



# Report to the Board of Trustees

October 7, 2020

## From the Director

In September, we purchased a new microfilm reader, thanks to capital funding from the Town of Branford. The new reader has digital capabilities essential for those researching their family genealogy.

The building committee met on September 24. The project's timeline has been extended due to a delay in the design of the steel supporting structure.

We were able to collaborate on some great programs—a program on social security through AAA Retire, a program on a local labyrinth, and a talk on the Lafayette Trail by the Branford Historical Society. Attendance at these programs continues to grow.

School is back in session with a hybrid model where students attend on alternate days. The Town of Branford has created a supervised program at the community center where school-aged children of town employees can do their remote lessons at the community center on their "home" days. The program has been extended to Blackstone Library staff.

Our Friends of the Library completed their series of mini book sales. The final sale was September 19 with every-



*The computer lab at full capacity with 6 patrons on September 29.*

thing being half price. The grand total was over \$22,000! With many fewer expenses than the traditional sale, a large portion of the funds will go toward supporting the library.

I met with members of the Branford Community Foundation and other community members with the goal to develop a program that helps everyone in the community share a common language around racism and an understanding of the history that brought us to where we are today. We are planning a series of lectures to be held in the spring.

The Rotary Club was offered a supply of face masks which they donated to us. We are very grateful!

On September 24, the Governor announced that CT can move toward Phase 3 reopening on October 8. For librar-

ies, this means that indoor capacity has increased from 50% to 75%. All other requirements remain the same.

This month I also attended a FLAG meeting and a CLA past presidents meeting by zoom. Most libraries in CT are in the same situation as we are—working hard to provide as many services as we possibly can without compromising the progress CT has made. Circulation of physical items is universally down and we are all seeing increased interest in electronic materials. Some libraries are still closed to the public.

As of September 23, 81% of CT's principal public libraries were open in some form. Our neighbor to the east, the Hagan Library in East Haven, recently opened for computer access.

*Karen Jensen*

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***Blackstone Library  
goes Fine Free***

*From a thankful patron:*

"Congratulations on making this decision! I can't tell you how many people over the years have told me they don't use the library because they have to return materials before they are finished with them. Even I (a power user), have had to accept fines when I have not quite finished something.

Good job! Thank you!

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## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

August marks the end of our Blackstone Quest and we could not have been happier with the results. We sent an end of summer reading survey to see what the quest participants liked about the program and what we could improve upon. All of the results were extremely positive and everyone said that they would take part again next year. Participants looked forward to the varied challenges and liked playing as a family. Sarah, Jenna and I then pulled 20 random summer reading winners. The prizes were gift cards to local businesses, which supports our community. We plan to contact the winners and thank our local sponsors with a video, on our social media!

Another popular program this month incorporated BreakOut Edu's virtual functions. BreakOut Edu is an educational escape room platform that shares 1,000+ in-person games on various topics. Last summer we used it for in-person breakouts with small groups working together to solve puzzles and assemble clues. The BreakOut Edu service also has an online platform where participants can complete virtual breakouts remotely. We chose Fridays as the game release day and then checked the dashboard throughout the week to see who needed extra help. Many of our participants played as a family and emailed pictures of their "break outs" of each challenge. They were not afraid to ask when they needed a hint along the way. We tried

to include a variety of concepts - math, language arts, science and then geography. In the end, families enjoyed having something to look forward to and this inspired Miss Sarah and me to set up more program that can be accessed on demand in the future.

This fall, Miss Sarah and I are putting together "grab and go" projects that will have an accompanying video on our social media pages. The videos will show participants how to tackle each hands-on project which can be done on their own time. Our hope is that families will use these kits when they feel like there is nothing left to do and we will encourage them to share their creations on our social media platforms.

Near the end of the month the Children's Museum of South Eastern Connecticut hosted two Wizarding programs that fell perfectly inline with our summer reading theme. The museum agreed to make the program interactive by curating bags for pick up with all the necessary supplies they would need. The day of the meeting participants were expected to have their bags nearby so that they could complete each activity with the instructor through zoom. Many were simple experiments, like making a "potion explode" with baking soda. Kids enjoyed making predictions before each activity and laughed as they shared their results on the screen. Everyone got to make their own wizarding hat and

they felt like they were part of Harry Potter's crew! This was the first time the Children's Museum had done something so involved virtually and we could not have been happier with the results.

Once the summer reading program was complete the Youth Service's Department took some time to talk about what did and did not work throughout the summer and ways we can improve virtual programming in the fall. Miss Sarah reached out to her teens, distributing a survey to see what types of virtual programming they would attend. After much discussion she decided to launch a Blackstone virtual hangout through Discord. Discord is similar to zoom in the sense that you can video conference and share screens but you can also customize your dashboard with points of interest: in our case gaming, creative works and Anime! In Discord teens only need one login to gain access to all of our programming (the end of multiple zoom codes) and can message or text back and forth based on the channels or points of interest she has created. Many teens did not like sharing their screens and felt more comfortable being able to type than speak and Sarah is hoping that this new offering will make all the difference. Miss Sarah is testing this new hangout the first week of September with her Teen Advisory Board. Fingers crossed all goes smoothly.

*Carly Lemire*



**Our young readers are completing 1000 Books Before Kindergarten despite the pandemic!**

## New Online Resources

The James Blackstone Memorial Library is pleased to offer two new online resources to Blackstone Library cardholders:

**Petersons Test Prep** provides standardized test preparation, tools for researching and selecting college and graduate schools, and information on tuition assistance. There are resources for jobs and careers, practice tests, online books, advice on resumes, cover letters, inter-

viewing and networking, and much more.

Specific offerings include test prep for AP, ACT, SAT, GED, GMAT, career certifications, and many more; college planning with intuitive searches of more than 4,000 accredited schools; financial aid tools to help students plan, budget, and identify resources; career development tools to help map interests and aptitude, plus job search guidance; and international resources in-

cluding practice tests and eBooks for U.S. Citizenship, TOEFL, and TOEIC.

**Gale Legal Forms** offers a wide selection of state-specific and multi-state legal forms; examples include real estate contracts, wills, premarital agreements, bankruptcy, divorce, landlord/tenant, and many others. There are also Legal Definitions, a Law Digest and Legal Q&A.

## Highlights from the Reference Department-August

The Reference librarians worked on a number of projects during August. We had a variety of virtual programs including poetry classes, yoga, several book discussions, a program titled Re-Imagining Your Story: Keys to a Life of Resilience, a DIY Ginger Ale and Vanilla Extract Workshop and a presentation by Lizette Pelletier, State Archivist at the Connecticut State Library, on preserving family treasures. Christina taught an iPad class and a class for the Senior Center on common tech/device problems. She and Sarah hosted another virtual game night and plan to continue holding one every month.

We worked on an update to our website, changing our

URL from blackstone.lioninc.org to blackstonelibrary.org across the entire website. This necessitated checking all of our internal links, over 400 in all, to ensure that all were updated. We believe this will make using the website less confusing for our patrons. We also spent some time evaluating a number of databases from Gale, which we hope to offer to our patrons soon.

We continued preparing for our next phase of reopening. Our Skedda scheduling software will be expanded to allow patrons to book their own appointments to come to the library to browse the collection, read newspapers

and magazines, or study. Fortunately, the software allows us to identify specific spaces and time slots and guidelines. The program is available on all of our staff computers so that we are able to easily see how many appointment slots are taken at any given time and to allow us to book our walk-in patrons into a browsing or study slot.

Jane Bouley shared an interesting discovery about the library with us. In a 1905 obituary for a local carpenter, George Linsley, it stated that he was the carpenter who did all of the woodworking in the library. This is information that Jane had not seen before and we had seen no reference to it in our library files.

-Debby Trofatter

**GEORGE LINSLEY, OF BRANFORD.**  
George Linsley, aged seventy-five years, died quite suddenly at his home on Chestnut street, Branford, Tuesday, from heart failure. He had been ill for about three weeks, but was very bright on Tuesday and was about the house. After eating dinner he lay down for his usual nap, and ten minutes before he died his daughter went into the room and he was then sleeping peacefully. Mrs. Linsley went into the room only a few minutes later and he was then dead.

Mr. Linsley was one of the best-known citizens of Branford. He was born May 29, 1829, and was the son of Elias and Mary Bradley Linsley. He was educated in the public schools. In early life he was a sailor and made several voyages to West India and other ports. He then learned the carpenter trade in New Haven, afterwards going back to Branford, where he followed his trade and also engaged in business, taking many important contracts. He was accounted one of the best carpenters and cabinet makers in Branford. When the library was constructed Mr. Linsley did all the woodwork. For several years, however, he had given up all business. He is survived by a widow, one daughter, Miss Isadora Linsley, and two brothers, the Hon. Henry D. Linsley and John Atwood Linsley, both of whom reside in Branford. He was a member of Widow's Son lodge, F. and A. M., being one of the oldest members, and also of Harmony lodge, I. O. O. F.

Funeral services will be held this afternoon at 2:30 at his late home. The members of Widow's Son lodge will attend and take charge of the services at the grave.

George Linsley was a local carpenter responsible for the woodworking throughout the library.



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...more than books

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## October 2020 Virtual Program Highlights

### Book Discussion:

#### **The Things We Cannot Say** by Kelly Rimmer

*October 9 @ 12—1 pm*

Slipping between Nazi-occupied Poland and the frenetic pace of modern life, Kelly Rimmer creates an emotional and finely wrought narrative. Book is available through HOOPLA.

#### **"You Are Not Alone": A Virtual Paranormal Event**

*October 10 @ 2:30—4 pm*

Sydney Sherman shares her life experiences with her book, *You Are Not Alone: Our Loved Ones Are Here...You're Just Not Listening*. Sherman's book outlines her passage from confusion to acceptance of her relationships with the many spirits who inhabit her everyday world.

#### **Chinese Calligraphy**

*October 17 @ 2:30—3:30 pm*

Join artist Jojo Liu in this beginner's Chinese calligraphy

class, from the safety and comfort of your own home! Space and supplies are limited. Calligraphy kits will be available to pick up at the library beginning Saturday, October 10th. You must be registered for the program in order to pick up a paint kit.

#### **Branford Forum – Let them Eat Tweets, How the Alliance of Populism and Plutocracy Undermined our Democracy**

*October 18 @ 2—3:30 pm*

Jacob Hacker, a Sterling professor at Yale, prolific author and media commentator, will speak about his new book.

#### **"All of the Belles":**

#### **A Centennial Presentation on F. Scott Fitzgerald**

*October 22 @ 6—7:30 pm*

Join us for a presentation by Kirk Curnutt, executive director of the F. Scott Fitzgerald Society and managing editor of *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. He is also the author of the introduction to a new

collection of Fitzgerald's stories: *All of the Belles: The Montgomery stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*.

#### **Beyond the Visible World: W.B. Yeats and the Occult**

*October 24 @ 3—4:30 pm*

Join us for a fascinating Zoom presentation by Yeats scholar Maureen DeLeo. W.B. Yeats remains one of the most respected poets of his time, but his fascination with the occult and its influence in his poetry has largely been downplayed—until now.

#### **Bestseller Book Club**

*October 31 @ 3:30—4:30 pm*

This month we're reading *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett.

#### **Cutting the Cord:**

#### **Saying Goodbye to Cable**

*November 5 @ 2—3:15 pm*

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

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

## August 2020 Statistics

#### **Total Circulation:** 3,103

*August 2019: 11,608*

#### **borrowIT:** 625

*August 2019: 2,932*

#### **Renewals:** 2,755

#### **Computer Sessions:** 192

#### **Facebook:** 1876 Likes

#### **Instagram:** 943 Followers

#### **MailChimp:** 7751

#### **Downloadable Circulation:**

Overdrive ebooks: 539

Overdrive audiobooks: 1625

RB Digital : 330

HOOPLA: 79

Kanopy: 143

Pronunciator: 548

**Total Downloadable:** 3,264

#### **Children's Programs**

*14 programs/110 attendance*

#### **Teen Programs (12+)**

*4 programs/22 attendance*

#### **Adult programs**

*22 programs/191 attendance*

**Lucy Hammer Room** N/A

**Conference Room** N/A

**Average Daily Visitors** N/A