



# Report to the Board of Trustees

June 2, 2021

## From the Director

Strategic planning staff sent out the screening questionnaire and have begun setting up groups and times for community conversations. We continued to practice and attend training throughout the month and are on track to have the conversations completed before the end of June. Trustee Michelle Blank completed a report detailing the results of the internal alignment work done in March; this will be delivered to the Trustees at the July meeting.

The committee to plan for the 125th anniversary held two brainstorming sessions this month. The session held in person was the first time since the beginning of the pandemic that a group of trustees has met in person. The group came up with a focused list of activities to complete during the year; the committee will meet to finalize the list and begin planning.

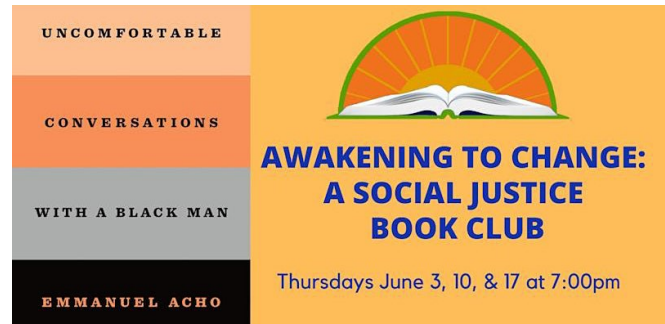
The newly re-constituted Building and Grounds Committee met on this month. Chairperson Liz Ferguson led the committee through an agenda that included a list of the projects to be completed. The Committee's focus will be on developing a Plan of



Bid for Blackstone  
Thank you!

Thank you to all who donated, and bid on the exciting experiences offered in our first online auction fundraiser.

The Library raised \$4775 after expenses. These funds help provide services and programs to our patrons. Great job, Development Committee!!



*All are welcome to join our newest book club, focusing on social justice. June's book is Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man by Emmanuel Acho. Copies are available at the library. Each session will focus on a different part of the book. Come to one, or all three sessions.*

Maintenance and Preservation, which will be critical for planning future projects, and also will help in obtaining future building grants.

On May 19, COVID regulations were relaxed. The library is no longer quarantining books when they are returned. The bathrooms are open, and we have expanded access to all areas of the building. Masks are still required inside the building, however we have removed the barrier at the main desk in the new entry. Most of our programs, especially the larger events, will continue to be held on Zoom this summer.

The duct cleaning was completed this month, and the new AC chiller is scheduled to arrive in early June. The floor polisher and self check-out machines have been delivered. The checkout ma-

chine will be available to use in early June.

Katy and the Development Committee were hard at work this month, raising \$4,775 through the library's first online auction, and then 16,610 through the Spring Appeal.

Our program coordinator, Jenna Anthony, graduates from her MLIS program this month! Jenna and I also met to plan how we will use Project Outcome to measure the impact of programs going forward. Project Outcome is an initiative of the Public Library Association and provides a system for surveying patrons on program impact. We selected several programs to start with and will begin reporting results next month.

*Karen Jensen*

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—April

This month we finalized our summer programs, including our all ages program, marketing, and ordering all the necessary materials for programs taking place. The online calendar, webpages, program reminders and monthly newsletters are either LIVE or set to be released throughout the summer. Our hope is that all of this preparation will not only allow our summer reading program to run smoothly but also take a lot of the burden off of the Youth Services team while I am on maternity leave. We had multiple staff meetings addressing the summer schedule, talked about any concerns and delegated monthly tasks. I know that the department will be in good hands while I am away and I cannot wait to hear all about our successful summer come fall.

This month I was also able to virtually meet with CELC, a small private middle school that focuses on individual needs. Every year the school does a big end of semester research project on various topics. In the past, the school has come to the library to pull physical materials and go through the digital research process in our computer lab. At the time the computer lab was not open to the public so we put together a ZOOM call where students could follow along with their chrome books. During the session I led the class through a variety of resources including our LION catalog where they could place personal holds,

Hoopla and Libby so that they could access eBooks instantly as well as ResearchIT CT where they could review full text articles from vetted resources. Miss Sarah and I also pulled physical resources ahead of time so that each student had books ready and waiting for them the day of our research meeting. Even though this is a school assignment each child needs to keep track of their own materials, meaning every student was required to have an up to date library card the day of our meeting. This experience gives them a taste of what it takes to be a responsible library user and hopefully sets them up for successful research experiences in the future.

During spring break we also hosted a BreakOut Edu challenge which was made possible by the Friends of the Library. BreakOut Edu is an online service that provides physical and digital, education-based breakouts. Families received daily emails with links to the games to complete whenever the timing was convenient from them. I also included my email in each message so that families could send photos and/or ask for hints along the way. One thing I did not expect was that multiple adults were also into taking part in the games. Even though the overall BreakOut questions were filled with middle school content they still require you to use logic and decoding skills, similar to logic games. Many adults said that they enjoyed

taking part simply because it required them to use their brains in a different way which has been proven to boost brain activity and confidence.

Miss Sarah and I had an exciting meeting in the middle of the month with eight students from Lyman Hall High School. This pool of students has agreed to share their expertise on a variety of animal themed topics since they attend an agricultural career driven school. During this talk they presented their topics, shared their presentation slides and discussed ways they could make their talks interactive for all ages. Presentation topics ranged from engineering on the farm to the hatching of baby chicks! Each presentation will last a total of 30 mins and will then open up for questions. All presentations will have a LIVE or recorded component where listeners can see different animals in action. Right now the class is nailing down some summer dates/times so that these sessions can be included on our Blackstone calendar. We cannot wait to see their final projects and love the fact that they are using the library to reach their community service hour goals.

-Carly Lemire



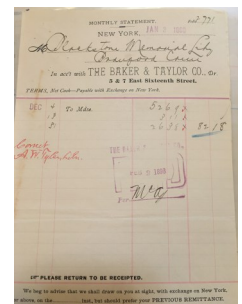
*Summer Reading begins on June 18! This year's theme is Tails and Tales.*

## 125th Anniversary—The Auditorium

While we know it's been a while since we've been able to host lectures, concerts, and other events in person, we're sure you all remember one of our favorite library spaces--the auditorium! Here you can see the view from the auditorium stage just before the library was opened to the public. Today's 125th Anniversary fact concerns the chairs you can see in the picture. We were sure that seating was all long gone, but back in 2019 William and Cynthia Kobak very kindly donated an original pair back to us. We always love it when pieces of Blackstone history find their way back home!

Until 1996, there were also chairs in the balcony of the auditorium. At that time, the chairs were removed to create the Branford History

Room, home to our collection of historic photos, library scrapbooks, maps and the works of local author Ella Wheeler Wilcox.



Here is a receipt from the book supplier Baker and Taylor dated 1898. What's so interesting about that? Well we still get most of our books from them today! Here at the Blackstone Library, we're certainly consistent. We order the books online these days rather than by correspondence, but maybe we should ask for a long-time customer discount?

## Highlights from the Reference Department-April

Our programs for March included book groups, Latin class, Poetry class, two presentations on tracing the history of your house, Virtual Game Night, a Branford Forum program on Frederick Douglass, a talk on East Rock and West Rock from the Peabody Museum, a follow-up discussion from the Historical Society on Branford's Beginnings and an introductory class on how to use our jobs database JobNow.

We are all continuing to work on a variety of archives projects. Debby and Jenna

launched the new Digital Archives site and will add collections and exhibits as time goes on. Town Historian Jane Bouley gave us permission to upload all of her columns - Pictures of the Past - from the Branford Review, so those have been added.

Anne is indexing our Vertical File and maintains our obituary index, with over 5,000 names. Christina and Debby are working on a web archiving project that will crawl and archive the websites of a variety of organizations in Branford. Jenna and Christina are

on the Strategic Planning committee and Jenna recently joined the Board of BCTV.

We received a request for tech help by phone this month from a woman who had a new iPad and was having trouble getting her Danielle Steel ebooks. We were able to talk her through getting the app and downloading her book. She told us that she is 94 years old! It's never too late to learn new technology.

-Deborah Trofatter



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...more than books

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## May 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

### Virtual Game Night

*June 4 @ 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 here on our Meetup page. Adults of all experience levels are welcome.

### Birder on Berry Lane

*June 12 @ 2 – 3 pm*  
A month-by-month guide to the birds that flock to the peaceful New England backyard of a noted writer, birder, and naturalist. Robert Tougias's house on Berry Lane may look like a typical Connecticut suburban home, but as his fascinating year-long account reveals, its three-acre backyard is teeming with nature's mysteries. Acutely sensitive to the activities of birds, Tougias notes which species are present,

which are breeding, and where their nests are. He identifies each species by its song, and brings us on a journey of appreciation as we learn the wonders of bird migration, the sensitive interaction of birds with their habitat, and the hidden meaning of their call notes and songs. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library*

### Legacy Theatre: Past, Present, & Future

*June 14 @ 6:30 - 7:30 pm*  
The Stony Creek Puppet House has had a long and rich history in both Stony Creek and the wider Branford Community. In this presentation by Keely Baisden-Knudsen, the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of the Legacy Theatre, you'll learn about the building's roots as a church, movie house, theatre, and home to some of the most

famous puppets in Connecticut. The building has recently been lovingly restored and is now the home of the Legacy Theatre, a professional theatre company which strives to enhance the Connecticut Shoreline's educational opportunities and quality of life through live theatre and related programs.

### Summer Birds: Our Neotropical Residents

*June 17 @ 6 – 7 pm*  
Winter is the time we think about bird migrations and species shifting locations. But when we enter summer a collection of birds return to the area for nesting and rearing of young. Learn about these colorful summer visitors. Photos of some of the favorites and unique species will be shared by Paul Fusco and Laura Rogers Castro, from the DEEP Wildlife Division.

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

## April 2021 Statistics

**Total Circulation:** 5,320  
*April 2020: 4,568*

**borrowIT:** 1,186  
*April 2020: 143*

**Renewals:** 3,907

**Computer Sessions:** 126  
**WIFI Logins:** 1,191

**Facebook:** 1975 Likes  
**Instagram:** 1030 Followers  
**MailChimp:** 7,620

### Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1501  
Overdrive audiobooks: 665  
Overdrive magazines: 195  
HOOPLA: 1082  
Kanopy: 266  
Pronunciator: 565  
Ancestry Library: 1511 searches

**Total Downloadable:** 5,785

### Children's Programs

*17 programs/86 attendance*

### Teen Programs (12+)

*4 programs/ 48 attendance*

### Adult programs

*15 programs/389 attendance*

**Lucy Hammer Room** N/A  
**Conference Room** N/A

**Days Open:** 26

**Average Daily Visitors:** N/A