



Report to the Board of Trustees

November 4, 2020

From the Director

The building committee met on October 8 and discussed the final phases of the project. The steel structure supporting the roof is expected to be complete and delivered in the first week of November. Remaining contingency funds allow for the auditorium ceiling to be painted, but there is no funding to complete the balcony enclosure which was to be a third conference room. Scaffolding has been installed in the auditorium and painting is expected to begin in early November. The committee also received a proposal from Downes Construction for including the HVAC chiller in the project. Since the cost of including the repair in the project was more expensive, and exceeded contingency funds, the decision was made to complete the repair at a later date. The rear roof repair and auditorium painting is expected to be complete by end of December at which point the renovation project will wrap up.

The Friends of the Library have established a fund raising task force to determine new ways to earn revenue for the library. They have invited participation from the Library Board of Trustees; Katy and I have also participated in the meetings. This month, the Friends established a new “virtual book cart” to take the



A rare view of the rear dome roof—protected from the elements and copper removed. Photos courtesy of Kathy Oxsalida

place of the book carts located in the new lobby which offered newer, gently-read books. The “virtual book cart” allows patrons to browse the books online and arrange contactless pickup at the library. The Friends were also featured in the *Best of the Shoreline 2020*, a special section that ran in *The Shoreline Times* in October.

Our teen librarian, Sarah Malory, received praise for her programs from a patron this month. She also participated in a forum with other LION libraries to discuss ways to host shared online teen programs.

Since we have opened up more areas of the library, patrons are slowly coming back. We started out requiring appointments for browsing and have found they are not necessary, so we eliminated that requirement in the last week of October. As COVID cases are increasing in

CT, we are reminded of the importance of being vigilant and wearing masks.

As we see more people coming in to the building, we are working on updating the Rotary Club’s wayfinding kiosk in the new lobby. Jenna has added new information about programs, and the kiosk offers interactive maps and information about the library.

Our new microfilm reader was delivered and installed. Debby and the reference staff are busy learning about all of its features.

I met with our YALE SOM graduate student, Eloise Owens and trustee Michelle Blank to work on the strategic planning process. We are almost ready to begin interviewing key stakeholders.

I also attended several virtual programs on diversity, equity and inclusion this month.

Karen Jensen

Grateful for Teen Programs

I just wanted to let you know I had both my kids take part in your program yesterday. I wanted to extend also such gratitude towards the creative ways you are engaging the children in town, mine included, and I am so thankful. They loved the “surprise” and yummy treat they were able to make with you virtually. I loved that it gave them something fun to look forward to after their classwork. You are such an asset to our community. Keep up the great work!

Highlights from the Youth Services Department—September



#takeandmake
Check it out on our
youtube channel!

Since school is split between in-person and online learning this year, we realized that kids' availability would vary based on how many devices were in each house. We were also concerned about "screen burnout" and wanted to offer programs that did not necessarily need ZOOM or in-person instruction. With that in mind, we have created a new monthly "Take and Make" program. Inspired by the success of this summer's storytime grab and go kits, we decided to create two sets of "Take and Makes" that can be completed at any time. One is for elementary school students and the other for middle and high school aged children. The kits provide 5 or so items to complete a project. This month the elementary school set created a marshmallow catapult from popsicle sticks, rubber bands and a spoon. The older kids created their own lip balm with simple ingredients and a microwave. We curated short YouTube videos so that families could access them whenever they wanted to complete the project. This was a fun way to promote the program on social media! Ultimately we created 20 grab and go bags per age group and set them out for curbside pick up on a first-come, first-served basis. This saved us from having to keep track of a wait list or calling those that never came to claim their bag. We also agreed that all of our Take and Make projects should be simple and use low cost items so that families could still replicate

the project at little to no cost. All our bags were claimed within the first 48 hours and we received a few emails thanking us for the projects.

This month Miss Mary and I also collaborated with the Shoreline Adult Education (SAE) program to open up our Wednesday storytime to families learning English. When the program was running in person parents took language learning classes while their children partook in a mixed aged playgroup offering hands-on developmentally appropriate activities. Now that everything is being offered online, we are offering our storytime followed by a parenting talk provided by the SAE teachers. We had five new families at our first combined program. We included a lot of music, simple rhymes and action stories. Everyone seemed to have a good time and it was nice to see parents interacting with their little ones on the screen.

Miss Sarah and I also put together a fun activity in front of the Blackstone Library! The idea came from Miss Mary while she was watching her three grandchildren complete a driveway obstacle course made with chalk. Actions included hopping like a frog, doing jumping jacks, spinning in circles or landing on letters to spell a particular word. Since the beginning of September predicted little to no rain Miss Sarah and I thought it would be the perfect opportunity to create our own

chalk course on our front sidewalk. We broke out the chalk and jam-packed our course with goofy challenges that would draw an all ages crowd. Our course was as long as the chalk would last and we made a short video encouraging others to do our #chalkchallenge on social media. To be honest, we are not sure how many people attempted our course. A few parents sent photos but followers loved our video; it brought in over 250 views.

Miss Sarah also held her first set of teen programs on Discord: a text, video and gaming platform that brings people together in 1 location rather than multiple ZOOM meetings. The program made it possible for her teens to play multiple online games in real time and have their first creative writers club meeting. Both programs brought in 10 or more teens and once again had participants joining in from other states and even different parts of the world. Miss Sarah is excited about these new levels of participation and will keep up with her monthly Teen Advisory Board meetings to brainstorm different ways she can continue to bring teens together.

Carly Lemire

Lee's Memorial Garden

Lee's Garden is hidden in a small half-circle tucked between a walk leading from Cedar Street to the Library. Dedicated by the Friends of the Library in 2010, the garden is a memorial to Leocadia "Lee" Sullivan, a longtime volunteer.

The garden features specimen trees supplemented with various annual flowers.

Recently, Friends Vice President Barbara Barrett and Library Director Karen Jensen weeded the garden and

planted daffodil bulbs. As the COVID-19 pandemic lags on, this gives us something to look forward to in the spring.

This beautiful garden provides a peaceful place on the Library's spectacular grounds.



Barbara Barrett and Karen Jensen in Lee's Garden. Photo by Joe Genua

Highlights from the Reference Department-September

We had some well attended virtual programs in September, including a lecture on the [Lafayette Trail](#) which was attended by 42 people and the Branford Forum topic of [Trump's Impact on US International Relations](#) which was attended by 73 people. Our program [Chasing Labyrinths](#) had 18 Zoom attendees, but has had 182 views on our YouTube channel. We hosted book groups, an author talk, yoga, Friday Night Game Night and programs on long-term care and Social Security. In addition, Christina taught an iPad class and held four or five virtual tech help sessions.

Every once in a while, the Reference department receives an inquiry that at first impression seems to be a tough question to track down. But with a bit of research and online searching, we were able to come up with the answer to a question we received this month. A patron asked if we could find the weight of a 16-foot Boston Whaler Ventura from 2000 as well as the weight of a 90hp Yamaha engine, also from 2000. Fortunately, NADA Guides includes this data in their online guide, so we were able to obtain the infor-

mation for our patron.

The Reference department has seen an increase in requests for our homebound delivery service and staff make anywhere between 3 and 10 deliveries every Wednesday. It is a service that is very well received by our patrons who are unable to get into the library.

-Debby Trofatter



Branford's labyrinth is one of 64 in Connecticut and Rhode Island featured in Branford resident Bill Ludwig's book, *Chasing Labyrinths*. Created by Bill in 2019 with help from the Town, volunteers and materials donated by the Stony Creek quarry, the labyrinth is part of the Shoreline Greenway Trail and can be accessed at the intersection of Tabor Drive and Ark Road.

Photo by Kathy Leonard Czepiel for the Daily Nutmeg.



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November 2020 Virtual Program Highlights

Cutting the Cord:

Saying Goodbye to Cable

November 5 @ 2:00 - 3:15 pm

We'll discuss all the most popular streaming services and devices so you can decide which is right for you!

F. Scott Fitzgerald:

Boats Against the Current

November 5 @ 6:00 - 7:30 pm

Richard Webb of Westport chats live about his book *Boats Against the Current*, companion to the documentary *Gatsby in Connecticut*, *The Untold Story*. Webb will talk about the real story behind the famous novel and its tragic hero; viewers have the opportunity for questions.

First Friday Book Discussion

The Mountains Sing

November 6 @ 12 - 1:00 pm

Vivid, gripping, and steeped in the language and traditions of Việt Nam, *The Mountains Sing* brings to life the human costs of this conflict from the point of view of the Vietnamese people themselves, while

showing us the true power of kindness and hope. Ebook and audio available free via HOOPLA, sponsored by the Friends of the Library.

Virtual Paint Party

November 7 @ 2:30 - 4:30 pm

Follow instructor Pamela Haligan of Pam's Picassos on Zoom as she walks you through the steps of creating your own masterpiece.

Greetings from Indian Neck

November 11 @ 7 - 9:00 pm

Jane Bouley shares images from her collection of postcards with a historical tour of the beaches, stores, and summer hotels from Sybil Creek to Limewood Avenue, along Linden Avenue to Summer Island and Sunset Beach. Sponsored by the Branford Historical Society.

Into the Beautiful North:

November 14 @ 1 - 2:00 pm

We are partnering with Eastern Connecticut State University to participate in NEA's Big

Read! The Big Read aims to revitalize the role of literature in American culture and encourage citizens to read for pleasure and enlightenment. We have a limited number of free digital copies – to participate, send an email to programs@blackstonelibrary.org.

Branford Forum:

Introduction to Opera

November 15 @ 2 - 3:30 pm

Charlotte D'Aniello, a long-time teacher at Albertus Magnus and distinguished pianist, presents this virtual program.

H.S. Diploma Info Sessions

November 17 @ 11 -12:00 pm

November 19 @ 6 -7:00 pm

Shoreline Adult Education offers flexible options for earning a high school diploma. The programs are free and designed to meet the needs of individuals in varying stages of life. Additionally, there will be a presentation on free resources for job seekers.

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

September 2020 Statistics

Total Circulation: 4,746

September 2019: 9,202

borrowIT: 597

September 2019: 2,383

Renewals: 2,969

Computer Sessions: 266

Facebook: 1895 Likes

Instagram: 957 Followers

MailChimp: 7,668

Downloadable Circulation:

Overdrive ebooks: 1531

Overdrive audiobooks: 545

RB Digital: 373

HOOPLA: 673

Kanopy: 194

Pronunciator: 548

Ancestry Library: 562 searches

Total Downloadable: 4,426

Children's Programs

13 programs/59 attendance

Teen Programs (12+)

4 programs/26 attendance

Adult programs

16 programs/327 attendance

Lucy Hammer Room N/A

Conference Room N/A

Average Daily Visitors N/A