



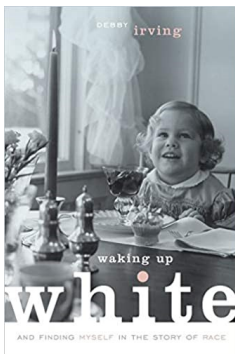
# Report to the Board of Trustees

February 3, 2021

## From the Director

The renovation project is complete! Scaffolding is coming down and the dome looks amazing with its bright new copper roof. The exterior marble will be repainted in the areas where the scaffolding was attached. Next steps are closing out the project and applying for the SHPO grant reimbursement.

The talk with Debby Irving on January 25 was a success with over 200 people attending the Zoom program. Debby did not allow the program to be recorded, but she agreed to return and answer questions on the following Monday. As part of the grant requirements, we agreed to distribute a survey after the program. This prompted us to give the Public Library Association's Project Outcome a test run. Project Outcome seeks to capture the benefits (or outcomes) of library services in terms of "what good we do," like changes in library users' knowledge, confidence, behavior change, or awareness. It is free to libraries and offers a variety of standard surveys. It also allows libraries to add their own questions, providing guidance in the process. The Awakening to Change series is sponsored by the Branford Community Foundation and BCTV. Watch for future pro-



*Over 200 people attended the talk with Debby Irving on January 25. Many in the audience expressed that they had gained a new knowledge of issues surrounding systemic racism.*



*We were featured in the Shoreline Times this month!*

grams in the next few months.

COVID numbers remained high in Branford, and area libraries are open on a very limited basis. Our computer lab remains closed.

Katy, Eloise, and I worked with Trustee Michelle Blank on strategic planning—a kick off meeting is scheduled with staff for 2/4. We have finalized our questions and schedule, and will spend much of February and March on

stakeholder interviews and data analysis.

The Finance Committee met to develop the budget request due to the Town on 2/5.

Now that the renovation project is complete, the Library's regular Building and Grounds Committee will be re-activated. Members have been recruited for approval by the board.

*-Karen Jensen*

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—December

This month we put together a couple of holiday themed virtual programs to get everyone in the spirit. The elementary Take and Make was a marshmallow snowman. The pack contained: marshmallows, frosting, pretzels, cookies and chocolate chips. Kids used all of these contents to decorate their own edible snowmen. Miss Sarah decorated Putz Houses with her tweens and teens. Putz Houses are tiny paper gingerbread houses popular in the 1900's. Families would assemble and use paints/glitter to decorate them around the holidays. We did not realize how intricate they would be! Miss Sarah set up two cameras for her "how to" video — one focused on her and another that zoomed in on the project so that followers could see the step-by-step process. She also included the teen logo in the right hand corner of the video which was very impressive and something I will have to try come January.

Later in the month we presented our first step-by-step snowman drawing project. Since Miss Sarah had been so successful with her paint nights with older participants we thought we would try a similar process with our younger patrons. I contacted Doris Benter, an artist that has put together a collection of art projects that can be conducted through ZOOM. All of her projects have a literacy link and participants came together to recreate the art found in the picture book *Snowmen at Night*. The artist uses a combination of markers and colored pencils to

depict how snowmen spend their evenings once everyone goes to sleep. I read the book and then helped Doris control the ZOOM session so that she did not have to jump between drawing, talking and viewing the class. Doris took the group through a step-by-step drawing process that was easy to follow and used common shapes so that everyone was able to understand what she was creating. She also asked them for input on what should be included in their drawings - mittens, striped scarves or types of hats. At one point someone requested a particular dinosaur and when the participant told her that she was drawing the wrong one she laughed and said, let me consult my phone, then adjusted her drawing to match.

Our other holiday themed program was a gingerbread house building workshop. We have done these in the past and I have to admit that my houses always seem to fall apart so I reached out to a small local business, Cooking Social Club, for a kit and "how to" program for families since we all struggle when it comes to the foundation. Priscilla was able to put together a variety of gingerbread house kits - including all of the fixings along with royal icing in piping bags. When we logged on, Priscilla talked about the various contents and how royal icing makes all the difference when it comes to getting everything to stick. The key to a proper build is to decorate all of your parts first and then construct the foundation once everything is dry. Priscilla read the classic The

Gingerbread Man and asked the kids to predict what would happen. Everyone had a blast and it was fun to see their completed houses on my computer screen.

Sarah hosted a "Bring Your Pet to Discord" party. This idea came from her Teen Advisory group when someone's cat popped in during meeting. The teens got a kick out of it and started talking about their pets so Sarah asked if that is something they would want to share. The program ran similar to show and tell and allowed everyone to talk about their pets and how they are cared for. Sarah said that there were some nontraditional pets thrown into the mix so it was fun to see how folks cared for these types of animals.

The teen gaming group has also been gaining popularity. Sarah decided to test run "Among Us" a free online game where everyone is trying to survive but certain players are working together to take others out - think of it as multiple spies on the loose. The nice thing about this game is that everyone plays at once in relatively small groups. You are also able to create private gaming rooms so all of Sarah's teens can play together without letting unknown players in. Since the game has quite an online following we were not surprised by the number of teens that signed up. She will continue to host game night the following month.

-Carly Lemire



## 125th Anniversary

In June 2021, Blackstone Library celebrates its 125th anniversary! All year long, we will be posting fun facts and pictures about the library. You can also follow along on a special anniversary website at [blackstonelibrary.org/jbml-1896-2021](http://blackstonelibrary.org/jbml-1896-2021).

The first head librarian at the library was Arthur Wellington Tyler, who served in that role

from June 1896 to April 1898. He lectured at the library in the years following his time as library director. He was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1842, attended Amherst College and was a journalist and newspaper editor before becoming assistant librarian at the Astor Library in New York City from 1871 to 1876. The Blackstone Library was the seventh which he has

either started or organized. Miss Susie Hutchinson was the assistant librarian, and Miss Sarah C. Neilson, a graduate of the Pratt Institute Library School in Brooklyn, was the cataloguer.

From: *The Blackstone Memorial Library* by Mrs. Edward M. Gallaudet, published in the New England Magazine, November 1896.

## Highlights from the Reference Department-December

2020 is quite a year to try to summarize. The new year began with normal hours, programming, reference and digital offerings. In February, the Reference department began work on a number of genealogy and local history projects. In March, the world was turned upside down by the coronavirus pandemic.

Library staff quickly transitioned to a full-time work from home model at the end of March and throughout the month of April. We worked on updating our website, adding more digital databases and links and providing remote reference and technology assistance. In May, we began to offer curbside pickup and we resumed making homebound deliveries. We continued providing remote reference and technology help, while working in the building. This model continued through June and then in July, we added computer

sessions by appointment; this remained the same during the month of August.

In September, we were able to begin offering browsing appointments as well as computer appointments. Throughout the fall, we offered in-house access as best we could, based on the governor's and health department's recommendations. Everyone on staff has always been aware of how important we are to the community and we did our best to offer as many services as we safely could.

Throughout this time, whether fully open, fully closed or somewhere in between, the Reference staff has worked diligently to offer our exemplary customer service and to find creative ways to interact with our patrons. We all look forward to the day that we can open our doors for everyone to return to browse,

study, read newspapers, use the computers, try our MakerLab, do genealogy research, receive one-on-one tech help in person, attend programs, have meetings and visit us for more than just a few minutes!

I always love being able to share especially touching stories with everyone and this is a good way to end December's end of year report. Jenna recently assisted a local patron with locating yearbook pictures of his mother who passed away when he was very young. Anne and Jenna scoured several of the Branford yearbooks and were able to find two pictures of her in high school and one in middle school; our patron was overjoyed. He said he had never seen any of them before, so having them was a huge comfort and he told us he would treasure them always.

-Debby Trofatter



When the library opened in 1896, the bronze light fixtures were "arranged for both gas and electric light."



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## February 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

### Virtual Game Night

*February 5 @ 6 – 9 pm*

Join us for a night of silly online games with some fun, laid-back people, without having to leave the house! Get all the info you need and RSVP on our Meetup page.

### The Beatles: From Liverpool to Abbey Road

*February 6 @ 2 – 4 pm*

Follow in the footsteps of The Beatles as they embark on their historic journey starting from their early days and coming full circle to the highlights of each individual's post Beatles work. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

### Virtual Branford Forum: Do Social Programs Work?

*February 7 @ 2 – 3:30 pm*

Passionate arguments for and against social interventions are usually based on morality, fiscal concerns, and fairness, but one question almost always goes unanswered: do social programs achieve their

aims? Jesus Amadeo will discuss MDRC's approach to the evaluation of social programs and share some examples of evidence-based social research projects.

### Beyond the Amistad:

#### Black History in Connecticut

*February 13 @ 2 – 3 pm*

The Connecticut Historical Society will take you on a tour of items from their collection representing a spectrum of the Black experience in CT. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library*

### Branford Beginnings

*February 17 @ 7 – 8:30 pm*

How did our town of Branford come to be? Mr. Joseph Naylor will explore the settling of Branford in 1644 from the perspective of his ancestor, Mr. William Swaine. Learn how migration to New England by Puritans fleeing persecution by the English Monarchy and the Church of England, the English Civil

War, the Pequot war of 1637, and a split among the Puritans into conservative and liberal factions all contributed to the founding of Branford. *Presented by the Branford Historical Society*

### What Should I Grow in My Medicinal Herb Garden?

*February 20 @ 2 – 3 pm*

Get a head start on your spring gardening with the mother daughter duo from Grounded Goodwife! The right herbal "superstars" can treat common ailments like colds and flu, inflammation, minor cuts, infections, pain, muscle spasms, anxiety, poor digestion, and insomnia. Starting your herb garden isn't as overwhelming as you may think!

### Best Seller Book Club

*Saturday, February 27*

*3:30 pm - 4:30 pm*

This month we're reading *The Searcher* by Tana French. The Blackstone Library has a limited number of copies available for book club participants.

*All programs are virtual—please visit our website at [www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org) for registration information.*

## December 2020 Statistics

**Total Circulation:** 4,516

*December 2019: 8,089*

**borrowIT:** 833

*December 2019: 2,329*

**Renewals:** 4,072

**Computer Sessions:** 56

**WIFI Logins:** 817

**Facebook:** 1918 Likes

**Instagram:** 1106 Followers

**MailChimp:** 7,593

**Downloadable Circulation:**

Overdrive ebooks: 1387

Overdrive audiobooks: 639

RB Digital: 349

HOOPLA: 802

Kanopy: 249

Pronunciator: 557

Ancestry Library: 339 searches

**Total Downloadable:** 4,322

**Children's Programs**

*16 programs/97 attendance*

**Teen Programs (12+)**

*3 programs/32 attendance*

**Adult programs**

*25 programs/393 attendance*

**Lucy Hammer Room** N/A

**Conference Room** N/A

**Days Open:** N/A

**Average Daily Visitors:** N/A