



Report to the Board of Trustees

October 4, 2023

From the Director

We kicked off September with a staff in-service training. In addition to learning from each other, we met with folks from the Branford Counseling and Community Services Center, learning about all that they do for the community. Thank you to the Friends for sponsoring this informative and collaborative training session.

Jenna and Emily staffed a booth at the BACA Artisan Festival on September 9. This was a day geared toward creative arts, and our sewing machine got a lot of attention!

The following week was the Friends of the Blackstone Library Annual Booksale on the Branford Green. This wonderful community event brings hundreds of people to the green to shop, see friends and family, and connect with their community. Congratulations to the Friends on a record-setting year. This year marks the highest sales ever, with over \$72,000 income!

This is also the first year the Friends have sought "Raise the Tent" sponsors.

Thank you to all of the sponsors and volunteers who helped make this event happen, and thanks to everyone who came out to shop and support the Friends and the Blackstone Library. Your support makes



Our fall in-service training included a chance for staff members to share with each other. Staff shared about their daily responsibilities, special projects, and things they've learned from workshops and webinars.

it possible for the Friends to sponsor enrichment programs and projects at the Blackstone that enhance our offerings to the community.

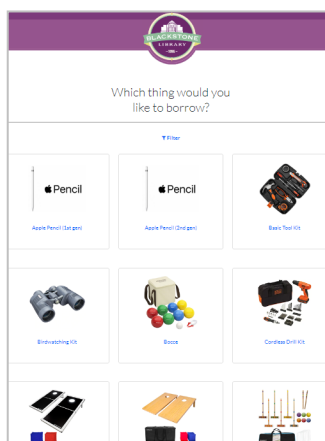
A new intern started working with us mid-September. Kacie is a graduate student at Southern, seeking her Masters of Library and Information Science degree. She has a background in graphic design and an interest in working with teens, and she will get to spend time at Reference, Youth Services and Circulation to get experience in a public library and work on some special projects.

Dr. Christopher Tranberg, the new Superintendent of Branford Schools visited the Blackstone the 20th. He met with me and Emily and gave him a tour of the building. We talked about what the library offers and how we can work with

schools to support teachers, parents, and students in Branford. We will also host an upcoming meeting of school administrators in October, giving them a chance to experience the library for themselves and offering them a great space to have their meeting.

Ticket sales for **An Evening with the Spirits** are strong. Tina has been working to secure additional auction items and volunteers to help the event be as successful as possible.

— Katy McNicol



Visit blackstonelibrary.org/libraryofthings to see all of the 'Things' available to borrow — lawn games, sewing machines, a metal detector, binoculars, and much more! Reserve a checkout date up to 90 days in advance!



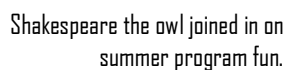
Congratulations to the Friends for a record-setting book sale! Thank you for all you do to support the Blackstone Library!



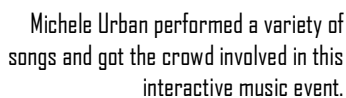
Jenna at our booth at BACA's Artisan Festival on September 9.

We had a wonderful August in Youth Services! We savored the long summer days with a few special programs featuring our summer reading theme, **Find Your Voice.**

First, we celebrated the launch of local author Kimberly Behre Kenna's middle-grade novel, ***Jett Jamison and the Secret Storm***. Kenna's novel centers around a girl who gains the confidence to speak out when an important book at her local library is censored. The library in the book is modeled after the Blackstone, and Kenna shared how her own family's connection to the Blackstone Library inspired parts of the story.



After talking about Jett's journey to finding her voice, Kenna taught participants about how storytellers around the world use beads to tell their stories, with each bead on a strand representing a particular part of the tale. Participants then got the chance to create story beads of their own, and afterwards enjoyed cookies and a book signing with the author.



The White Memorial Conservation Center also visited this month for a program on animal voices. Wildlife educators came to the library to share all about the animals that call Connecticut home and the various sounds they make. During their program, The Sound of (Nature's) Music, participants learned how to identify animals by listening to their noises and calls. The educators even brought in an owl named Shakespeare to



Kimberly Behre Kenna at the book launch of her second middle grade novel. She prepared interactive activities for the participants, including making their own story beads.

introduce to the children and shared tips for listening to the wildlife in their own community.

The final event in our summer reading series was a concert with children's performer Michele Urban of My Music Room. Michele kept everyone engaged with her interactive songs about dinosaurs, the ocean, friendship, and more! She also incorporated our summer reading theme by inviting children to come up to the microphone and share their voice. This was a lively event for the whole family with lots of movement and audience participation.

We are so grateful to the Allan Louis Loeb Foundation, the Branford Community Foundation, and the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library for making all of these special summer reading events possible!

Our Take N Make kits remain very popular with families, and this month we were inspired by nature. Each kit had the supplies to make a

caterpillar resting on a leaf using pompoms, googly eyes, and green paper. Thanks to our Junior Teen Advisory group for preparing these kits for us!

Teens also enjoyed our monthly Dungeons and Dragons campaign and a 3D printing workshop this month.

I was able to participate in some in-person professional development in August, attending a Library Furniture Expo hosted by the Connecticut Library Consortium at the Wallingford Public Library. At this event, I learned about how the Stratford Library redesigned their children's space, and got ideas for ways to make our space more user-friendly and welcoming. It was great to connect with some other Youth Services librarians in person, and I look forward to implementing some of the things I learned in the future!

— Emily Yates

Highlights from the Reference Department—August

We had some well-attended programs in August including Friday game night, another Trivia program at Caius Brewery, a cello concert attended by 81 people and our Lawn-a-Palooza event with 125 people stopping by over the course of the event. A great time was had by all!

Jenna completed our new eight page fall events calendar and it looks great. Thanks to the Friends of the Blackstone Library for sponsoring this expanded calendar. The Programming Committee has some terrific programs lined up for the fall.

We are very excited to see our Library of Things collection grow. This project has been a lengthy one and Jordan has worked hard

to choose Things that we feel our patrons will be excited to check out. Many thanks to Christina as well, for cataloging these unusual items, and to Emily and her staff for making space to store them in the Crafts room. In addition to our lawn games, we now have eight sewing machines, a birdwatching kit, a travel kit, a basic tool set, a cordless drill, a metal detector, a Nintendo Switch, gardening tools, memory kits, a VCR/DVD player, a telescope, a Kill-a-watt meter, a GoPro kit, and two Apple pencils. We will be adding to the collection in the near future. Patrons can also check out a laptop or iPad for use in the building or on the grounds.

Debby, Jordan and Christina all attended a Zoom webinar on AI.

Jordan and Christina are offering a class on AI in September and plan to use a number of the ideas that they learned about at the webinar. Jordan found the most useful applications to be book recommendations, creating book displays, and summarizing articles. Some new uses that he learned about included mapping out travel plans, brainstorming kit ideas (a potential Library of Things use), transcribing Zoom meetings, rephrasing sentences, developing policies, and drafting legal documents. While there are challenges and pitfalls to using AI, there are also some very useful applications for us as well.

— Deborah Trofatter



TICKETS NOW ON SALE

Blackstone Library and Branford Wine & Liquor Presents:

AN EVENING WITH THE SPIRITS

SATURDAY • OCTOBER 21 • 7 PM

AT BLACKSTONE LIBRARY • 758 MAIN STREET, BRANFORD

- whiskey and spirits tasting
- sessions with psychic mediums
- silent auction
- light sustenance included

Tickets: \$40 per soul

available at Blackstone Library or blackstonelibrary.org; open to ages 21+

All proceeds benefit programs and services offered at Blackstone Library.

A MESSAGE FROM THE FRIENDS:



A BIG THANK YOU to all our shoppers, volunteers, and our business sponsors for a successful 2023 Fall Book Sale on the Branford Green

Funds raised support children's and adult enrichment programs, activities, and more... offered for free to our community.

Our 'Raise the Tent' Business Sponsors

TITLE SPONSOR



GOLD Sponsors



SILVER Sponsors

Anderson Krause • Houlihan Lawrence Real Estate • Tags on Main



BRONZE Sponsors

Branford Arts & Cultural Alliance • Caius Farm Brewery • CT Orthopaedics • Horner's Nest • Tractor Supply Co. • TYCO



www.blackstonelibrary.org/friends



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



Applications are now being
accepted for Branford Poet
Laureate, an honorary post,
and are due October 6,
2023.

Visit [blackstonelibrary.org/
poetlaureate](http://blackstonelibrary.org/poetlaureate) for more
information.

October 2023 Program Highlights

Concept Development Part 2: Outlining the Narrative of Your Feature Film

Thursday, October 5
@ 6:30 - 8pm

Have you ever wanted to write a script but don't know where to start? Join award-winning filmmaker and Branford native Christopher Rucinski for a workshop that will help you develop your movie idea, bringing it from concept to script. In Part Two of this workshop, you'll expand the logline developed in the first workshop into a feature film narrative outline, utilizing The Hero's Journey and Three Act Structure.

Alden M. Young: Branford's Thomas Edison?

Wednesday, October 11
@6-7 pm

The Shoreline Trolley Museum. The Pine Orchard Yacht and Country Club. Branford Land Trust properties. Light switches. Yowago Avenue. The common link is Mr. Alden Young. Join Matt Radulski,

Branford Historical Society President, for a presentation of all his amazing contributions to our town! *Presented by the Branford Historical Society.*

Medicare Made Clear Thursday, October 19

@ 6:30-7:30 pm

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

The Doox of Yale in Concert Sunday, October 22 @ 2-3 pm

Join us for a concert by the Doox of Yale, an a cappella group from Yale University. Their repertoire is thrilling, challenging, and diverse, composed of an exciting mix of old favorites and contemporary hits. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Willie Harris: Jim Crow Survivor, Hollywood Stuntman, & Civil Rights Activist Monday, October 23

@ 6:30-7:30 pm

Tim Shea will discuss the life of Willie Harris (1941-2021), the subject of his book *Big Man: An Incredible Journey from Mississippi to Hollywood*. Harris was raised as a sharecropper picking cotton on a plantation in Mississippi in the 1950s, and went on to play Division I college basketball, serve in the US Air Force, and become an important advocate for civil rights, fighting against racism in Hollywood and changing the film industry.

All About Oktoberfest Sunday, October 29 @ 2-3 pm

Come learn about the history, tradition, and beer of Oktoberfest with Advanced Cicerone, author and cartoonist Em Sauter. Em will discuss the origins of Oktoberfest and share interesting facts about the event. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

August 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 9,258

August 2022: 9,567

borrowIT: 1,841

May 2022: 1,976

Renewals: 5,270

Computer Sessions: 842

WIFI Logins: 4,682

Website visits: 8,555 sessions

Facebook: 2,596 followers

Instagram: 1,243 followers

MailChimp: 7,769 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive/Libby ebooks: 1,292

Overdrive/Libby audiobooks: 937

Overdrive/Libby magazines: 140

Palace App: 30

HOOPLA: 1,305

Kanopy: 203

Pronunciator: 764

Ancestry Library: 948

New Haven Register: 203

Branford History Scrapbooks: 123

Creative Bug: 73

**Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 141**

Children's Programs
25 programs/605 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
2 programs/22 attendance

Adult programs
26 programs/452 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 404
Days open: 27