

Report to the Board of Trustees

December 1, 2021

From the Director

Our community survey closed at the end of October, and this month we chose 4 winners from a random drawing of survey respondents. Winners were notified and asked to give us their choice of a Branford restaurant, and we gave them \$100 gift cards to that restaurant. Restaurants chosen were: Marco's Pizzeria, Pasta Cosi, Siam Orchid, Tommy Sullivan's. All gift cards have been picked up by the winners.

Katy continued to work with Innovation Builders to refine the charts from the data collected through interviews and survey responses. Our team also met with IB to learn about creating motivational segment profiles, and are working on this to complete the deep needs analysis. The Strategic Planning Committee received a preliminary report detailing the results of the interviews combined with the survey results. The report will be presented to the Trustees at their regular meeting.

The Finance Committee met and reviewed recommended uses for the pending bequest. Some of the recommendations will be brought to the trustees for approval at the December meeting.

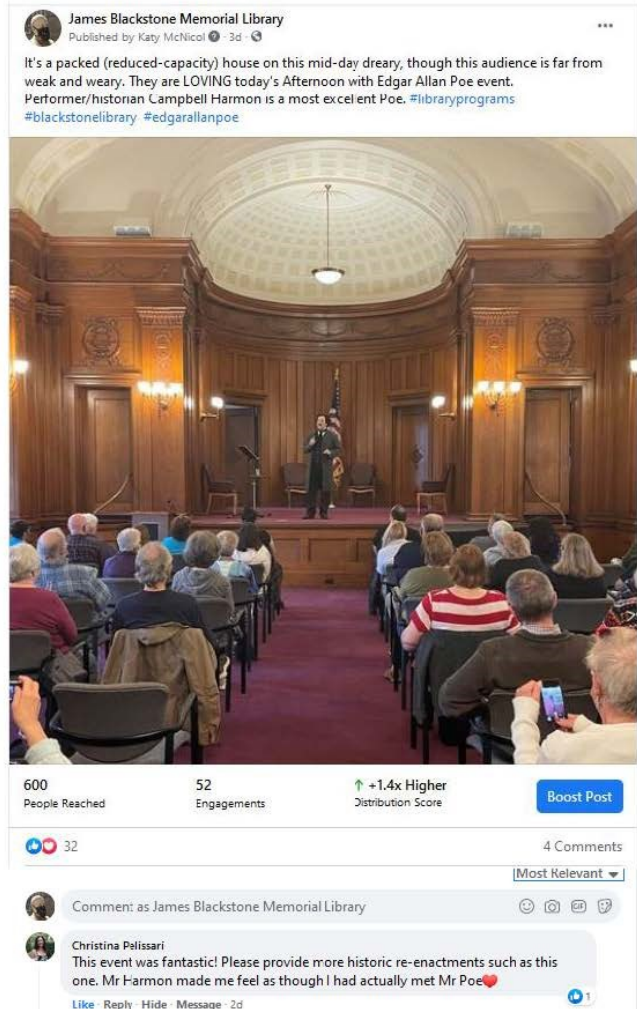
Our end of year appeal was mailed out before Thanksgiv-



The Garden Club arrived on November 30 to deck the halls of the Library! This is an annual tradition that we sadly missed last year due to COVID.

These beautiful wreaths at the front entrance are handmade by the members. They are 4 feet in diameter and composed of greens from members' gardens.

Thank you, Garden Club! We are so happy to celebrate the season again.



Programs are back in the auditorium!

ing, and we are beginning to receive donations. These donations are necessary for our annual operating expenses, and we are grateful for the generosity of our community, which allows us to offer such a wide array of resources. A comment from a donor: "Thank you for saving us during these trying times."

In other news, we have lost one of the largest members of our LION consortium, the Russell Library in Middletown, which left to join the Library Connection consortium which is mainly composed of Hartford County libraries. A number of smaller libraries have joined, and the effect is expected to be minimal at this time.

Karen Jensen

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—October

Miss Sarah kicked things off this month by working with the high school media specialist to create five virtual talks that focused on the library's digital and physical services, programs and volunteer opportunities. Students were able to sign up for a card online and have it delivered in person to the high school. Offering these talks virtually allowed us to take time to show the students our website and digital offerings and provide instruction on downloading materials and placing holds. Sarah reached more than 100 students throughout her two weeks of presentations and we hope to see some new teens at upcoming events.



Fun with edible SLIME!

The Early Years Center affiliated with the Family Resource Center invited me to put together a regular program at their site. I am now visiting once each month with a topical library containing approximately 30 books on a designated topic, I share a few of the titles and offer an interactive activity. The Early Years Center does not have a designated library and they want their students to have a book "borrowing" experience. I see a total of 5 classes during the visits and read to children on a wide range of ability levels. Everyone is attentive and fully engaged and they most enjoy browsing the mobile library before I leave. Creating these experiences not only prepares them for kindergarten but also reminds them that the Library is ready and waiting to provide them

with what they need. In the upcoming months I will be sure to bring the winter program calendar so that every student can share with their family.

At the end of the month Miss Mary and I held our annual Halloween Parade. After taking a break in 2020, it was time to bring one of our favorite events back but safely. We decided to require registration actually ran the program twice so that we could maintain a small group setting for our families. The only bummer about the overall event was the weather. Initially we had everything planned for outside but with rain being predicted we decided to pivot and hold the event inside. We did our best to inform families ahead of time but we still lost some sign-ups because they did not feel comfortable attending class inside. Despite the hiccup we still had a blast singing, dancing and reading. Miss Mary and I dressed up as M&Ms and patrons really got a kick out of our tutus! We are going to try to run our annual NOON Year event for families this December but once again on a smaller scale. In order to accommodate more families as we head inside Miss Mary and I have decided to add additional classes so that we can maintain small numbers and ensure that we continue to social distance.

Out of all the programs this month our STEAM class could not be beat! We decided to

do some mixing and created a mini slime lab where families could pick up the supplies and then meet online to test the process as a group. Miss Mary also found the perfect tagalong book that mixed Halloween with science, just imagine slime coming alive! But, Miss Sarah really upped the ante by asking me whether or not there was such a thing as edible slime. Obviously we were unsure but did a little research and soon discovered that melted marshmallows mixed with cornstarch and cooking oil can become quite sticky! The kids were amazed with the results and had a blast adding food coloring to their edible concoctions. One of the nicest things about these STEAM programs is that our Junior Teen Advisory Group helps us prepare all the necessary materials and then tests out the process in case we hit any roadblocks. They ensure that we know what we are doing! The kids have a great time working together and the act of the experiment is a nice reward for all of their measuring, cutting and sorting. Miss Sarah and I agree it is an excellent way to bridge them from kids to young adult programming.

Carly Lemire

Highlights from the Reference Department-October

This month's programs included Latin classes, poetry discussions, American Sign Language classes, knitting, book groups (Books 'n Brews is back in-person!), a well-attended in-person program on Edgar Allan Poe, a virtual game night as well as an in-person game day, an adult coloring group, an author talk and a Branford Forum virtual presentation titled "The Climate Crisis: Becoming Part of the Solution."

Christina hosted tech sessions on email troubleshooting, QR codes, accessibility/siri on an

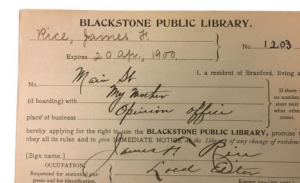
iPad, texting, MS Word, Zoom and basic iPad navigation. She and Brendan also began a monthly tech drop-in session at the Senior Center.

Staff from all departments attended a presentation sponsored by the Southington Public Library on how to best assist patrons suffering from dementia.

We added another new database this month - Passenger and Immigration Lists Index. This database is an index to millions of people who immigrated to the United States and Canada and can be ac-

cessed from inside the library or from home with a Blackstone Library card. First published by Gale Research Co. in 1981 in print-only format, Passenger and Immigration Lists Index covered 500,000 persons. The 2020 digital edition provides access to more than 5 million people who immigrated to the United States and Canada between the late 1500s to mid-1900s, departing from more than 100 ports in Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and the South Pacific and arriving at more than 200 ports in North and South America.

Deb Trofatter



An early library card application

A Family History Resource Unique to the Blackstone Library

Spending time with loved ones (in person or virtually) over the holidays gives us an opportunity to learn more about them and can remind us how their experiences have shaped our own lives.

In our archives we've saved hundreds of paper library card applications dating back to 1896. Used until the 1970s, these cards were the means of tracking information about library patrons in the days before computers. That may not sound very impressive, but we're sure the local genealogists are already getting excited! What information is preserved on these cards? It's more than just names and addresses. We also asked questions about occupation,

living situation, and place of business. If you were a child, we asked what school you went to. In the early days someone in town had to "recommend you" in order for you to get a library card, so we can learn all kinds of things about relationships between friends and neighbors. These cards also exist for summer residents, so we have information on people from New York, Massachusetts, and other areas in Connecticut. When someone passed away, it was recorded on their library card application and any notable circumstances were recorded—for example we have several cards that mention a young male cardholder "died in war" in the 1940s.

These cards are chock full of hints about the lives of the people who came before us. Anyone who has researched their family history knows just how important little hints can be in uncovering big discoveries! Not to mention there's something special about seeing the handwriting of a relative who is no longer with us. We're working on the monumental task of digitizing and indexing these cards, and hope to make their information available to the public sometime in the near future so be sure to keep an eye on our online local history pages!

Jenna Anthony



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December 2021 Program Highlights

World of Harmonica

December 5 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

Bob Hennessy tells the story and plays the music that will open your ears and minds to "The World of Harmonica." Using story telling, historical facts, and playing the instrument in many styles, this fast paced program is both entertaining and educational. The show will delight and perhaps even move you to try the instrument once again! IN PERSON event. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

BoatSense: Lessons & Yarns from a Marine Writer's Life

December 6 @ 6:30 - 7:30 pm

The Stony Creek Museum proudly presents local author Doug Logan for a presentation on his fascinating and informative book *BoatSense!* ONLINE Event.

Eat This Not That!

December 8 @ 6:30 - 7:30 pm

Join us for this fun and interactive nutrition program, and learn how making simple tweaks in our foods lead to big results! With so much misinformation about nutrition on the internet, this program provides participants with science-based nutrition information delivered in a fun way. ONLINE event. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

The Alchemy of Us

December 11 @ 2 - 3:00 pm

The Blackstone Library is proud to host author Ainissa Ramirez for a discussion of her fascinating new book. Winner of the 2021 CT Book Award for nonfiction, *The Alchemy of Us: How Humans and Matter Transformed One*

Another examines eight inventions and reveals how they shaped the human experience. Registration is required to attend this HYBRID event.

Branford Forum: Discovering Opera, the Greatest Art Form

December 19 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

The human voice is the quintessential instrument. It can uniquely express the human experience and captivate audiences of all backgrounds. Charlotte D'Aniello (Institute for Learning in Retirement at Albertus Magnus) will guide you on an exploration of all the elements that combine into this amazing art form. Whether you're an expert or a complete beginner, you're sure to learn something new!

For program registration—see our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org

October 2021 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,443

October 2020: 4,390

borrowIT: 1,498

October 2020: 942

Renewals: 4,502

Computer Sessions: 546

WIFI Logins: 2819

Facebook: 2032 Likes

Instagram: 1071 Followers

MailChimp: 7575

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,744

Overdrive audiobooks: 818

Overdrive Magazines: 227

HOOPLA: 1,010

Kanopy: 205

Pronunciator: 570

Ancestry Library: 850

New Haven Register: 147

Creative Bug: 84

Total Downloadable: 5,655

Children's Programs

25 programs/262 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

11 programs/143 attendance

Adult programs

42 programs/379 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

142 meetings/380 attendees

Average Daily Visitors: 203

Days Open: 30