



# Report to the Board of Trustees

October 6, 2021

## From the Director

In September, we sent out our community survey and have received over 300 responses so far. Our team attended training to learn how to chart the data from the community conversations and Katy did the first pass.

Sarah and Christina did a great job interviewing a group of millennials for the strategic plan, and we will conduct a conversation with a group of immigrants in early October.

Our 125th anniversary commemorative library cards were popular this month. We were busy issuing new cards this month as the community saw our PR.

Tammy from Bailey Scarano spent a week at the library conducting our annual audit. The report is expected to be available in November.

Along with our new library cards, we issued a booklist of library staff favorites—it is available to print out on our website, and as an added bonus, a craft to make it into a little book with a pocket.

We began holding programs in person, although attendance has not rebounded to pre-pandemic levels. Miss Carly is back from family leave and has been holding



The Friends of the Library's annual fall book sale returned to the Green and earned \$60,000 in gross receipts.

*Photo by Joe Genua*

children's storytimes outside on the lawn—the weather has been beautiful and the programs have attracted some new families.

I attended a meeting of CT library directors this month. The consensus of our group was that attendance has begun to increase, albeit slowly. The pandemic created a new demand for zoom programming, which we are all integrating into the overall mix of events.

Over the summer we partnered with Shoreline Adult Ed and Literacy Volunteers to

offer an English conversation group for learners of ESOL. The group had been meeting on zoom only and is moving to the library on Tuesday mornings at 10am beginning in October.

The library was host to a local group working with IRIS (Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services) to hold a program centered on welcoming a refugee family to Branford. Families from Syria, Congo and Afghanistan are currently being relocated, and the group is working hard in hopes of sponsoring a family.

*Karen Jensen*



*Many thanks to our friends from Pro-Shred and our Trustees for September 18's "information destruction" event! We filled the truck and earned \$2100 for the library. Not too bad for a morning's work!*

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

I am very happy to report that there were over 200 participants in our online summer reading program. The event took place over 8 weeks and required participants to complete different literary and physical tasks in hope of getting them off of their computer screens. As a matter of fact, one week we asked everyone to look up the Branford Land Trust's trail maps so that they could take a hike and see the natural beauty right outside their front door! Folks reported back on their hikes and it was fun to hear about their experiences and favorite spots.

When I came back one of the first things we did was pull our summer reading winners! We were able to offer a total of 16 gift cards to local businesses.

One of the most popular programs we shared in August was provided by Arethusa Farm and Dairy located in Bantam, CT. It is a full working dairy farm that makes the most delicious ice cream. They actually have a satellite scoop shop in New Haven so if you have not had it before I highly recommend it! After explaining what kind of program we were looking for, a staff member from the farm was kind enough to donate their time through ZOOM to share some history about the farm. They talked about the breed of cows they raise as well as the ice cream making process. Miss Sarah said they were very into the program and they enjoyed sharing their favorite ice cream flavors with one another.



*Carly, Mary and Sarah*



*Storytime on the library lawn!*

Another summer program I could not wait to hear more about was the partnership Miss Sarah put together with Lyman Hall. Every high school student was fully prepared and Miss Sarah was able to add literacy components that provided context for what they were going to learn about. I was so in love with the idea of students sharing their knowledge with others and to know that families showed up to hear what these teens had to say was sensational. My hope is that we will be able to continue this program in some capacity in the future.

In fall news we are excited to announce that the Youth Services Department will be offering a combination of in-person and virtual programming. As vaccination numbers increase we are feeling optimistic about coming together in small groups. In order to mitigate risk we have agreed to hold as many programs as

possible outside and require those age 2 and up to wear a mask if we have to move things indoors. We are currently offering in-person and virtual story times back to back to see where the demand lies. If families are requesting more in-person opportunities we will switch the virtual options to in-person so that we can maintain a reasonable class size. Like everything this past year, we need to be flexible and open to trying new things to see what does and does not work during this country wide reopening. If anything we are excited to see the many faces we have been missing for so long. Miss Sarah is also following suit with her teens by bringing back in-person TAG meetings, Dungeons and Dragons as well as creative writing opportunities. She will follow the same protocols and fingers crossed we will have mild weather this fall so that we can spend as much time outside as possible.

*-Carly Lemire*

## Highlights from the Reference Department-August

This month's events included Latin and Poetry, knitting group, book groups, Virtual Game Night, One Bird, Two Climates – A Look at Shorebirds: Presented by DEEP, a program on Bats by DEEP, and Uncovering the Hidden Job Market with Reference Solutions.

Once again, our tech team was super busy - Christina had 14 tech appointments in July on the following topics: Mac navigation (x2), Word & Google docs, Unemployment (x2), Tracfone voicemail, Social media, Facebook, iPad Mail (x2), Smartphone, Hoopla in car, Windows 10, and Ancestry.

Brendan and Christina held a tech session at the Branford Senior Center, helping 8 people on the following topics: iPad emailing, Windows PC navigation, Tracfone help (x2), Smartphone help (x2), Facebook help, and Word/attaching docs help.

### History in the Making

2021 marks the 125th year the Blackstone Library has been serving the Branford community and to mark that momentous occasion we have some brand-new commemorative library cards available. The two designs feature different historic aspects of the building so you can carry a little piece of history in your pocket! One design features the murals on

We are excited to announce two new databases - *Black Life in America* and *Heritage Hub*, with a third being added next month - *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index*.

These databases are available to all Blackstone library cardholders, in the library and from home; the links can be found under the Research dropdown menu on the website.

Here are descriptions of the new databases:

#### Black Life in America

Comprehensive coverage of the African American experience from the early 18th century to the present day. Sourced from more than 19,000 American and global news sources, including over 400 current and historical Black publications, it is an easy-to-use online resource—updated daily—for research and the study of Black life in America

the library dome, and the other card features a photo of the library while it was still under construction, specifically in October of 1894. Most of the exterior has been completed in this picture, but the interior still has a long way to go! These photos were taken at the request of Probst Construction Company, the firm that built the

#### Heritage Hub

Provides comprehensive coverage of obituaries and death notices from 1704 through today. Manually indexed obituaries enhance search accuracy for deeper family connections. It provides coverage from all 50 U.S. states and territories.

#### Passenger & Immigration Lists Index available October!

First published by Gale Research Co. in 1981 in print-only format, *Passenger and Immigration Lists Index* covered 500,000 persons.

The 2020 digital edition provides access to more than 5 million people who immigrated to the United States and Canada between the late 1500s to mid-1900s, departing from more than 100 ports in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and the South Pacific and arriving at more than 200 ports in North and South America.

-Deb Trofatter

library. They were taken by the Stoddard Studio in New Haven, and for many of them we know the name of the actual photographer—Harry O. Andrews. You can see this picture, and many other library construction photos, on our online archive available on our website!

Jenna Anthony



Photo of the Library's original construction



James Blackstone Memorial Library  
758 Main Street  
Branford, CT 06405  
203.488.1441  
reference@blackstonelibrary.org  
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary  
twitter.com/blackstonlib  
www.blackstonelibrary.org

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## October 2021 Program Highlights

### Drop-in Tech Session

*October 7 @ 2 - 4:00 pm*  
Confused about your new iPhone or iPad? Need help formatting a Word document? Drop in to the library between 2 & 4 PM to get a tech question answered. First come, first served. Sessions will be limited to 15 minutes per person.

### Awakening to Change: Screening/Discussion of 13<sup>th</sup> *Thursdays, October 7, 14, 21* *7:00 - 8:30 pm*

The series continues with a screening of 13<sup>th</sup>, directed by Ava DuVernay. In this thought-provoking documentary, scholars, activists and politicians analyze the criminalization of African Americans and the U.S. prison boom. The film will be screened and discussed in 3 parts.

### An Afternoon with Edgar Allan Poe

*October 9 @ 2 - 3:00 pm*  
The master of the macabre and father of the modern horror story shares his poetry and prose live and in-person. Learn about Poe's life, his work, his mysterious death, and his enduring influence on our culture in this afternoon of thrills and chills with actor Campbell Harmon. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

### Awakening to Change: With Hilma Wolitzer *October 12 @ 7 - 8:00 pm* Lonnie Reed and Roberta Gill-Brooks will facilitate an illuminating discussion with author Hilma Wolitzer as we explore another layer in Awakening to Change — gender.

Wolitzer's new story collection *Today a Woman Went Mad in the Supermarket* gathers pieces written in the 1960s and 70s which explore the lives of women during one of the most tumultuous periods in the history of the fight for gender equality. The collection also includes a new story written during the pandemic which brings these themes full circle into the present day.

### Best Seller Book Club

*October 30 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm*  
This month we're reading *The Personal Librarian* by Marie Benedict and Victoria Christopher Murray. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

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

## August 2021 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 8,516**  
*August 2020: 3,103*

**borrowIT: 1,779**  
*August 2020: 625*

**Renewals: 5,146**

**Computer Sessions: 535**  
**WIFI Logins: 2254**

**Facebook: 1999 Likes**  
**Instagram: 1057 Followers**  
**MailChimp: 7622**

### Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,780

Overdrive audiobooks: 764

Overdrive Magazines: 190

HOOPLA: 1,775

Kanopy: 244

Pronunciator: 548

Ancestry Library: 1,539

**Total Downloadable: 6,840**

### Children's Programs

*8 programs/120 attendance*

### Teen Programs (12+)

*3 programs/12 attendance*

### Adult programs

*27 programs/161 attendance*

### Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

*166 meetings/498 attendees*

**Average Daily Visitors: 250**