If you’re familiar with the Branford Land Trust, then you’ve undoubtedly encountered the name of Lauren Brown. She recently conducted a wildflower walk through the Goss property in Stony Creek as part of the Land Trust’s 50th anniversary celebration. This is just one of several she has led over the past three decades. She’s recognized as a botanist and celebrated for her extensive knowledge of plant life in Connecticut.

Lauren spent her childhood in Guilford when her appreciation of nature was fostered by roaming free outdoors, exploring the wonders of nature without the inhibitions of present-day societal dangers.

Lauren has lived in Branford since 1977 and been involved with the Branford Land Trust since 1976. She was deeply involved in a ten-year campaign to save the Beacon Hill Preserve, a 100-foot-high traprock ridge overlooking the Farm River marshes. With her husband John they spearheaded the creation of the state scenic roads legislation which affords some measure of protection against insensitive alterations and led to the designation of Route 146 as a scenic road.

Brown is the author of two botanical field guides. *Weeds in Winter* hit the bookstores in 1976, published by WW Norton, showing how to identify wildflowers in their dried winter state. It has subsequently been reissued as *Weeds and Wildflowers in Winter*. This appealing guide identifies over 135 of the common species of wildflowers and weeds found in the northeastern United States. Each plant is skillfully illustrated by the author with a full-page drawing accompanied by an artistic description of the plant’s key characteristics. In addition, a step-by-step key to plant identifications and an illustrated glossary of common plant parts and botanical terms have been included to make this a practical resource in identifying the dormant but various vestiges of spring and summer foliage.

Her second publication *Grasses: An Identification Guide* (1979, Houghton Mifflin Company) is a layperson’s guide to identifying grasses and similar plants. The author said that she wanted to produce this as grasses are so common but also beautiful. At that time, and even still now, there were no ID guides in plain English with illustrations. The book is now being revised, with the addition of color photographs. Her co-author is Ted Elliman, author of *Wildflowers of New England*. Publication is by Yale University Press and is scheduled for release in the summer of 2020.

Both of these guides can be found in the stacks at the Blackstone Library.

From 1984-1987 Lauren Brown was president of the Land Trust. She collaborated with then State Rep. Lucy Hammer in the preservation of Branford’s open space. Hammer ultimately donated her land on Cherry Hill Road which she cherished for the ponds, the wildflowers, and the space for contemplation to the Trust for the recreation and enjoyment of Branfordites.

Take advantage of these Land Trust acquisitions and appreciate the efforts of all those instrumental in obtaining them, including Lauren Brown.

Alpha Coiro
The Sweet Smell of Success!

This year’s Used Book Sale in September was a record breaker according to the Friends’ treasurer, Callista Stoddard. It topped all previous years by grossing over $62,000. The reorganization of the fundraiser by chairperson Joe Genua and the planning committee efficiently led to the event’s goal of raising funds to support some of the functions of the library such as lectures and entertaining programs, special programming, particularly for the Youth Services Department, as well as assets for the purchase of equipment for the library, museum passes, movies, concerts, embellishment of the library grounds, and a student intern who assisted with the archiving of Friends’ documents.

Despite a wet start on opening night with a mighty deluge from the skies, dozens of dedicated volunteers soldiered on covering hundreds of volumes that bordered the edges of the display tables. Patrons appreciated the wider aisles in which to peruse books, and chairs for weary legs.

A new approach of Bargain Book Night selling all books at 1/2 price was successful. And the tried and true Fill Our Bag Day on Sunday @ $10 per bag did not disappoint.

This triumph, of course, was contingent upon the volunteers who worked tirelessly not only under the tent that weekend, but the rest of the year organizing, categorizing, publicizing, and promoting the event. A huge shout-out goes to all of those folks who made it happen. Send a message to jbfriendsvolunteer@gmail.com to be part of it next year.

-Alpha Cairo
Winter Programs—*sponsored by the Friends*

Handmade Spa Products  
December 21 @ 2—3:30 pm  
Bring the spa to you with our DIY spa products workshop! You'll learn how to create your own sugar scrub and bath salts so you can enjoy a relaxing evening in. Not in the mood to treat yourself? Make one for someone you love instead! *Registration for this program is not required, but supplies are limited. Workshop is first come, first served.*

Bestseller Book Club  
December 28, January 25  
3:30 pm - 4:30 pm  
Have you ever thought about joining a book club? It's a fun way to get connected, make new friends, and read more books! In the Bestseller Book Club, we read and discuss newly released, highly rated books from a wide variety of genres. December's title is *Akin* by Emma Donoghue. In January we'll read *Catch and Kill* by Ronan Farrow. Books are available to borrow at the library.

Sparking Joy: The KonMarie Method  
January 25 @ 2:00 pm  
Does the state of your home spark joy? If not, start the new year off with our Marie Kondo workshop! Christine Thorn of Wolcott, Connecticut's first certified KonMari consultant, will share the benefits of the KonMari Method™ of tidying and decluttering to help you experience the life changing magic of tidying up! She'll help you get your house in order for 2020 and beyond. Call 203.488.1441 ext. 318 to register for this program.

Merry and Bright!

It's that time again! The Holidays are upon us, and the Friends of the Blackstone Library are once again producing their festive Holiday Basket and book Sale! Volunteers are busily assembling enticing gift baskets to be sold in the new entry to our wonderful library. Wednesday evening, December 11th, from 5:00 to 8:00 PM, will kick off the sale in conjunction with the Sip and Stroll event. Shop early, sip Prosecco and nibble delicious sweet treats while choosing from the best selection on Opening Night! The sale will continue during library hours through December 15th, while supply lasts.

How can you help? In oh so many ways! Santa has his elves, we can use some friends! First, we need baskets to fill. If they’ve been accumulating and taking up space, donate them to the Friends. Our ever patient librarians will accept and hold for us all donations at the circulation desk. Next, gift-quality items are needed to create tempting baskets. Basket themes are as myriad as the joys of the season! Build a theme around beverages: teas, coffees, cocaos, or wine. Try foodie themed collections of spices, oils, vinegars, grains or pastas; just be sure your donation is non perishable. Baking needs baskets, gluten free baskets, sweet delights, just imagine what you would enjoy receiving! Hostess baskets, nature lovers’ baskets, birding baskets, sport enthusiasts, snowy day activities, little ones, games for all ages, bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens... let your imagination guide you! Perhaps you have some holiday themed volumes to add to the sale. Please bring your donated items to Blackstone by December 4th, and label them with your name, address and email, and the approximate value of your donation, to help us determine prices for the baskets.

If you have a talent for and enjoy merchandising and wrapping, please join us in creating beautiful gifts for every occasion. We also need Friends to donate their time for selling the baskets; it's fun and social and embodies the spirit of the season!

If you can help, please send an email to: jbmfriendsvolunteer@gmail.com. Willing volunteers can also contact Barbara Barrett at 203-481-5377 or barbara@sbaglobal.net and Pam Roy at 203-488-9569 or at proy817@aol.com.

Please give of yourself and join the Friends' Holiday Basket and Book Sale effort.

Hatsie Mahoney
Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library
P.O. Box 51
Branford, CT 06405

Renovation Progress

Response from our patrons has been overwhelmingly positive toward the new entry, and we’re excited that the Friends’ Basket Sale will take place in the new space on December 11.

We moved into the new fiction space in mid-November. This move was accomplished in only two days—made possible by excellent advance planning by staff members and all of us pitching into make it happen. The new area has much better lighting and is large enough to include the large print collection, fiction & nonfiction audiobooks, and new fiction & nonfiction.

We also opened the new youth services desk, and work has begun on the final phase of the youth services space.

Vending machines have been reinstalled in the café, and last month we set up a coffee station. Coffee and tea are available for a $1 donation on the honor system.

The final phase of our project includes renovating the auditorium. We are still on target for January 2020.

Many thanks for your support of this project!

Karen Jensen
Library Director

Board of Directors 2019—2020:
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Terry Twigg
Helen Wong
Karen Jensen, Library Director
Member Ex-Officio

The new youth services desk on the ground floor.