



# Report to the Board of Trustees

September 6, 2023

## From the Director

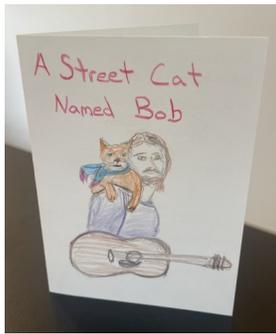
The summer flew by with a flurry of activity at the Blackstone. We kicked off the summer with muralists Brooke Sheldon and Lena Fransioli for a reception to celebrate the Children's Playroom mural.

The new sound system for the auditorium was installed. Funding came from a gift from the Friends of the Library, in memory of longtime Friend Betsy Klarman.

Jordan has led the charge for expanding the Library of Things collection, working with staff to identify, purchase, and process items. Thank you to Christina for her efforts to catalog each item! We went live with LendingKey, a service that allows patrons to reserve Things for specific dates, up to 3 months out. It also makes it easy to see what Things we have on offer!

Jared and Stephanie have taken on creating videos for TikTok (and Facebook/Instagram) to advertise the library's offerings and Friends book sale. They are so creative and have gotten thousands of views!

We had a new phone system installed this summer, upgrading our 20+ year-old phones to newer digital phones that come with all-phone paging capabilities. We added phones to the conference room and auditorium for safety and convenience. Most of the button functions are the same, so the transition was smooth.



BHCare sent a handmade thank-you card after we helped get them book club books.



The Travel Kit from the Library of Things includes luggage scale & voltage converter.



Kathy, Mary, & Nicolette represented the Blackstone at the grand opening of the splash pad.



People of all ages came out to enjoy music and games on the library's lawn for Lawn-A-Palooza on Saturday, August 19. Thank you to the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund for making the concert possible.

In August, a new artist moved into the upstairs Gallery. Robert Jawitz hosted an opening reception and took visitors on a tour of his sketches of Yale buildings.

Tina has successfully secured psychics for Evening with the Spirits. We have 6 readers for one-on-one sessions, and 2 group readers. Branford Wine & Liquor will once again be coordinating distributor tastings, and Tina has been collecting items for prize drawings and silent auction. It should be another wonderful event!

I attended a FLAG meeting to help plan the monthly discussion topics for the coming year, a webinar on how to complete the annual State Report (due November 1), and Tina attended the Town Merchant's meet-

ing. Kathy and I attended a webinar from CLC on their new HR support service. Through our CLC membership, we now have free access to an HR hotline and support from Employers Association of the NorthEast (EANE).

Lawn-a-palooza was fantastic way to close out summer, with people coming out to relax on the lawn, play lawn games and dance to the music! Thanks to Jenna for organizing the event, to Card My Yard—Madison for free rental of the Lawn-a-palooza sign, and to Sarah for volunteering. Lawn games were made possible by a gift from the Friends, and the concert was made possible by the David J. Hughes Memorial Fund.

— Katy McNicol

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June/July

We are enjoying summer in Youth Services! With students out of school, we have been busy offering reading recommendations, running programs, and processing new books to go on the shelves. Our summer reading challenge is also in full swing! Stop by the Youth Services desk to pick up a summer reading game board. Each space on the gameboard is a new challenge designed to encourage reading, and children and teens can complete these challenges to receive rewards. We have a new scavenger hunt for kids each month in the playroom, and the library's annual Storywalk®, featuring *I Am One* by Susan Verde, is on display in the businesses along Main Street.



A crafty Take-n-Make flower.



Teens working on embroidery projects.

If you haven't been in the children's playroom recently, you are in for a treat! We had a stunning mural installed in June. With funding from a bequest of the Estate of Linda J. DeLaurentis, submissions of mural ideas were requested in the Fall of 2022. Submissions were voted on and the top choice was from Brooke Sheldon of Guilford, CT. She and her partner, Lena Fransioli, painted the mural onto canvas in their studio and then brought it to the library on Friday, June 9, when it was hung like wallpaper. We celebrated the installation of the new mural in early July with a community reception with the artists. The mural truly transforms the space, brightening the room and sparking children's imagination with its playful details.

One of the most anticipated events of the summer is the Branford Festival on the green. Mary and Nicolette represented the Blackstone, and spent their Saturday making library cards, demonstrating our button maker, and providing other fun activities for kids. This event is a great way to connect with people who may have never visited the library before and to share all of the amazing events we have going on this summer.

We also welcomed The Legacy Theatre back to the Blackstone this summer, with a special Beauty and the Beast meet and greet. Actors from their upcoming show performed songs and answered questions in character, and children got to take their pictures with Belle after the performance. Teens enjoyed several special programs in June and July.

With support from the Friends, we hosted an intro to embroidery program. Teens made mini embroidered constellations with metallic thread, and thanks to a patron donation, they took home an embroidery kit complete with hoop, fabric, embroidery floss, and tools. We also held the first meeting of our Middle Grade Graphic Novel book club. College-bound teens got tips for how to stand out during the application process in a program called "How to Crush your College Essays" with Big Green College Prep, and the Teen and Junior Teen Advisory groups helped out by putting together our Take-N-Make kits for June and July.

Did you know that the library has two 3D printers that patrons can use? We've been very busy printing jobs for patrons this summer. From a keyboard case for an assistive device, to a vase, to a stretching cat figurine, our 3D printers have been running almost every day! 3D printing is free, and we're offering monthly drop-in workshops this summer for kids and teens to learn about how the printers work and how to design their own 3D files.

Finally, we've had several amazing programs this summer funded by the Branford Community Foundation. Storyteller Sara DeBeer visited in June and told stories from around the world centering on our Summer Reading theme, Find Your Voice. These heartwarming stories explored different ways to show strength and individuality while speaking up for yourself. Then, in July, the Food Explorers came to do a chopped-style cooking competition with kids, with teams competing to create the best tacos. Team salsa and team guacamole were neck and neck! The Connecticut Ballet also visited to give a backstage look at what it takes to be a ballerina. Dancers demonstrated their art to families, and kids even got to test out a few moves! We are so grateful to the Branford Community Foundation for making these special events possible. We can't wait to see everyone for more summer fun in August!

— Emily Yates

## Highlights from the Reference Department—June/July

Our digital scrapbooks proved useful once again when a patron asked if we had any information on his home at 45 Hillside Avenue. He had heard that it was once a bakery. We were able to locate a small announcement in the Branford Review in 1936 that a bakery was opening at that address.

**Announcing opening of Polish Bakery by Michael Dombrowski at 45 Hillside Ave., Branford, July 13.**

Debby attended a Zoom conference of the New England Library Association that included sessions on AI, creating a library website and a Makerspace. She also attended a program given by the Palace Project on adding titles to our ebooks and audiobooks collection through Palace. Debby and Deirdre will review their pricing and consider purchasing some titles directly through Palace.

Jenna attended the Branford Festival and had a very successful Volunteer Fair at the library. Connecting local organizations with those interested in volunteering was one of the important results of our Strategic Plan. Jenna had a great group of or-

ganizations present and has already received requests to hold additional programs in furtherance of this goal. Jenna created a handout with a description of the organizations in attendance and these are available at all service desks.

Our Library of Things collection has expanded greatly. We have purchased additional lawn games, a metal detector, gardening kit, tool kit, cordless drill, Nintendo Switch, travel kit with adapter and luggage scale, and more. Christina is cataloging the items and Jordan is entering the item information into the new web program that will allow patrons to book items up to 90 days in advance (as they are now able to do with our museum passes).

Jordan held our first Trivia Night with Caius Farm Brewery in July and had 22 teams in attendance, with a total of 70 people. A great time was had by all and Jordan will continue to host a monthly Trivia night at the brewery.

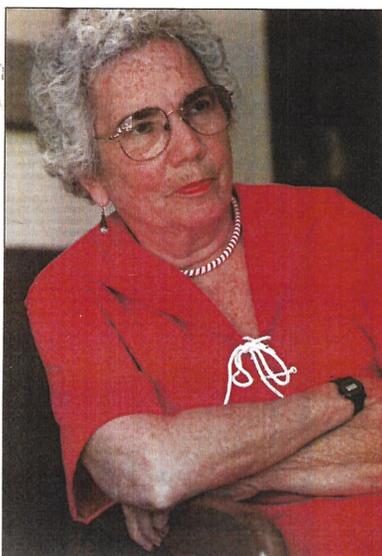
We are excited to be collaborating with other departments on social media postings. Jordan continues to lead the social media committee and worked with Stephanie

and Jared on new TikTok videos. Everyone on the committee is working hard to reach more patrons with library news. Jenna makes sure that our upcoming programs are featured prominently on our Facebook page and has seen an uptick in attendance following her weekly programs email.

We had a patron inquire about a house this month and are grateful, as always, to Town Historian Jane Bouley who sent us some fun stories about the house to share with our patron. Philander Hopson's house was on Main Street and was used as St. Mary's rectory. The church bought the house from Betsey Hopson in 1898. The building was then purchased in 1937 by William R. Foote when the church decided to build the new rectory (which still stands). The digging of the foundation on Eades Street was Dan Cosgrove's first job and the house was moved to its current Eades Street location by Michael Nardella, who then bought the house. Charles A. Blackstone said they used to have skeet shooting where the house is now, in the early 1900s.



— Deborah Trofatter



Steffen E. Cretella/The Sound

### In Memoriam: Joan Berdick

Joan Berdick, age 97, passed away peacefully on August 21, 2023. Joan was a passionate and dedicated Trustee of the Blackstone Library for many years, and was president of the board during the last major renovations in the mid-1990's, which included cleaning and restoration of the murals in the dome. She helped spearhead the project, tirelessly helping to find funding, meet with the contractors and see it through to completion. The Blackstone Library was fortunate to have Joan looking out for it, and we honor her memory every time we look up and admire the gorgeous dome.



## FRIENDS BOOK SALE

Fall Sale on the Branford Green:  
September 14th – 17th (Thurs – Sun)

JOIN THE FRIENDS OR  
RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY!  
[blackstonelibrary.org/friends](http://blackstonelibrary.org/friends)



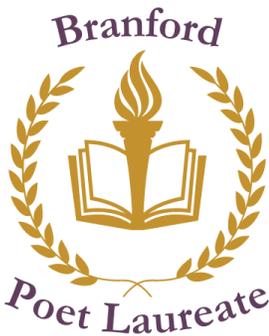
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James Blackstone Memorial Library  
758 Main Street  
Branford, CT 06405

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



**Branford Arts & Cultural Alliance**  
Artisan Marketplace on the Branford Green

Saturday, September 9  
@ 10 am–4 pm

Visit our booth at the Branford Arts and Cultural Alliance's Artisan Marketplace! We'll have crafts to share and info on upcoming arts programs for all ages.

## September 2023 Program Highlights

**Intro to Pilates**  
Saturdays, Sept 9–Oct 7  
@ 9:30–10:30 am  
In this introductory series of classes, you'll learn the basics of Pilates from certified instructor Cindy Kondziela. Whether you're new to fitness or just trying to mix up your existing fitness routine, this class has something for everyone. Please bring a yoga mat to class. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

**Silk n' Sounds Chorus**  
Sunday, September 10 @ 2–3 pm  
Silk'n Sounds, the Greater New Haven women's a cappella chorus, has provided high quality performances for wide-ranging audiences since 1998. Their broad repertoire includes traditional and contemporary songs, jazz standards, ballads and pop favorites. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

**Concept Development: Taking Your Movie Idea from Concept to Script**  
Monday, Sept 18 @ 6:30 pm–8 pm  
Have you ever wanted to write a script but don't know where to start? Join award-winning filmmaker and Branford native Christopher Rucinski (*Northern Shade*) for a workshop that will help you develop your movie idea, bringing it from concept to script.

**Intro to A.I. Chatbots**  
Thursday, Sept 21 @ 2 pm–3 pm  
ChatGPT and other generative AI products are all over the news these days, but just what exactly is an AI Chatbot? How does it work? And what are some practical applications for both your work and personal life? In this class you'll learn the basics of these different applications, and get answers to your questions.

**Local Poetry Showcase**  
Thursday, Sept 21 @ 6:30–7:30 pm  
Local poets Nancy Manning, William Moorhead, and Karen J. Ciosek will share their poetry with the Branford community. Featuring everything from birds to baseball, there's a poem for everyone.

**Meet the Author: Tony Renzoni**  
Saturday, Sept 23 @ 12–4 pm  
Join us for a meet and greet book signing with Branford author Tony Renzoni! In addition to his four other local history titles, he'll be featuring his most recent book: *Connecticut's Girls of Summer: the Brakettes and the Falcons*. It tells the stories of two of the greatest sports teams to come out of Connecticut: the legendary Brakettes and Falcons women's fast-pitch softball teams.

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

## June/July 2023 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

June / July  
**Total Circulation:**  
8,676 / 8,574  
2022: 7,581 / 8,434  
**borrowIT:**  
1,779 / 1,595  
2022: 1,410 / 1,607  
**Renewals:**  
4,209 / 5,079

**Public Computer Sessions:**  
716 / 713  
**WIFI Logins:**  
4,242 / 4,282  
**Website visits:**  
7,784 / 9,719  
**Facebook:** 2,593 followers  
**Instagram:** 1,229 followers  
**MailChimp:** 7,597 subscribers

June / July  
**Downloadable Circulation:**  
**Overdrive/Libby ebooks:**  
1,313 / 1,491  
**Overdrive/Libby audiobooks:**  
810 / 904  
**Overdrive/Libby magazines:**  
222 / 168  
**Palace App:** 31 / 19  
**HOOPLA:** 1,253 / 1,231  
**Kanopy:** 243 / 239  
**Pronunciator:** 746 / 753  
**Ancestry Library:** 1,291 / 779  
**New Haven Register:** 284 / 196  
**Branford History Scrapbooks:**  
132 / 154  
**Creative Bug:** 173 / 25

June / July  
**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage:** 115 / 130  
**Children's Programs**  
June: 24 programs  
549 attendance  
July: 25 programs  
548 attendance  
**Teen Programs (12+)**  
June: 6 programs  
29 attendance  
July: 6 programs  
33 attendance  
**Adult programs**  
June: 28 programs  
440 attendance  
July: 27 programs  
479 attendance

**Average Daily Visitors:** 403 / 298  
**Days open:** 26 / 25