



Report to the Board of Trustees

June 3, 2020

From the Director

The month of May opened with the RTM Education Committee budget hearing which resulted in a recommendation to maintain the current level of Town funding for the Blackstone Library at a 0% increase. Trustees, Friends and patrons reached out to their RTM representatives to advocate for the requested increase. Ultimately, a majority of RTM members voted in favor of the Education Committee's recommendation, asking the Library to allocate any unspent funds from FY'20 toward the FY '21 budget. Established practice has been for the Library to draw a budgeted amount from investments to contribute to the operating budget throughout the year. Any unspent funds would be left in the investment account to be used for future operating support. The majority of RTM members felt it was important for the Library to use these unspent funds to reduce the Town's expenditures next year as many residents will be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Subsequent to the RTM's decision, the Finance Committee met to develop an amended budget.

The Governance Committee piloted a board evaluation survey — results will be discussed at the June 3 Trustees meeting.



Contactless pickup began on May 20—Allison, Moira and the entire staff have been working to get books into the hands of our patrons.

The Building Committee met this month to determine the best way to proceed with the roof repair. I submitted our grant request to the State Historic Preservation Office for the roof repair. The maximum award for the grant is \$100,000 as long as the total project cost exceeds \$200,000. The grant will be reviewed at their June 3 meeting. If awarded, the funds will be used to offset the Town contribution.

The Library initiated a contactless pickup service on May 20; so far it has gone well. The governor has identified public libraries as being able open as of June 20. We have been participating in meetings, talking with neighboring libraries, consulting with the East Shore Health District, researching best practices and procuring PPE in preparation.

The Youth Services staff have prepared a robust summer reading program that can be conducted entirely online. Carly created a wonderful video that will be shown in all of the elementary schools to kick off the program. It is available on the Library's Youtube Channel, through our website.

Jenna has also prepared a full schedule of adult summer programs for virtual participation.

The annual goal setting process takes place for staff in June. This year has been unusual with staff having to adapt to a changing building and now working through a pandemic. I think we all have a new appreciation for each other and the people whom we serve.

-Karen Jensen



Donating with Social Distance

Many of our regular donors donated to local organizations in need rather than donate to our Spring Appeal. However, one of our regular patrons was inspired to make a special donation, and did so by attaching a note and check to a Frisbee, which he threw to me across the parking lot!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—April

The Youth Services Staff has been officially working from home for about a month and we have fallen into the swing of things. Everyone has been working hard to come up with virtual programs, maintaining our social media and web presence all while fielding questions and ordering new materials. Miss Mary and I have added an interactive element to our Saturday Stories: asking kids to bring items to share, instruments they can march with and ideas for particular songs/rhymes they would like to hear. This keeps the program fresh and encourages participation, plus our littles love to be in the spotlight on ZOOM!

Miss Sarah and I just started a virtual tween/teen book club that has us following different series. Right now I am diving into **Harry Potter** while Miss Sarah is reading the **Life As We Knew It** trilogy. Both series are available on Hoopla so that we can register as many teens as possible. Right now we have 2 readers in my book group and 7 in Miss Sarah's. It will be interesting to see if we can gather more participants after our first meetings since we encouraged them to share the group with their friends.

Miss Sarah's social distance challenge is really starting to take shape with a total of 62 participants. So far people enjoy sharing what they are binge watching, making for dinner or doing with their pets!

Now that Branford Public Schools' eLearning platform is up and running we have been fielding questions for different teachers. Having our card registration form online has been a seamless way for everyone to gain access to our digital collections.

I have also been on the hunt for particular titles for teachers and students. We have also updated the Home-schooling Resources Page on the website for access to additional eMaterials, activities and recorded readings to keep everyone engaged while home.

This past month I was also able to resurrect our YouTube channel. We have used it in the past to showcase different fundraising efforts and maker creations but we are also hoping to utilize it as a landing page for virtual programming that people may have missed. I am also planning to use it this summer as a way to release BreakOut EDU challenges to families. Essentially, I will record a weekly video explaining the digital breakout and then include the link to the game in the YouTube notes. Families will have 1 week to complete each challenge and report back their findings. We thought that this could be a fun way to engage the entire family without having a designated meeting time.

And, that brings us to summer reading. The Youth Services Department is proud to announce that we have been awarded a \$2,500 grant from

the Guilford Savings Bank to use towards summer programming. Before the pandemic we had a list of ideas percolating but social distancing restrictions have forced us to think outside the box and come up with creative ways to engage. Knowing that our website and social media outlets might be our main source of communication we didn't want to over complicate things and decided to create a library-wide program that anyone can join. The idea is to provide 10 weeks of summer reading challenges/activities that families or individuals can complete. The more they do, the more chances they have to be entered in our end of summer reading prize drawings. Prizes will be an array of gift cards to local businesses which we can easily mail at summer's end. Challenges will be reading based but will also ask participants to get outside, perform random acts of kindness or share recommendations. All in an effort to create connections and get folks outside and off their screens. Since this year's summer reading theme is Imagine Your Story we decided to call this a Summer Reading Quest and we cannot wait to start inviting people to participate. More on virtual programming and how we are promoting in May!

-Carly Lemire



Some new and familiar programs are scheduled this summer



Coming in June, virtual summer reading programs!

Highlights from the Reference Department-April

April was our first full month of remote work and programming. We have all adjusted to our new circumstances and with a terrific work ethic and great participation, we have continued to offer interesting programs and excellent service to our patrons.

We receive regular telephone inquiries and questions by email; these include requests for telephone numbers or addresses, for obituaries or copies of articles, for detailed information on news items, biographical information, and book characters. In addition, we are receiving many requests for technology help with apps, online resources and devices.

Christina has fielded the great majority of the technology inquiries and has created a series of videos (found on our YouTube channel) on a number of our apps. She offers one on one telephone or Zoom training sessions for anyone who needs help. She is preparing for her Cutting

the Cord program later this month. Anne has been working on indexing and scanning the vertical file. Jenna has been busy organizing (and running some of) our virtual programs. We now offer Latin and Poetry classes, virtual knitting, book discussions, programs such as No-Till Gardening and Cutting the Cord, and we have resumed our collaboration with Branford Forum and Tilde Café.

We have all been busy on our message sharing app, Slack, so that we can discuss summer reading, programming and general library issues as a group. We attend relevant webinars and Zoom meetings, especially ones with other CT librarians so that we can plan for what a reopened Blackstone Library will look like.

Much of what we have learned and put into place will continue to be used by the staff even once the reopening phases begin. In-

house training and programming may not be possible for some time, so we plan to continue with our virtual offerings. Flexibility and adaptability are key as we move forward, knowing that changes will be happening and that we will need to be ready for every eventuality. I'd like to thank all staff, but particularly my Reference staff, for their dedication, hard work and for their willingness to find solutions to problems we couldn't even imagine just a few months ago.

-Debby Trofatter



Face coverings are the new norm for all of us during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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...more than books

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June 2020 Virtual Program Highlights

Knitting Group

Wednesdays @ 6-7:30 pm

Join our weekly knitting group where both beginners and experienced knitters are welcome.

Book Discussion:

Lady Clementine

Friday, June 5 @ Noon

Download Lady Clementine, by Marie Benedict, on Hoopla (free with your Blackstone Library card), then meet up with us via zoom for a live book discussion.

How to Eat a Poem:

Poetry Discussion Group

Saturdays @ 1-2 pm

Learn to better understand and appreciate the wide world of poetry! Each week we'll discuss a new chapter from the 8th edition of the book *Sound and Sense: an Introduction to Poetry* by Laurence Perrine.

Feeding the Dragon: Author

Talk with Chris Fenton

Saturday, June 6 @ 2:30 pm

Chris Fenton will discuss his new memoir, *Feeding the Dragon: Inside the Trillion Dollar Dilemma Facing Hollywood, the NBA, and American Business*.

Second Tuesday Book Group

June 9 @ 6:15 pm

June's title is *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn (available on Hoopla to download with your Blackstone Library card).

Sugar Scrub & Face Mask

Friday, June 12 @ 1 pm

Join the mother/daughter duo, Grounded Goodwife, for this hands-on workshop using ingredients from your kitchen! Check our website for a list of necessary ingredients. Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.

How to Access Ebooks: OverDrive, SimplyE, and More

Thursday, June 18 @ 2 pm

Learn about OverDrive and Libby, two reading apps made by OverDrive. We'll also take a quick look at another ebook lending resource, RBDigital, and then head over to our newest app called SimplyE.

Imagine Your Story: 3-Part Fiction Writing Workshop

Tuesdays, 6/30, 7/7, 7/14 @ 10:30 am

Award-winning novelist Susan Strecker hosts. Topics covered will include eight tips and tricks for writing a novel, the essential elements of successful books, and the importance of hooking the reader. Writers of all experience and ability levels are welcome. Note: you are registering for all three sessions.

All programs are virtual—please visit our website at www.blackstonelibrary.org for registration information.

April 2020 (Virtual) Statistics

Total Circulation: 143

April 2019: 10,050

borrowIT: 123

April 2019: 2,010

Renewals: 52

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive eBooks: 1444

Overdrive audiobooks: 530

RB Digital: 397

Hoopla: 1387 plays

Kanopy: 349 plays

Pronunciator: 527 users

Ancestry Library: 1508

searches

Website: 10,819 sessions

Children's Programs:

Babies (0-2)

0 programs/0 attendance

Preschool (3-5)

0 programs/0 attendance

School-age (6-11)

0 programs/0 attendance

All Ages—Saturday Stories

4 programs/40 attendance

Total Children's Programs: 4

Total Attendance: 40

Teen Programs (12+)

Social Distance Challenge: 63

Adult programs

6 programs/54 attendance

Hammer & Conference Room

0 meetings/0 attendance

Computer Sessions: 0

Facebook: 1,845 Likes

Instagram: 827 followers

Twitter: 803 followers

MailChimp: 7,871 subscribers

Days Open: 0

Daily Attendance: 0