

Report to the Board of Trustees

March 2, 2022

From the Director

This month I worked with the Friends of the Library to help them develop a new logo. It had been a long time since the Friends had updated this important identity symbol and they were eager for a new professional design that reflected their dedication to the library. Using 99designs, an online service, the Friends were able to input their wishes for specific colors, style and images, then choose from several designs submitted by a variety of different designers. The winning design was approved by the Friends board; members especially liked the contemporary book graphic with stars emanating from it, which they felt represented the multitude of opportunities available through the library.

This month our planning team continued to meet with Trustee Michelle Blank to prepare for writing the Strategic Framework. The entire staff was also present on February 18 for a presentation from Jeanine Esposito on the Community Deep Needs Analysis that was presented to the trustees in December.

In other news, we had a local filmmaker use our auditorium and conference room to film a court scene. It is not always possible when we have a full program schedule, but this is one way we can support crea-



Allie and Shayla enjoying bubble tea!

tive work in the community.

One of the most popular and fun programs this month was a take & make craft kit featuring Brown Sugar Bubble Tea. Supplies went quickly, and we received lovely feedback in appreciation, including the above photo!

Some personal news...

At the last board meeting, I announced that I will be retiring as director of the Blackstone Library effective this June. This has been very fulfilling work for me and I am now ready to spend more time on personal and family interests.

With your support and an incredible staff, the Library has been able to accomplish a great deal over the past 9 years, including a building

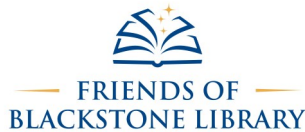
renovation, the launch of a new program for teens, a strong development program and many enriching events and partnerships with organizations in the community.

I have enjoyed my work here and getting to know so many of you. Please know that our talented and dedicated staff will carry on their good work, and a committee has been established to find a new director and ensure a smooth transition.

We know this is important news, and want you to know that your questions and suggestions are welcome as we move forward with this major transition.

With deep gratitude for all of your support,

Karen Jensen



The Friends of Blackstone Library have a new logo!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—January



Take Your Child to the Library Day (TYCLD) is an international initiative that encourages families everywhere to take their children to their local library. Launched in 2011 in Connecticut by librarians Nadine Lipman (Waterford Public Library, retired) and Caitlin Augusta (Stratford Library) with artist Nancy Elizabeth Wallace (Branford), TYCLD raises community awareness about the importance of the library in the life of a child, and promotes library services and programs for children and families.

In the wake of the Omicron variant's surge, the Youth Services Department decided to make all programming virtual. We knew this was a possibility so we were intentional about the winter programs we created, ensuring that they could work well in-person and online. I was able to keep my commitment to the Family Resource Center and Branford Early Learning Center by switching out their borrowed books with new themes, this way their students would still be able to check out books even though I was not physically there to read. Our plan is to remain virtual for the month of February and then ramp up our in-person programming with the release of our spring calendar. Here's hoping spring will give us more opportunities to come together and spend some time outside.

For the last few years we have put together "Blind Date with a Book" for the month of February. We ask staff to recommend some favorite titles, then wrap them and encourage patrons to check them out without knowing what they are about to read! I look forward to this display every year because it is one of the few times that the entire staff gets to work together on a single project. Plus, we get to see what everyone else has been reading!

Miss Mary and I spent part of this month preparing for Take Your Child to the Library Day. It is always the first Saturday

in February. We decided to host an all day event, so that families could come and go as they pleased. All of us love Mo Willems and we decided to celebrate Elephant and Piggie in a big way. We have planned a miniature birthday party incorporating Elephant and Piggie activities. Each activity is connected to one of their famous books so families will have to read the book together before completing each task. We are currently fleshing out some giveaway ideas once they complete each station but cupcakes are at the top of our list.

Thanks to the Friends of the Library we were able to go LIVE with our new museum pass management software, MuseumKey. The software is simple to use and is reminiscent of our previous software, LibraryInsight so the learning curve should be a breeze. Patrons will be able to gain access to MuseumKey through our website and can reserve passes for specific days of the week as well as print many from home. We are in the process of promoting the upgrade on our website and social media platforms. Our hope is that people will take advantage of these discounts as COVID cases decrease. We are still not up to the total number of museum passes we offered pre-pandemic, many museums are still struggling to make ends meet but it's nice to know that venues are reopening and we can all see light at the end of the tunnel.

Miss Sarah has also reintroduced her teen Make and Take kits with great success. This past month she put together a bird feeder that will be welcoming fine feathered friends to a backyard near you. One of the nicest things about Sarah's Make and Take kits is that she includes additional information about what you are making. In this month's kit Sarah was able to provide a bird guide so that teens could identify which high flyers were visiting their feeders. She also added a little information about why some birds migrate and others stay put. This additional information really adds to the experience and opens the door to more questions and discovery. What a great way to make a connection without physically being present. She is planning to continue to roll these out in the future.

Carly Lemire

Highlights from the Reference Department-January

We are very excited about the progress we've made on our Digital Archives website. We recently added two collections - one is about Branford schools and the second is a collection of newspaper articles from the Saturday Chronicle, which was published in the early 1900's. Town Historian, Jane Bouley, had compiled a list of articles about Branford locations and people from the Chronicle, but we did not have access to the actual articles.

We contacted the New Haven Museum to ask if we could get scans of a few articles. Librarian Ed Surato sent high quality jpgs to us and asked if we needed any additional articles; he told us he was enjoying looking through the

Chronicle. We immediately thanked him and sent along a substantial list of articles. Ed has since sent 40 or so. We convert the jpgs to searchable pdfs and have uploaded about twenty to the Digital Archives website. Some of the topics include Summer News, which reports on residents and visitors to the numerous summer hotels, the growth of Pine Orchard, Trinity Church, Blackstone Library and Branford Fairs.

We will continue to add articles as we receive them. In addition, we have begun scanning the early high school yearbooks (from 1925) and will be adding these to the website soon.

-Deb Trofatter



The skilled craftsmen who brought the building plans to life in 1896.

The Men who Built the Library

Valentine's Day is the perfect day for celebrating the special people in your life. One of our 125th Anniversary Facts celebrated some of the most important people in Blackstone's history—the men who built the library!

We're lucky enough to have a photo of the original construction crew taken on the front steps of the library back in 1896, each holding the tools of his trade. They

worked for Probst Construction Company, the firm that built the library. They had offices in both Chicago and Branford (according to their business card) which must have made them the ideal team to build a library in Branford, designed and funded in Chicago.

It's truly remarkable the building was built by such a small crew, and we wish we knew more about these in-

credible craftsmen. Our best guess, judging by the tools they're holding, is carpenters on the right, stone workers on the left, and possibly engineers and the foreman in the center.

-Jenna Anthony



James Blackstone Memorial Library
758 Main Street
Branford, CT 06405
203.488.1441
reference@blackstonelibrary.org
facebook.com/blackstonelibrary
twitter.com/blackstonlib
www.blackstonelibrary.org

...more than books

Join our email list for more information about programs
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March 2022 Program Highlights

English Conversation Group

*Tuesdays at 10:00 – 11:00 am
in our Conference Room*

Wednesdays 4-5:00 pm Zoom

For ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) adults. For more information and to register, contact Kathleen McKenna of Literacy Volunteers at 203-285-2621 or kmckenna@lvaghn.org.

The Victorian Lady

March 19 @ 2:00-3:00pm

Dressing in actual vintage and authentically reproduced undergarments, clothing and accessories, Kandie Carle adds humor, history and intriguing anecdotes about fashion, home life and etiquette of men and women during the 1860s to the 1900s. The Victorian Lady program brings to light some of the differences as well as some of the similarities between us and our Victorian ancestors. gnificent era in history.

Celtic Songs and Stories

March 27 @ 1:30-3:00pm

Enjoy the traditional music of Scotland, England and Ireland performed by Jeff Snow! Much of the history of this area is preserved in song, and Jeff's love and knowledge of his Scottish heritage creates a delightful program of traditional and original tunes, songs, and stories that will educate as well as entertain.

Seventeen Summers in a Garden

March 31 @ 2:00-3:00pm

Although his most famous works were set along the Mississippi River of his childhood, Mark Twain composed those novels while living in Nook Farm, a neighborhood of Hartford full of celebrated literary figures. This program explores what it was like in this vibrant community of authors and activists, whose

residents included not only Twain, but also novelist Harriet Beecher Stowe, travel writer and journalist Charles Dudley Warner, Civil War hero and senator Joseph Hawley, and female suffrage campaigner Isabella Beecher Hooker. Presented by DiDi Wiles, Weekend Coordinator and Lead Interpreter at the Mark Twain House and Museum.

The Art of the Blackstone Library: The Life and Times of Oliver Dennett Grover

April 9, 2:00 - 3:00pm

The crown jewels of the Blackstone Library are our murals, painted by renowned Chicago artist Oliver Dennett Grover. Join Grover's official biographer Joel Dryer for a discussion of the art featured on the dome, as well as his life, art, and legacy.

Programs require registration—see our website at blackstonelibrary.org

January 2022 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

Total Circulation: 6,962

January 2021: 4,543

borrowIT: 1,255

January 2021: 925

Renewals: 4,384

Computer Sessions: 429

WIFI Logins: 2523

Facebook: 2066 Likes

Instagram: 1078 Followers

MailChimp: 7533

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1,803

Overdrive audiobooks: 851

Overdrive Magazines: 246

HOOPLA: 1196

Kanopy: 391

Pronunciator: 583

Ancestry Library: 80

New Haven Register: 175

Creative Bug: 5

Total Downloadable: 5,330

Children's Programs

21 programs/124 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

9 programs/111 attendance

Adult programs

33 programs/355 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room & Conference Room

170 meetings/510 attendees

Average Daily Visitors: 266

Days Open: 26