Sandwiched in between the triangular intersection of Chestnut and Main Streets of the Branford Center historic district sits a 2-story pale yellow building dating to circa 1850 which once served as the dwelling of Timothy Beach. In front is rooted a well-manicured garden of perennials and herbs. Here lies the home of G-Zen, a plant-based, organic eatery. Its menu boasts vegan and vegetarian cuisine. The restaurant represents the presence of Chef Mark Shadle and Chef Ami Beach Shadle. Together they take the concept of “Farm to Table” to complete levels by growing the organic ingredients, serving them fresh at the restaurant and then composting the waste. In 2020 G-Zen was featured in Travel + Leisure magazine’s “Best Vegetarian Restaurants in USA.” Also, Food Network named G-Zen “One of the best vegan restaurants in the nation.” This year G-Zen hit its tenth anniversary in Branford.

At the helm is Mark, executive chef and co-owner. For more than 20 years of his culinary career he has impacted the natural foods movement. In June 2010, Mark had the high honor of being invited to the White House by First-Lady Michelle Obama and is currently involved with the “Chefs Move to School” initiative that involves working directly with students. Mark is best known within the public eye from his over 22 years spent as the executive chef and co-owner of It’s Only Natural Restaurant in Middletown. In 2011 Mark sold his share of It’s Only Natural to pursue other projects.

Executive raw foods chef and co-owner is Ami who is an accomplished author, certified holistic nutritionist, and a raw foods educator. She has been recognized for her work both nationally and internationally. Ami is also the founder/CEO of G-Monkey mobile and G-glo Organic Juice Fast.

Another creation of Ami’s and Mark’s is G-Monkey, the nation’s first fully vegan and sustainable food truck launched in 2011. The G-Monkey operation has offered vegan and organic food to folks in the Greater Hartford and New Haven areas.

One of the first things that comes to mind is the enigmatic name of the restaurant. According to Mark and Ami G-Zen stands for Green Business ethics and plant-based cuisine and Zen represents Living Mindfully--to be in a state of peace and balance in one’s body.

“G-Zen can proudly say that in more than 8 months of Covid we have never shortened our extensive menu... because of a devoted culinary team and our incredible customers we were able to continue to dazzle our community... Without our incredibly supportive fan base G-Zen could not be here today and we are forever grateful,” expresses Ami.

Mark and Ami have collaborated in penning a cookbook with others entitled Peace Begins on Your Plate featuring over 120 plant-based recipes and lifestyle tips. The cookbook is also meant to be an adult coloring book containing pen and ink drawings for users to set intentions of gratitude and interact with its content. Paperback in format; 196 pp. The recipes range from dressings and sauces to entrees, desserts, soups.

Continued inside...
February and March Madness

Did you know that February and March are noticeably the most common birth months for outstanding basketball players?


You may wish to expand your knowledge of some of these basketball stars by obtaining one of these resources available in various formats through the Blackstone Library. Also try using the Library’s Search Catalog on its website.

Shaq Uncut: My Story
By Shaquille O’Neal with Jackie MacMullan
In this candid new autobiography the four-time NBA champion and a three-time NBA Finals MVP discusses his colorful career, NBA victories, and his thoughts on major NBA names like Kobe Bryant, Phil Jackson, and Pat Riley.
(adult)

Salt in his shoes: Michael Jordan in pursuit of a dream
By Roslyn Young
Michael Jordan, who was smaller than the other players, learns that determination and hard work are more important than size when playing the game of basketball.
(children)

Full Court Press
By Lauren Kessler
A season in the life of a winning basketball team and the women who made it happen.
(adult)

Maya Moore
By Jeff Savage
Maya Moore was a basketball star long before she joined the Minnesota Lynx. During her high school career, Maya helped her team win 125 games to only 3 losses. At the University of Connecticut (UConn), Maya led the Huskies to four amazing seasons and two national championships.

The Story of the WNBA
By Ellen Labrecque
Women’s basketball has been around for more than 100 years, but only in the past two decades has a pro league grown into prominence. Trace the key events that helped the WNBA bloom into today’s national powerhouse.
(children)

With Appreciation!

Beginning with this issue groups of volunteers among the Friends will be saluted. The first of these is the dedicated group that oversees the Children’s Section at all of the book sales. We thank them for all of the time and assistance they donate all year round.

During the annual book sales put on by the Friends of the Blackstone Library, the children’s book group is very important. Made up of former teachers and other retirees who love books, this group of volunteers works all year around to sort, clean, and individually price the thousands of donated children’s books offered for sale. Donations continue to pour in this year, and the children’s sorters are looking forward to a May spring sale at our warehouse as well as a fall sale.

The current members of the group are Susan Rowan, Micky Fazzino, Pat Mooney, Evelyn Moulton, Andrea Schieckel and Barbara Johnson. The joy they see when children find the books they are looking for and unexpected books they are not looking for is gratification and intrinsic reward for this group’s time and effort.
The following is an excerpt from the book for Raspberry Apple Crumble:

**Ingredients:**
3 Granny Smith apples peeled, seeded, and sliced
1 lemon, juiced
2 cups fresh raspberries
1 cup flour
½ cup Florida Crystals® natural sugar
1/2 cup coconut oil
¼ teaspoon nutmeg

**Method:**
1. Preheat oven to 375F.
2. Peel and core apples and slice each into 8-10 pieces.
3. Arrange in baking dish sprayed with vegetable oil and squeeze lemon juice over them.
4. Drain raspberries and sprinkle over apples.
5. Mix flour and sugar in bowl. Cut in coconut oil with knife until mixture is crumbly.
6. Bake for 25 minutes until top is golden brown.

Recipe reproduced with permission.

A portion of the proceeds of the book is donated to animal welfare. Peace Begins on Your Plate is a reader’s feast even for those carnivores among us! It is available online at http://www.g-universe.shop/ for $34.99+ tax, and available to borrow at the Blackstone Library.

-Arpha Coiro
From the President

“There aren’t many truly public places left in America. Most of our shared spaces require money or a certain social status to access. One place, though, remains open to everybody. The public library requires nothing of its visitors: no purchases, no membership fees, no dress code. You can stay all day, and you don’t have to buy anything. You don’t need money or a library card to access a multitude of on-site resources that includes books, e-books and magazines, job-hunting assistance, computer stations, free Wi-Fi, and much more. And the library will never share or sell your personal data.” *

As we transition from 2020 with the excitement for better things to come in 2021, I refer to the words above and think how lucky we are to have the James Blackstone Memorial Library as part of our community. This is our public place, which is open to all with an incredible staff performing welcoming services. I am so proud to be a member of the Friends of the James Blackstone Memorial Library whose sole purpose is advocacy and raising funds to continue these benefits to our community. Members and volunteers, please join me with a New Year’s Resolution to rededicate yourself to serving this community treasure.

**“The Complicated Role of the Modern Public Library”, Humanities Magazine, Jennifer Howard

-Al Bertoline