



Report to the Board of Trustees

September 9, 2020

From the Director

In mid-July, the Library was awarded a low interest Paycheck Protection Program loan through Guilford Savings Bank made possible by the CARES act. The loan is payable over a period of 5 years, at a rate of 1% per annum. If the loan is spent on payroll costs, it may be 100% forgiven. The process to apply for loan forgiveness begins this month and the library may be eligible to apply before the end of the year.

Security cameras were installed in six locations around the building. One at each entrance, one at the terrace, two at the rear parking lot, and one at the front parking lot. Having these cameras will make a significant difference in the safety of patrons and staff for the future. Thank you to the Town of Branford for funding this capital expense.

We continued curbside service and opened the computer lab for appointments. It has been great seeing our regular patrons and they appreciate critical access to the internet and help with applications, research, and email.

Summer reading was supported through a variety of interactive programs on zoom. Over 200 children participated in the summer challenges posted throughout the

Friends' Mini Book Sales

The Friends held targeted small book sales over three weekends in August from their River Run warehouse location. They received high marks for their organization and safety precautions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The event was a huge success, offering folks an opportunity to get out and shop and raising \$16,753 for the library!

The final Mini-Warehouse Sale takes place the weekend of September 11–13. Details are on the library website.

Are you a member of the Friends? You can join at www.blackstonelibrary.org/friends/



Join us for this special event!

**BLACK IN BRANFORD:
A PERSPECTIVE IN A
TIME OF AWAKENING**

*Featuring Roberta Gill-Brooks,
lifetime Branford resident
and
first female black
elected official
in Branford*

WEDNESDAY JULY 29, 2020 7 PM

**PROUDLY PRESENTED BY THE JAMES BLACKSTONE MEMORIAL
LIBRARY IN CONJUNCTION WITH BCTV**

We were thrilled to co-host this timely talk with BCTV on July 29. The event was also broadcast on Facebook live, receiving over 850 views to date.

summer. You can follow our social media at Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to see how we are communicating with our patrons.

The roof repair project began on August 3. By the end of the month, the terracotta had been removed and all of the steel was exposed. The new steel frame will be installed mid-September.

The community is discovering our programs on zoom, and we find they are also being viewed afterwards by those who could not attend the live programs. The program hosted on July 29 with BCTV was

viewed over 850 times on Facebook Live after it was broadcast.

Our flip/nest tables arrived for the auditorium. We are so excited to have tables that don't require lifting! Thank you to the Town of Branford for funding this purchase.

As the summer comes to a close and school begins again, we are excited to make plans to open the building for browsing and studying. We have posted a list of FAQs and are ready to welcome our patrons in mid-September.

Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—June & July



I wanted to let you know that your children's librarians, Miss Mary and Miss Carly are amazing. My daughter and I are regulars at the library and we have faithfully been attending the numerous virtual storytimes throughout the pandemic. These really help with working from home and providing an additional avenue for educational programming for my daughter, Juliette.

We appreciate all they are doing for children of Branford.

June marked the official start of our online Summer Reading Quest, featuring 10 weeks of virtual challenges for readers of all ages. We used social media, email, and Google forms to communicate with our participants, who read outside of their comfort zone, designed new book covers, re-read something they loved in their youth, and more! There were over 200 people signed up for the program including individuals and families. We loved seeing submissions and posting highlights throughout the summer. Each story reminds us how reading can transform us deeply.

For the summer months, we increased our virtual story times to three each week. In June, we brought two LIVE programs for families through Zoom, with the ScienceTellers and Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center.

The ScienceTellers use stories to explain scientific topics. Kids learned about the properties of solids, liquids, and gasses through a dragon-themed quest, ending with a LIVE experiment that the kids could replicate with supplies easily found at home.

Denison's program focused on animals and the many senses they use in order to survive. Kids were able to see owls, turtles, and snakes up close and they enjoyed being able to ask questions and share facts they had learned along the way.

My favorite program this month was my book club for 4th & 5th grade. We discussed *Storm Runner*, a Maya

mythology book from Rick Riordan's new series that is committed to giving a voice to underrepresented cultures. Most of the kids signed up for the book club because they have read Rick Riordan's mythological adventures in the past, so if he endorses it - it has to be good! Looking back, this platform is genius, allowing Riordan to open the door for under represented voices and share fully-rounded multicultural characters that we so desperately need! Not only to ensure that every reader can see themselves as the hero of the story, but also so that we will continue to look beyond our personal culture and history.

Miss Sarah reached out to her Teen Advisory Board to plan for the fall. One of the members hosted a "how to" makeup class where teens could learn how to obtain different looks. The teen said that putting a "how to" class together was something she wanted to do for awhile and the opportunity to use Zoom eased her fears and gave her the push she needed to share her love of makeup with others.

At the end of June, we mounted our annual Story-Walk on Main in the windows of Branford downtown stores. This year we chose *My Two Blankets* by Irena Kobald and Freya Blackwood. The story is based on true events of a friendship formed between the author's daughter and a Sudanese child. The experience of reading a book while going on a walk was a safe way to get outside and

the story was a reminder that our similarities surpass our differences.

Miss Sarah's bi-weekly Creative Writing Class for teens has grown with each coming week and proves she is a marketing genius because teens from different countries have been participating in order to connect with kids from the U.S. and practice English in a natural setting. Creating this cross cultural connection has been beneficial and a way for teens to see life through the eyes of someone that does not live in Branford, CT; something that was not initially on our radar but a cool benefit of moving programming to an all online platform.

Speaking of connecting outside the U.S., I was able to book an early childhood musical performer from Canada that has a huge following on Instagram. Mr. Drew uses a combination of Music Together songs, puppets, and instruments to create a music and movement experience that extends outside screens. His personality is infectious and he calls as many viewers as he can by name so that they are seen and heard.

This summer we also hosted our first LIVE streamed movie, a sing-along of *Frozen*™. Miss Sarah's Cosplay Club attended, and some brought LIVE action puppets to add to the experience. Many of the kids came to the show in full costume and we were able to connect, compliment, and talk about their favorite characters and songs.

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—*continued*

Finally, we were able to order updated furniture for our new space. We want children and teens to find our area

appealing and also workable since our computers and programming room need to accommodate families, school-

aged children, and teens. We are excited about these updates and look forward to opening our doors again.

Carly Lemire

Highlights from the Reference Department-June/July

The Reference staff continues to be busy with reference inquiries, archives indexing, collection development, and lots of programs. Our Zoom programs continue to be very popular and we are expanding our offerings since we recognize that in-house programming will not be possible for some time to come.

We have weekly yoga, Latin, and poetry classes, our knitting group now meets on the library lawn at safe social distancing, we host several book clubs, and Christina held a class on accessing eBooks from OverDrive, Libby, RBDigital, and SimplyE. Jenna has been working on summer reading and on additional programs for the summer. Christina and Sarah are taking their popular game night online in a Zoom session.

The department continues to support the circulation staff as they manage the contactless pickup service. Our patrons have been really pleased that we can offer hold and pickup service.

One question that the Reference department often receives involves requests for obituaries. Many of these inquiries are from out-of-town patrons looking for an obituary for a person who died in Branford. However,

because many deaths occur at Hospice for non-Branford residents, these obituaries very often cannot be found in a local newspaper. Recently, we received one such request and were able to determine on AncestryLibrary that the woman was a resident of Fairfield at the time of her death, so we contacted the History Center at the Bridgeport Public Library and asked them to search for an obituary in the Connecticut Post. They did so and were able to locate the obituary which we forwarded to our patron, who was very pleased. Sometimes it takes a little extra effort, but going the extra mile is a characteristic of our department in which we take particular pride.

We opened the Computer Lab in July for socially distanced one-hour appointments and our regulars in particular were very happy to be back. We have had cooperation with mask wearing and social distancing and overall the process has been positive and well received.

The Reference librarians are very grateful to the staff in the circulation department as they are the ones checking patrons in as they enter the building and adding same day reservations to the schedule. Once again, interdepart-

mental cooperation shows what a great place the Blackstone Library is to work in!

Our Print from Home service has been used more often during the pandemic. Patrons are able to send a print job and arrange a contactless pickup from our atrium. This process is initiated in the Computer Lab, but once again the staff at the main desk makes sure the print jobs are available for pickup by our patrons.

We had a number of successful Zoom programs in July, including a class on Hoopla and Kanopy, one with the Canoe Brook Senior Center on accessing and playing online games, an online adult game night, an author book talk, a Drum Away the Blues program, our usual Knitting group, book discussions, yoga and poetry classes, a program on eating disorders, and a very successful program titled Black in Branford which we co-hosted with BCTV and ran on both Zoom and Facebook Live.

Our online programming is reaching patrons around the world; we have had people sign up for our Zoom programs from England, the Philippines, and Australia.

Deb Trofatter



To All of you!

Thank you for your help, expertise and kindness that you provide to everybody. We're very grateful to have such great service and librarians. Stay well!!

Maria & Rocco Ciravolo



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...more than books

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

September 2020 Program Highlights

The Lafayette Trail

September 9 @ 7-9 pm

Julien P. Icher will speak about Lafayette's Farewell Tour to the US and the stops he made in Connecticut.

Sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

Chasing Labyrinths: A Love Story

September 12 @ 2:30-4 pm

Bill Ludwig, a longtime Branford resident and creator of the Branford Labyrinth, will speak about how discovering labyrinths changed the course of his life.

Getting the Most from Social Security

September 17 @ 6-7 pm

Join us for this Zoom workshop sponsored by AAA Retirement.

The Severed Finger: Author Talk with Arno Zimmer

September 19 @ 2-3:30 pm

Join us for a virtual presentation by local author Arno B. Zimmer. He'll discuss his book, *The Severed Finger*, a mystery novel set right off the coast of the Thimble Islands!

Virtual Game Nights

September 25 @ 6-9 pm

Join us for a night of online games with some fun, laid-back people, without having to leave the house! Find the Everyday Adventurers group at Meetup.com.

Best Seller Book Club

September 26 @ 3:30-4:30 pm

Read and discuss newly released, highly-rated books from a wide variety of genres.

New members are welcome!
Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

Financial Planning for Long-Term Care

September 29 @ 6-7:30 pm

An informative discussion on long-term care and asset protection planning, including an overview of potential long-term care costs, options to help offset those costs, and frequently asked questions on protecting your assets.

Spirits of New England

October 1 @ 6-7:30 pm

This lecture by professional ghost hunter Dustin Pari chronicles some of his favorite New England paranormal investigations. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

Check our website for more programs! All programs are virtual and require registration.

June/July 2020 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation

June: 3,123 July: 3,756

June 2019: 10,532

July 2019: 12,552

borrowIT

June: 740 July: 668

June 2019: 2,071

July 2019: 2622

Renewals:

June: 1,149 July: 1,374

Computer Sessions

June: N/A /July: 118

Facebook: 1868 Likes

Instagram: 923 Followers

MailChimp: 7776

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks

June: 1,405 /July: 1,662

Overdrive audiobooks

June: 560/July: 589

RB Digital June: 302/ July: 343

HOOPLA

June: 904/July: 865

Kanopy

June: 176/ July: 152

Pronunciator

June: 542 /July: 547

Lucy Hammer Room N/A

Conference Room N/A

Average Daily Visitors N/A

Children's Programs

June:

17 programs/158 attendance

July:

20 programs/170 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

June:

4 programs/18 attendance

July:

4 programs/22 attendance

Adult programs

June:

15 programs/264 attendance

July:

17 programs/431 attendance