



July 2, 2025

Engaging Community • Expanding Minds • Enriching Lives

Report to the Board of Trustees

From the Director

We kicked off June with our annual Shred-A-Thon. Thank you to Rhea and all of the volunteers who came out to help make this event run so smoothly, even with gray skies and rainy weather. The event raised over \$1,500 for the library and offers a great community service. Great job, Rhea!

We also held an inservice training session. Thank you to the Friends for sponsoring our half-day of learning. We had a visit from Maggie Moffett of Shoreline Family Health Care, a nonprofit healthcare center, to learn about all they offer the community. We also presented to each other what we've been working on in each department. It was a rare opportunity for all staff to gather, so we used part of the day to celebrate Kathy, who retired after 22 years of dedicated service to the library. Kathy's steady hand on the finances helped keep the library's budget on track and in good shape.

Our new Business Manager started during Kathy's last week. Cynthia Bannon has held leadership positions for various nonprofits and comes to the Blackstone with a wealth of finance and HR expertise. We're happy to have Cynthia on board, and I look forward to working closely with her to continue stewarding the library's financial health into the future.

Our new Facilities Manager also started with us in June. Stephen



It was a bit rainy during the library's Shred-A-Thon event but that didn't stop people from coming out to shred their documents and support the library.

Brady has a background in property management and also maintains his own contracting business. He has jumped right in, taking on maintenance and repair issues and working directly with service providers to ensure the library is safe and well-maintained.

Our summer reading program began at the Branford Festival. We offer summer reading challenges for kids, teens, and adults, with badges and opportunities to win prizes. It's a great way to enjoy summer and keep minds active and engaged.

I attended the Friends Annual Meeting where I was presented with a check representing the Friends gifts to the Blackstone for the year, totaling \$80,000! The Friends work so hard year-round to raise an incredible

amount of funds for the Blackstone and their results are amazing! We are so fortunate to have such a strong Friends group!

Kudos to Stephanie and Jared for creating a new program series called Crafts and Laughs. They research arts and crafts projects and then lead a group through creating their own. This month was Blackout Poetry night, and participants created some beautiful designs — the talent in this community is impressive! Great job, Jared and Stephanie!

Angela and Erin also continue their popular programs, a movie matinee series and the First Friday Book Club. It's so great to have these opportunities for staff to showcase their considerable talents and interests. We're so lucky to have such a great team!

— Katy McNicol



It was a 'massively fun time at Crafts and Laughs' for Blackout Poetry night! The creativity of our patrons is amazing! Kudos to Jared and Stephanie for planning and implementing this wonderful program series!



Our summer reading program offers fun and challenges for kids, teens, and adults!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—May

May flew by in the Youth Services department! We started the month with a fun craft project for teens: marbled bags. We began with blank zippered pouches and created beautiful marbled designs on the outside using shaving cream and fabric paint. First, we blocked off the area of the bag we wanted to remain blank using painters' tape. Then, we drizzled fabric paint onto a pile of shaving cream, gently swirled it, and placed our bag onto the shaving cream. Once it had a moment to set, we scraped off the shaving cream using a flat surface to reveal a beautiful marbled design. Other teen events in May included our monthly Dungeons and Dragons group and a Nintendo Switch tournament, where participants battled it out to see who was the best Super Smash Bros fighter.

We also spent lots of time learning in May! This month in our Homeschool Meetup group we learned all about the animals that act as pollinators and why their job is so important for the food that we eat. We then enjoyed berries, a food that is the result of pollinators' hard work. We made a delicious fruit dessert with pudding, graham crackers, raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries. Our Take and Make kit this month also featured a pollinator! Kids took home kits with all the supplies to create butterflies made from coffee filters, pipe cleaners, and clothes pins.

The learning continued in Cool-oology's Science Saturday program, Defying Gravity: Wicked



Lego creations by attendees to the Lego Club.

Fun Gravity Lab. Participants learned about gravity and then dropped different types of objects to see which fell the fastest, like Galileo did off the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Kids then defied gravity by building their own towers out of cups, and learned about the center of gravity by using pipe cleaners and weights to change the tipping point of a popsicle stick. We also hosted the New Canaan Nature Center for a program all about Wildlife Superheroes, creatures with "super" qualities that make them unique. Participants met many animals, including a box turtle named Pierre, a bearded dragon named Dorito, a ball python named Chance, a Honduran Curly-haired tarantula named Rosie, and a Northern Saw-whet owl named Gus.

Other fun and relaxing events for kids included a beading program, where participants enjoyed music and snacks while creating beaded friendship bracelets, rainbow loom bracelets, embroidery thread bracelets, and keychains. Kids also loved using their

imagination during Nicolette's Lego Club, making all kinds of unique vehicles and structures.

I participated in some outreach and professional development in the month of May. I attended the Health Fair at Branford High School, and enjoyed connecting with students, handing out free books, and promoting all the amazing programs we have planned for the summer. I also attended two professional development sessions, one called Developing Library Services for Teens with Disabilities and one called Welcoming Deaf Kids and Families to Your Library. Both programs were very helpful in thinking about ways we can make our programming in Youth Services more accessible, and we hope to implement these ideas in the coming months. We can't wait to welcome everyone into the library this summer!

— Emily Yates



Marbled bags created by teens.



Ready to engage with students at Branford High School Health Fair.



Take and Make butterfly creations.

Highlights from the Reference Department—May

We have had some especially busy days at the library recently and we look forward to more with our summer and fall programming. On one Saturday in May, we hosted a drop-in session for patrons to view and try out our Library of Things collection, provided space for an all-day Medicare drop-in event, hosted the Garden Club's plant sale on the lawn and had a Musical Arts piano concert in the auditorium. Jordan has received some great feedback from patrons about our events and he has been working hard to get the fall schedule in place.

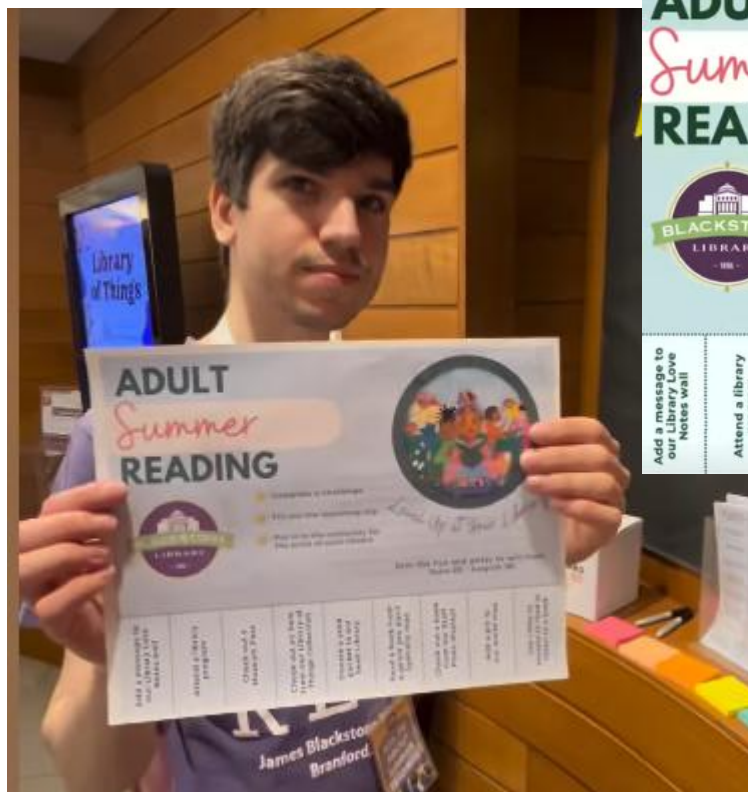
Ryan is planning a new round table on sustainability for the Connecticut Library Consortium. He has been working to ensure that all of our cataloging records

are accurate and that all of our call numbers are consistent. Jenny participated in the Garden Club plant sale, is planning a seed swap event for the fall and is looking into other places she might obtain seed donations.

Stephanie worked closely with Jordan on our upcoming Fall print calendar of events, presented a crafting class on pet portraits with Jared and is working on new items for our Library of Things collection. I have been working with Katy on the selection of a single person standalone booth where patrons can make telephone calls or have a Zoom meeting in private and have been investigating new copiers for the library that are updated and suited for easy mobile printing.

I recently had a patron inquire about his grandparents and great-grandparents, Branford residents for a brief time, about whom he had very little information. I reached out to our Town Historian, who was able to send me two photographs of the patron's great-grandfather which I forwarded to our patron; he very much appreciated it.

— Deborah Trofatter



Summer reading isn't just for kids! We offer an adult summer reading program for adults. Pick up a game board from the library lobby and earn chances to win gift cards to local businesses by completing the challenges.



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reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
instagram.com/blackstone_library

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

LAWN GAMES & MORE AVAILABLE TO BORROW

Planning a party
this summer?
Looking for
something fun to
do outside? Look
no further than
our collection of **lawn games**,
part of the Library of Things!



From corn hole and ladder toss
to giant tumbling blocks and
giant four-in-a-row, you can
gather friends and family and
have fun playing together.

Visit: bit.ly/jbmlLOTlawn to see
all of the lawn games and re-
serve your favorites today!

Thanks to the
**Friends of the
Blackstone Li-
brary** for making
the Library of
Things possible!




FRIENDS OF
BLACKSTONE LIBRARY

July 2025 Program Highlights

Saturday Afternoon Games Saturdays @ 1–4 pm

July 5, August 2

Join us for an afternoon of
games! We've got games for
everyone, no matter your
experience level. Feel free to
bring your own games too.
Adults of all ages are welcome.

Piece by Piece: A Community Puzzling Group

Saturdays @ 11 am–1 pm
July 12, August 9

Join us for a casual monthly
puzzling group. Various jigsaw
puzzles will be available to
work on as a group or
individually. Feel free to bring
your own puzzle to solve, or
participate in a puzzle swap
with other attendees!

Your Edible Landscape Wednesday, July 23

@ 6–7 pm

Hunting for wild edible plants
doesn't have to mean hiking in
exotic locations far from home;

many delicious and nutritious
wild foods grow in your own
backyard. Disguised as
attractive landscaped trees,
planted for beautiful blooms,
or removed as common
nuisance weeds, your edible
landscape holds many
surprising food sources. Join
The 3 Foragers as they teach
the fruits, nuts, flowers, and
greens found right outside your
back door. **Sponsored by the
Friends of the Blackstone
Library.**

Fireside Chats with Local Authors

Thursday, July 24
@ 6–7:30 pm

Drop-in event. Join us for
readings and discussions with
local authors in front of the
fireplace in our Reading Room!
Registration is not required to
attend these events.

Branford Land Trust Lecture Monday, July 28

@ 6:30–7:30 pm

Join us for an informative talk
presented by the U.S. Fish and
Wildlife Service's Stewart B.
McKinney National Wildlife
Refuge. Sponsored by the
Branford Land Trust.

Connecticut, Color, & The Civil War

Thursday, July 31
@ 6–7:30 pm

Genealogist John Mills will
delve into the lives and
experiences of some of the
men who enlisted in
Connecticut's Colored
Regiments during the Civil War,
what drove them to enlist and
the perspective of Connecticut
at the time. John will also
discuss his research into past
enslaved individuals in
Connecticut, highlighting their
experiences and his work to
acknowledge them.

Check our website for more programs and registration details!

May 2025 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Physical Items Circulation: 8,112

May 2024: 7,215

borrowIT: 2,381

May 2024: 1,791

Renewals: 4,669

Computer Sessions: 858

WIFI Logins: 1,250

Website visits: 7,462

Facebook: 2,908 followers

Instagram: 1,549 followers

MailChimp: 8,410 subscribers

Downloadable Circulation:

Libby ebooks: 1,389

Libby audiobooks: 1,348

Libby magazines: 849

Palace App: 37

HOOPLA: 1,113

Kanopy: 397

Transparent Languages: 24

Ancestry Library: 151

New Haven Register: 189

Branford History Scrapbooks: 71

Lucy Hammer & Conference
Room Usage: 131

Children's Programs
32 programs/1160 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)
6 programs/21 attendance

Adult/All Ages programs
40 programs/426 attendance

Average Daily Visitors: 418
Days open: 29