Letter from the President

Time flies when you are having fun. I have been president of the Friends of the Blackstone for almost two years. I started this new year with an adventure trip to Antarctica followed by a visit to Texas and Arizona, so this newsletter is later than usual.

This year has seen some big changes to our organization. For many years, the children’s books, puzzles, and games donated for our annual Book Sale were stored and sorted at the old Branford Hills School. Since that building is now unsafe, we relocated the children’s books to the Volunteer Service Center and have rented space for the rest. We live in a generous community: each sale includes some 70,000 volumes, after the outdated, mildewed and torn books are weeded out!

After 27 years of unflagging service—since the very beginning of the Book Sale—two veteran book sorters have retired. Alexine Wallace and Marie Crowley leave with our endless thanks for all the work they have done out of love for the Blackstone. Thanks also to Gerri Reider for her 6 years of service to the Friends Board.

I am sorry to report a special sadness to me personally as well as a great loss to the Friends Board. Fred Biamonte (1934-2016) passed away. Fred was responsible for developing and directing the Friends’ Lecture Series, bringing all those interesting talks and musical performances. He also expanded my horizons by introducing me to American Impressionist artists. Our sincerest condolences go to Fred’s wife Nancy and their children.

—Helen Wong

Annual Membership Drive

Late spring brings tulips, lilacs, and your Friends membership envelope. Please don’t forget to renew your membership, or join this year if you aren’t yet a member.

You’ll receive notice via this newsletter of upcoming events, often before the library publishes its events calendar; an invitation to the Annual Meeting on Tuesday, June 7 at 5:30 pm, and Volunteer Appreciation Events, and the most prized benefit, admission to Preview Night at the Book Sale. All members are welcome to attend any board meeting and share their ideas. Membership follows our fiscal year, from July 1 through June 30.

A practical note: The Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library is a not-for-profit organization, separate from the Library itself. When writing your membership check, buying books, or sending in a donation, please make out your check to “Friends of JBML” rather than just to the Library. Your Friends board works hard to ensure that your money goes to the projects and equipment your membership most wants to support, and in order to accomplish that, we need to keep our finances in order.

Thanks for Judy Hotz and her committee, we have new Bylaws for the Friends of the Blackstone Memorial Library. Please do take a look at the changes at www.blackstone.lioninc.org/friends and don’t hesitate to speak up if you think you have a better idea!
A Year of Lectures and Concerts

The Friends have sponsored some wonderful events that were well attended.

Lecture by the world famous forensic scientist, Dr. Henry Lee, who explained how he has used DNA in criminal investigations.

Brian Gillie, Roots of Rock ‘n’ Roll, a one-man show.

RaveOn, with songs of Roy Orbison, Buddy Holly, and Elvis Presley brought back many memories and gave the audience a chance to hum along and tap their toes.

At Christmas we had a special treat of listening to Branford High School’s award-winning and internationally traveled Music Makers send songs of Christmas echoing through the Library.

Marvelous musicians called sFOURzando performed. Four to eight hands played on one piano.

Who can forget the Beach Boys music in concert?

A salute to the commerce that was: A program that highlighted the 1940’s and the glories of Beatrice Fox Auerbach and G. Fox department store.

Loeb Lecture (cosponsored by the Friends and the Trustees) by Matthew Bartlett describing the roles of female spies during the Civil War along with period costumes.

Very recently a group of schoolteachers who call themselves The Jolly Beggars sang and played a rich selection of Celtic folk music. There was dancing in the aisles.

Local Author Expo & Book Fair

The Blackstone Library’s Local Author Expo will showcase 30 authors from Branford & surrounding areas. The event will begin with a talk by Ann Nyberg, author of Slices of Life, and the longest-serving, full-time female news anchor/reporter in Connecticut television history.

Panel discussions will follow, featuring Adult, Young Adult, and Children’s authors.

Throughout the afternoon, we will have tables set up around the library for local authors to interact with the public, while selling and signing their books.

Each attendee will receive a Blackstone Author Trail map, showing each author’s location. There will be something for everyone!

Helen Wong, Dr. Henry Lee and Mrs. Lee
Program Highlights Spring 2016

Programs with an * require registration. Please register by calling 203.488.1441 ext 318, or through the website: www.blackstonelibrary.org

Bestseller Book Club*
Saturdays @ 3—4 PM
March 26, April 30, May 28
In March we will read The Muralist by B.A. Shapiro. April’s title is The Nest by Cynthia D’Aprix Sweeney and in May we will read Everyone Brave Is Forgiven by Chris Cleave. Books are available at the library.

Shoreline Village Presents:
Annita Perez Sawyer
April 13 @ 2—3:30 PM
Annita Perez Sawyer will be here to discuss and read from her book Smoking Cigarettes, Eating Glass. For more information, visit shorelinevlagect.org.

Inside Emily Dickinson:
Her Poetry & Her Life
April 17 @ 2—4 PM
This inspiring biographical portrait is based on the letters, life stories and poems of Emily Dickinson. It combines performance with interactive workshop activities. In the course of the show, creator and performer Ginger Grace reaches out to the audience for ideas, words and phrases, and with their input, new poems are created. The spirit of Emily Dickinson is celebrated not only with her story—filled with heart and humor—but with the immediate creativity taking place in the room! Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Investing 101*
April 18 @ 6:30 PM
Connor Dolan from Guilford Savings Bank will be here to answer your questions and teach you the basics of stocks, bonds, and mutual funds. This program is part of the CT Dept. of Banking’s DASH for the STASH program, where participants who attend will be eligible to win a $1,000 contribution to an IRA.

A History of The Atlantic Wire Company
April 26 @ 7—8:00 PM
Jane Bouley will give a talk and slide presentation on the History of The Atlantic Wire Company. She will discuss the land on Meadow Street and founder William Hitchcock who established the company in 1906. Also discussed will be the buildings, employees, the process of wire drawing, and the many products that were produced from the wire shipped by Atlantic Wire. Refreshments will be served. The program is sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

Alzheimer’s Association of CT Family Caregiver Series
Tuesdays @ 6—8 PM
May 24, 31 & June 21 & 28
For family members and friends of people with any type of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease.

Annual John Loeb Lecture*:
Teddy Roosevelt—Mind, Body and Spirit
September 18 @ 2 PM
Actor and author Ted Zalewski brings one of America’s greatest presidents to life. Combining history, drama and fun, Mr. Zalewski gives voice to many of Roosevelt’s own words, writings, and beliefs. Cowboy, soldier, naturalist, historian, father, statesman and winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace, Theodore Roosevelt lived a life that inspires us still.

Washboard Slim and the Bluelights
September 25 @ 2 PM
The music the Bluelights perform is at the very root of traditional American popular music. A typical Bluelights performance might include original music, early jazz, blues, swing, standards, jug band, gospel, pop music from the turn of the century, and roots rock ‘n’ roll. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

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October: Program to be announced.

The Music of the Beach Boys:
The Beach Meanies
November 13 @ 2 PM
One of the most popular and versatile tribute bands on the East Coast. The New York/ New Jersey based band has been performing together since 1984. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

December 2016
Branford High Music Makers
Holiday Concert—Date TBD.

Julius Caesar
Presented by Shakesperience*
May 22 @ 2:00—3:30 pm
Witness the story of “the noblest Roman of them all” as Shakespeare’s tale of political intrigue and betrayal is brought to life in this adaptation by Emily Mattina. This production stages the balance of power on a metal toy construction set that devolves along with the action. Sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

For a full program listing, visit our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org
Fred Biamonte 1934—2016

We are sad to report the passing of Friends’ board member Fred Biamonte. Fred was responsible for planning the Friends’ Lecture Series, bringing a variety of interesting talks and vibrant musical performances to the Blackstone over the years.

A skilled psychobiographer, Fred contributed his own lectures on well-known artists to the series, including talks on Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, Norman Rockwell, John Singer Sargent, Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Mary Cassatt and Henri Toulouse Lautrec.

Fred was also responsible for bringing music to the library, including lectures on classical music in classic cartoons (given by his daughter, Nicole, a professor at McGill University), a Beatles legend band, several performances of RaveOn and much more.

Fred’s Lecture Series earned an award for the Friends of the Blackstone Library at the Friends of CT annual meeting in 2014.