



# Report to the Board of Trustees

May 5, 2021

## From the Director

Strategic planning staff continued to meet throughout April, finalizing our motivational segments and attending the first conversation facilitation training on April 21. Katy, Angela and I attended more intensive training on April 28, while Sarah, Jenna and Christina attended intensive data collection training at the same time. Our screening questionnaire has been finalized and will go out to the community beginning the week of May 10. Interviews will be scheduled between May 24 and June 21.

The committee to plan for the 125th anniversary met this month. The committee is planning two brainstorming sessions in May to define the overarching message, and develop strategies to reinforce that message throughout the year. The committee would like to identify supporting programs and initiatives that will celebrate the past, showcase the present and create the future. The focus will be on incorporating testimonials and real world impact as a central element of our communications.

I am very happy to report that 100% of our staff are completely vaccinated, or have received their first dose



*The Friends of the Library commemorated their largest single donation yet, with the largest check they could find. Pictured here are Barbara Barrett, Friends Vice President, Al Bertoline, Friends President, Beth Law, Board of Trustees President, and Karen Jensen, Library Director. Photo by Diane Puchalski*

at this time. We expect that many COVID restrictions may be lifted by the Governor on May 19 but to date, have not heard anything specific in terms of directions or updated sector guidelines from the State Library.

Our program committee met this month to plan summer activities. Most of our programs, especially the larger events, will continue to be held on Zoom.

Furniture for the terrace was ordered for the second time and unfortunately has been delayed again until early June. The duct cleaning is in progress, the AC Chiller, floor polisher and self-checkout

machines have been ordered. Kathy, Liz Ferguson and I met to discuss the launch of the new Building and Grounds Committee—the first meeting will be scheduled between the May and June board meetings.

I attended several meetings this month: ACLPD (Advisory Council for Library Planning and Development), a workshop on donor development, a LION board meeting, Friends board meeting, RTM Education Committee meeting, Friends newsletter meeting, and board committee meetings.

Finally, Library Giving Day on April 6th earned \$2847.70!

*Karen Jensen*



Bid for Blackstone  
May 3–15  
Experience Your World!

The Blackstone Library wants to help you experience the world around you with family and friends. Check out our spring fundraiser that is packed full of exciting packages for you to share with loved ones: Bid for Blackstone – Experience Your World.

There are auction packages for all interests and budgets – a private, outdoor floral design class for you and 4 friends, beer and wine tasting experiences, a family photoshoot session, guided hikes and gear, and a hot-air balloon ride are just some of experiences we'll offer for bidding during the online auction.

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—March

Spring is in full bloom at the Blackstone so a whole new lineup of programming has opened up to our kids, tweens and teens. This month our department planned accordingly by offering activities that had to do with the great outdoors.

Both Take and Makes were food based but one had to do with feeding humans and the other had to do with feeding the birds! Sarah's video showed tweens/teens how to make their own trail mix bites. She also included a full listing of local hikes in each bag since the weather is getting nicer. Our younger participants received a bag filled with materials to make peanut butter bird feeders. I must admit our feeders MIGHT have been feeding more squirrels than birds but this was a nice way to commemorate spring and head outside.

Miss Sarah and I must have had birds on the brain because at the end of the month she led her teens through a DIY birdhouse program. Her program provided all the necessary materials to build your own birdhouse and she also talked about what kind of birds are native to our area and what you can do to encourage a family to move in. She also challenged them to check on their completed houses daily.

The Youth Services Department also found itself with a pretty incredible opportunity this past month and it did not disappoint. In February I received an email from some-

one that works at the Disney Publishing House. They wanted to know if we would be interested in hosting an author talk with Carlos Hernandez. Carlos has made quite a name for himself with his middle grade Sal & Gabi series and is a 2020 Pura Belpré Award winner. This publicity director saw that we host a middle grade Rick Riordan Presents book club; Carlos is a part of that label and as a result wanted to give back to those that boost their book mission. Obviously, I was super jazzed but wanted to make sure there was not an additional catch. Turns out they did not want a penny, just the opportunity to meet our kids, converse and offer advice to readers and writers.

Our current book club attendees were psyched about the opportunity so we decided to read the sequel to Sal & Gabi in preparation. We also opened the talk to additional readers/writers and found that Carlos pulls in quite a crowd! There was a huge age range but he was so magnetic that it did not matter. He opened his talk with a magic trick and discussed how we are surrounded by it - perfect example, a man walking on the moon! This is something that we never thought was possible but through perseverance, experimentation and time it became achievable. Reading/writing gives us its own kind of magic - allowing us to be transported within a blink of an eye and how gosh darn cool that is! Then he basically opened up the discussion and

allowed kids, teens and adults to talk about their favorite reads, fan art, writing and even which Pokemon rule. Everyone had a voice during this talk, everyone's questions were taken seriously and everyone had an opportunity to share topics that meant something to them. It truly was amazing and was made possible because Carlos set the stage for success. Everyone left this talk uplifted and grinning from ear to ear. Now that we have a direct contact within Disney Publishing we are hoping to pull in new and exciting authors in the future. They let us know that the door is always open so I feel like the opportunities are endless.

Miss Mary and I also hosted a special storytime for Read Across America Day. Once again we were able to reach out Read to Grow for support and offered families that signed up for the event a free book. We also included information about our 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program which is geared towards our storytime audience. Our goal was to encourage families to read to their children daily which incentive program builds upon. We also shared a series of free resources that families could turn to when looking to mixup read alouds or gain access to accompanying activities that would reinforce what they just read. In the end the class was fun and informative and a way to bring a little normalcy by promoting one of our longstanding programs.



*Preparing the peanut butter squirrel, um BIRD feeders.*

## 125th Anniversary—Youth Services

For this week's 125th Anniversary fact we're taking you back to the groovy days of the 1970s and one of our earliest renovation projects. It's hard to imagine now, but there was a time when the Blackstone Library did not have a dedicated space for children. Recognizing the needs of the community, The Branford Woman's Club teamed up with the library and began raising money in

the early 1970s to change all that. They played an integral role in making the project happen, and Blackstone opened the brand-new Children's Department in February of 1974!



## Highlights from the Reference Department-March

In addition to our Latin classes, Poetry discussions, book discussions and Game Night, the library hosted programs on Genetic Genealogy, Women on Opposite Sides of the Law (criminals and lawyers) and the Stony Creek Quarry.

Christina and Jenna are participating in the library's Strategic Planning initiative and Christina and Debby have begun to learn about Web Archiving. The library applied for and was awarded a grant from Community Webs, an Institute for Museum and Library Sciences supported group that is helping public libraries build collections of historically-valuable, web published materials documenting their local communities.

The library debuted a new online resource this month,

Creativebug, with more than 1,000 arts & crafts video classes taught by design experts. All are available remotely to our patrons and to those of Willoughby Wallace Library. Our staff will also be utilizing this resource when they create their Make & Take kits.

I'd like to share a personal story that began as a research project related to my grandfather. I have been working through a box of family items and came across a photograph of my grandfather with a young woman, from 1946, in front of a ship where my grandfather served as Chief Engineer. On the back of the photograph, he indicated that the young woman was a stowaway on his ship! There were also two letters from her to my grandfather, asking him to sponsor her.

Curious to know more, I used the library's subscription to AncestryLibrary and found a record from a subject index of the Associated Press as well as a deportation record. Two newspaper articles also detailed how the 23-year-old singer from Rotterdam had snuck onto the ship, been discovered and ultimately was sent back to Rotterdam.

*Deb Trofatter*



The library has two Seth Thomas clocks, one in the Reading Room and one in the nonfiction area, that are still telling time for us 125 years after they were first installed for the opening of the library in 1896.



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...more than books

Join our email list for more information about programs  
[www.blackstonelibrary.org](http://www.blackstonelibrary.org)

## May 2021 Virtual Program Highlights

### Cutting the Cord:

#### Saying Goodbye to Cable

May 13 @ 2 - 3:00 pm

Dealing with cable can be a pain, but trying to find an alternative can be equally frustrating. If you've had enough of cable and need some guidance for making your next move, come to our class on cutting the cord! We'll discuss all the most popular streaming services and devices so you can decide which one is right for you!

### Virtual Branford Forum: Immigration Law

May 16 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

The Branford Forum, a community organization that brings nationally renowned figures to the Shoreline, is returning to the Blackstone Library for a series of virtual conversations.

### Birdscaping:

#### Home Sweet Habitat

May 22 @ 2 - 3:00 pm

Looking to kickstart your spring gardening? This beautifully illustrated program explores the importance of creating welcoming habitats for birds through thoughtful landscape choices, including native plants vital for food and nesting sites. Learn about the benefits and joys of creating beautiful layered gardens designed to bring avian performers right into your own backyard. *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library*

### Best Seller Book Club

May 29 @ 3:30 - 4:30 pm

Have you ever thought about joining a book club? It's a fun way to get connected, make new friends, and read more books! In the Best Seller Book Club, we'll be reading and

discussing newly released, highly rated books from a wide variety of genres. This month we're reading *The Midnight Library* by Matt Haig. Somewhere out beyond the edge of the universe there is a library that contains an infinite number of books, each one the story of another reality. One tells the story of your life as it is, along with another book for the other life you could have lived if you had made a different choice at any point in your life. While we all wonder how our lives might have been, what if you had the chance to go to the library and see for yourself? Would any of these other lives truly be better? *Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.*

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

## March 2021 Statistics

**Total Circulation:** 5,455

March 2020: 4,568

**borrowIT:** 1,354

March 2020: 2,734

**Renewals:** 4,402

**Computer Sessions:** 81

**WIFI Logins:** 1,079

**Facebook:** 1961 Likes

**Instagram:** 1030 Followers

**MailChimp:** 7,648

**Downloadable Circulation:**

Overdrive ebooks: 1576

Overdrive audiobooks: 712

Overdrive magazines: 559

HOOPLA: 1082

Kanopy: 372

Pronunciator: 565

Ancestry Library: 1706

searches

**Total Downloadable:** 6,572

**Children's Programs**

20 programs/153 attendance

**Teen Programs (12+)**

4 programs/ 52 attendance

**Adult programs**

11 programs/325 attendance

**Lucy Hammer Room** N/A

**Conference Room** N/A

**Days Open:** N/A

**Average Daily Visitors:** N/A