selection Committee reviewed applications for the honorary position and narrowed the field down to two very strong candidates. The Committee will interview candidates in November before making its final choice.

We hosted a meeting of Branford school administrators at the end of the month. Superintendent Dr. Tranberg is holding these monthly administrator meetings at various locations around town, and we were happy to be asked to be one of those locations, bringing school leadership into the library and strengthening our ties with the schools.

— Katy McNicol

More scenes from An Evening with the Spirits can be found at [blackstonelibrary.org](http://blackstonelibrary.org).



The library, along with other Town of Branford buildings, went pink and blue for the month of October in honor of Pregnancy & Infant Loss Awareness Month.

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—September

With students returning to school and fall in the air, there was a lot of learning happening at the library this month! We started off September with a program by the Denison Pequotsepos



A snake interaction at the animal senses program.

Nature Center on how animals use their senses to interact with their environment. Children learned how animals like frogs, bats, and deer use their senses to connect with the world, and had the opportunity

to interact with a live snake and cockroach from the nature center.

Then for our mini-maker table program, Nicolette taught children about how electrical circuits work! After learning about how to create a circuit, participants got to make one of their own by using copper tape, a battery, and a LED light. The children created paper flowers to take home that illuminate when the circuit is connected.



Candy sushi is a big hit with teens.

We were excited to host the first meeting of a monthly homeschool group we are offering this fall! For our first gathering we wanted families to be able to connect and share resources, so we started the event getting to know each other with an icebreaker game. Afterwards we gave a tour of the library and Nicolette led the kids in a sand art activity while I shared the library's online resources with the adults. We ended the session with an opportunity to use our always-popular button maker!



Illustration demonstration.

Local author Norah Bernal and illustrator Rubén Rodríguez visited for one of our Saturday storytimes this month. Nohra and Rubén are artists from Colombia who have been living in New Haven since 2009. They shared their picture book, **The Child and the Tree: A Tale for Better Times**, and did a live illustration demonstration of the main character from the book. Children also participated in a song and movement activity based on the book, as well as a coloring project.

Food always draws a crowd for teen programs and they had lots of fun this month with a candy sushi making program. Using rice krispie treats for the rice, fruit roll-ups for the seaweed, and gummy bears for the fillings, teens crafted beautiful plates of "sushi." Some teens even went above and beyond by adding candy representations of chopsticks, candied ginger, and wasabi! We also had a 3D printing workshop this month which focused on Tinkercad, a software program you can use to learn about 3D design and make your own prints. Also this

month we had a passive program for the teens after the first week of school; we set up a stress ball making station using balloons and flour, and the teens got to craft their own stress ball to help them relax.

For outreach this month, I enjoyed working at the library's table along with Jenna at the Branford Arts and Cultural Alliance's festival on the green. Since the festival showcases local artisans, we highlighted some of our upcoming programs that feature creativity and art, and brought a sewing machine from our library of things. People were excited to see that they could borrow nontraditional items from the library, and were interested to learn more about CreativeBug, one of our digital resources that features video lessons teaching various crafts.

Finally, I attended a collection audit webinar offered by Kym Powe from the State Library. This session taught us how to analyze our print collection to ensure we are accurately representing the diversity of our community. I hope to implement some of the tools and strategies I learned from the session soon to improve our book offerings in the Youth Services department. We look forward to seeing more new and familiar faces at the library this fall!

— Emily Yates



## Highlights from the Reference Department—September

One of the most rewarding and interesting aspects of our work in the Reference Department is the variety - the questions we receive, assistance we provide and how our patrons make use of the library and its materials.

Here is just a selection of what we have recently had patrons call or come into the library for.

- Request assistance with installing the Hoopla, Palace or Libby app on their mobile device
- Ask for photographs and information about their historic house
- Buy a cup of coffee and read today's NY Times in the Reading Room
- Attend a class on AI
- Play the piano while their Mom entertains their younger siblings
- Request an interlibrary loan book from Yale or UCONN
- Sign up for a program or book a meeting room
- Attend a drop-in tech session or have a one-on-one tech appointment with a Reference librarian
- Request a telephone number for a local business
- Ask for book recommendations
- Sign up for homebound delivery service
- Attend a book discussion
- Scan a printed resume into Microsoft Word so it can be edited
- Ask for background on a local physician
- Request a copy of a 1966 National Geographic article
- Print PDFs or photos from a mobile device
- Watch a new release movie in the auditorium, complete with snacks and a drink
- Request to have a fax sent
- Ask how to begin genealogy research and obtain assistance with online sources and with the library's extensive collection of local history



The local history questions are among those I personally enjoy a great deal as there is almost always something new that I learn about Branford. We had a patron recently request information about the home she lives in on Hillside Avenue, which was originally on Main Street. It was moved in 1901 by Samuel Foote of North Branford (who was known as the local house mover) to allow for the construction of a new store by Thomas Toole. This section of Main Street was known as the Toole Block.

— Deborah Trofatter



The Friends In-Library Book Sale Cart is back! Located on the main level in the library rotunda, it's filled with fiction, children's and a special shelf with rotating categories. This month's special is biographies. Stop in and see what we have. You might be surprised! Pictured is Friends Volunteer Arla Rosmarin along with Friends President Barbara Barrett.



Come to the Branford Green and see the Library Witch of Blackstone and her friends race toward the library to get more books. Pick up a free children's book when you visit. Now through November 7th.



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Join our email list for more  
information about programs  
[www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org)



#### WE ARE LOOKING FOR HOLIDAY GIFT BASKET DONATIONS

Collecting items **NOW**  
until November 30th

Please drop off donations  
at the circulation desk by  
the back entrance.

We are looking for only gift quality  
items or new items for our baskets  
or completed holiday baskets.

Some basket ideas to consider  
include:

- Hanukkah or Christmas baskets
- Baskets for men and children
- Pet Baskets
- Cooking, Baking, or Entertaining
- Game Night Basket
- Spa Basket
- Pop Culture (Teens)
- Book lovers
- Hostess gifts

## November 2023 Program Highlights

### Grief & Loss: An Educational Seminar

Thursday, November 2,  
6–7:30 pm  
Grief is universal, and can be especially difficult around the holidays. Learn how to identify signs of grief, discuss different kinds of loss, and develop tools to overcome it. Presented by Cheryl Cole, AccentCare Bereavement Volunteer and Certified Grief Recovery Specialist.

### Winter Sowing for Native Plants

Saturday, November 4,  
11 am–12 pm  
In this workshop, we will be sowing the seeds of native perennial plants in order to overwinter them outdoors. Please bring a clean plastic milk jug, and be prepared to take it home filled with soil and seeds.  
**Sponsored by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.**

### Hands Only CPR & AED Training

Saturday, November 4, 2–4 pm  
This free training opportunity will teach you how to recognize

the signs of cardiac arrest, perform CPR, and utilize an AED. Presented in partnership with the American Red Cross, Yale Emergency Medicine Section of EMS, and Yale New Haven Health.

### Neighboring Hues: Shades of Belonging

Sunday, November 19  
1:30–3 pm  
We often say we want to get to know our neighbors, but how do we begin? Who are our neighbors? And how do we make connections with people whose lives may be different from our own?

Join us for a powerful storytelling concert presented by Ubuntu Storytellers, an ensemble of professional black, brown, and biracial story artists from our community. Through the power of storytelling, they'll share true stories of their lives to help us gain a deeper understanding of those around us. A Q&A portion will follow the concert so audience members

can process what they've heard and gain deeper insights.

**Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library and the Loeb Lecture Fund.**

### Stony Creek Museum

Monday, November 6  
6–7 pm  
The Stony Creek Museum is dedicated to sharing the history, culture, and community of Stony Creek and the Thimble Islands. Join us for an interesting presentation about our local history!

### Alzheimer's & Dementia: Caregiver Resources in CT

Monday, November 13  
6–7:30 pm  
Are you a caregiver for someone with Alzheimer's disease or another type of progressive dementia? Join us to learn more about the resources available through the Alzheimer's Association, the Agency on Aging of South Central Connecticut, and Connecticut Hospice.

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

## September 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 7,491**  
September 2022: 6,935

**borrowIT: 1,484**  
September 2022: 1,735

**Renewals: 4,935**

**Computer Sessions: 711**  
**WiFi Logins: 4,291**  
**Website visits: 9,353 sessions**

**Facebook: 2,622 followers**  
**Instagram: 1,262 followers**  
**MailChimp: 7,701 subscribers**

### Downloadable Circulation:

**Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,253**  
**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 883**  
**Overdrive/Libby magazines: 231**  
**Palace App: 22**  
**HOOPLA: 1,238**  
**Kanopy: 266**  
**Pronunciator: 780**  
**Ancestry Library: 660**  
**New Haven Register: 233**  
**Branford History Scrapbooks: 387**  
**Creative Bug: 95**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 156**

**Children's Programs**  
18 programs/527 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**  
6 programs/50 attendance

**Adult programs**  
68 programs/473 attendance

**Average Daily Visitors: 342**  
**Days open: 28**