



# Report to the Board of Trustees

October 12, 2022

## From the Director

At the beginning of September, our book vendor, Baker & Taylor, was subject to a ransomware attack and was offline for 2 weeks. Luckily, all of the online carts we'd created were restored and we have been catching up on placing orders for new books as quickly as possible.

This month, we are pleased to welcome four new members to the Blackstone team:

Stephanie Carvin, Reference  
Alondra Lopez, Circulation  
Tina Strell, Development  
Emily Yates, Reference

They each have a lot of enthusiasm and experience, and we're thrilled to have them on board.

The Branford RTM Education Committee held their September meeting at the library.

Thank you to everyone who attended. I look forward to working with the Education Committee and continuing open communications with the Town.

Adam Spilka and I joined Barbara Barrett and Joe Genua at the Friends of the Library's warehouse where all of the book sale materials are sorted and online books are sold throughout the year. It was great to see the "room where it happens" and better understand how much work goes into preparing for the book sale all year long.

The Friends Annual Book Sale on the Green was a huge success, generating over \$63,000



The Friends Annual Book Sale on the Branford green was held September 22-25, and each day was packed with shoppers. The event hit a new record in sales!

in sales, plus garnering new memberships. Congratulations to the Friends, and thanks for all of your hard work!

Thanks to a gift from the Friends, the library now offers Friends Quick Picks—best-seller books with shorter loan times, in order to reach more people. These books are flying off the shelf!

Thanks to another Friends gift, the library is getting new online calendar software to help streamline setup, registration, and promotion of library events, and allow for online booking of conference rooms. We met with our project manager to kick off the 2-month process for setting up the new software.

I submitted to the Board (with help from Adam and Michelle

Blank) a description of the Strategic Framework to share with the public. I also created a draft implementation plan, setting out library priorities for the coming years.

I met with Courtney Rosenberg of the Community Dining Room (CDR) and Frank Carrano of Branford Arts and Cultural Alliance (BACA) to discuss some possible ways our organizations can partner on exciting projects in the near future. We're excited to partner with other local nonprofits to better serve our community.

We issued a Call for Artists for a mural for the Youth Services department, looking for timeless, cheerful proposals to welcome families when they enter the Children's space.

— Katy McNicol



## CELEBRATE THE FREEDOM TO READ

Banned Books Week is an annual event celebrating the freedom to read. Banned Books Week was launched in 1982 in response to a sudden surge in the number of challenges to books in schools, bookstores and libraries. Typically held during the last week of September, it highlights the value of free and open access to information.

We celebrated the freedom to read with a display of books that have been challenged over the years.

Thank you to Alondra Lopez for creating the display!

## Highlights from the Youth Services Department—August

### SUMMER READING

August marked the culmination of our summer reading program, featuring StoryWalk on Main. The grant-funded program allowed us to give away 180 journals, encouraging participants to take part in our summer writing contest. Participants were invited to read the story posted along Main Street and then write their own version or interpretation and submit it. Shoreline Adult Education visited the Storywalk as a class field trip, visiting the library along the way. Seeing them close their summer session with a tour was delightful!

The YS staff is currently reading through the submissions and they are pretty amazing! Some are graphic representations, others summarized the story, and quite a few submitted poetry! We are currently scanning everyone’s pieces so that they can be displayed on our website. Then we will pick a winner from each category.

### SURVEY RESPONSES

In an email program survey, 100% of respondents felt that their attitude towards creative writing and sharing their thoughts and feelings about books had improved! They also had nothing but positive comments to say about the StoryWalk in general, including: “Yes! I always do it every year with one of my best friends and it’s so fun! I especially liked this year because of the creative writing!”

We also sent out a general summer programming survey



*Our Super Science Saturday program gets kids hands-on with science experiments.*



as required by the Connecticut State Library, and received over 100 responses. 100% of those who responded learned something by taking part in our summer programming. Comments include: “Thank you for doing so much for the kids! The library has always been a positive, welcoming place for myself and my young children,” and “You are a valuable resource to the community. Keep up the good work.”

### LOOKING AHEAD

The remainder of the month was spent planning for the fall. We will be sure to offer some programming on week-

ends and in evenings for working families. We also continue to offer a number of drop-in events in addition to pre-registration events, to make it easy for those with busy schedules. Miss Sarah and I also are looking into holding a monthly activity table where people can complete different projects at their own pace. The idea grew from our extremely successful treasure hunt. Having an interactive activity on offer makes a visit to the Blackstone that much more special.

– Carly Lemire

## Highlights from the Reference Department—August

### AUGUST PROGRAMS

Our programs this month included book groups, Latin classes, poetry, knitting and coloring groups, a Saturday Cinema showing of King Richard, a community conversation on climate change, an in-person game night with over thirty people in attendance as well as a virtual game night, a Zoom program on stars and planets, a program on the Community Dining Room volunteer program and a closing reception for the August art show.

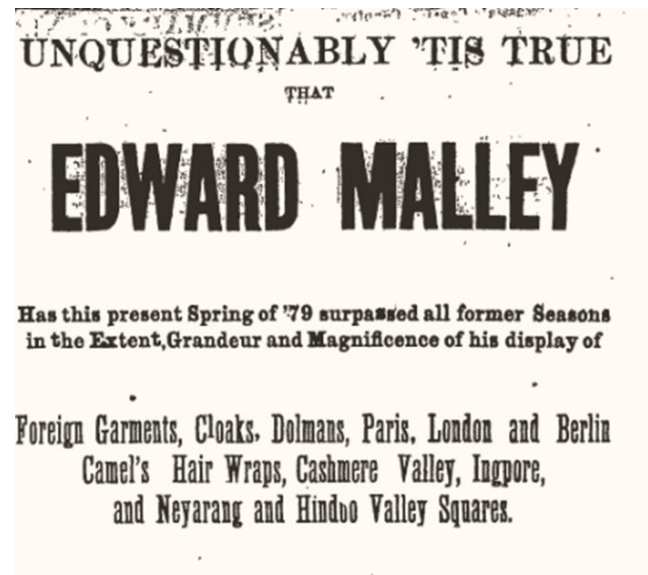
### DIGITIZATION PROJECTS

A number of Blackstone librarians are continuing to work on various digitization projects. Some are current, such as the scanning of The Sound and Branford articles

from the Shoreline Times. Some were begun many years ago, when librarians cut articles out of the newspaper and created scrapbooks relating to Branford or to the Blackstone Library.

We still have these physical scrapbooks, as well as microfilm of the scrapbooks and access to digitized records at our Advantage Preservation site, <http://branford.advantage-preservation.com>. Our oldest records go back to 1878, when the Branford Gleaner was published. These newspaper articles and scrapbooks can be searched or browsed.

— Deborah Trofatter



A portion of an advertisement that ran in the Branford Gleaner on July 16, 1879.

## Connecticut Library Association (CLA) Leadership Institute

Earlier this month I attended a two-day virtual conference held by CLA on leadership. I was very excited to be able to learn some new skills.

### Day 1: Communication & Crisis Leadership

This session was all about effective communication. It focused on how to have better conversations, practicing communicating with others in a genuine way and making an effort to connect.

The speaker discussed three major communication skills: Presence, being more aware of our feelings and reactions; Intention, focusing on one's motivations in a conversation and where you're coming from; Attention, train your attention on 4 areas—observations (not accusations), feelings, needs, and requests.

The crisis leadership portion delivered the message to leaders that it's their job to lead, not work. Staff need to be trained and trusted to carry out the plan the leader sets forth.

### Day 2: Know Your Worth & Toxic Workplaces

Stacey Vanek Smith, journalist and author, discussed negotiation tactics and knowing your value, especially in a nonprofit environment, and ensuring leadership skills are learned and maintained.

This session dealt with toxic work environments—how to avoid one and how to deal with them once they occur. Suggestions included: come to problems with a coaching attitude: bring up an issue, and then listen to the person and get their perspective; actively pursue diversity, equity, and belonging; get people engaged; and guide and mentor staff.

—Jenna Anthony





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## October 2022 Program Highlights

### F2G2 Adult Game Night

**Friday, October 7 @ 6–9 pm**

**In-person.** We'll be playing all types of board games, from fast-paced, hilarious party games to highly strategic, thinking games that will leave your head spinning! RSVP at [meetup.com/everyday-adventurers](https://meetup.com/everyday-adventurers).

### Kathryn King Art Reception

**Saturday, October 8 @ 1-3 pm**

**In-person.** Drop in to the library and visit our top floor gallery to view the beautiful paintings and sculptures done by Kathryn King. Refreshments will be served, and you'll have the opportunity to chat with the artist about her work.

### You Wrote a Book, Now What? The Secrets of Getting Published

**Saturday, October 8 @**

**2-4:30 pm**

**In-person.** Writing your book is only the first step! Getting published presents its own unique challenges. Join Jan Kardys of Black Hawk Literary Agency for an in depth look at

the publishing process from start to finish. The workshop begins from manuscript to printed book, how to write a query letter, how to find a literary agent, contract deal points, and many other vital topics for writers who wish to get published today. **Sponsored by the Friends of the Blackstone Library.**

### Queen City Crime: A Virtual Author Event

**Saturday, October 15 @ 2-3 pm**

**In-person.** We're welcoming back local author Jodé Millman for a discussion of her Queen City Crime series! Her novels have been described as "dark, dangerous and deviously suspenseful." We're thrilled to help celebrate the release of the second book in the series Hooker Avenue.

### Awakening to Change: A Social Justice Discussion Group

**Thursday, October 13**

**7–8:30 pm**

**Online.** Awakening to Change is

designed to help unify our community by developing a shared understanding of the history, policy, and experiences shaping contemporary discussions of race. All are welcome to join! This month we'll be exploring culture—unspoken "rules" and norms that determine how people act and relate to one another.

### The Discovery of the Dutch Fort on Indian Neck: Presented by the Branford Historical Society

**Wednesday, October 26**

**@ 6:30–7:30 pm**

**In-person.** Local historian and author Jim Powers tells the story of how the location of a Dutch trading post and fort was discovered right here in Branford. **Presented by the Branford Historical Society.**

### Masterworks for Violin & Piano

**Sunday, October 30 @ 2–3 pm**

**In-person.** Back by popular demand!

Michael Tropepe returns with the Mendelssohn violin concerto, Vivaldi Chaconne for Violin and Piano, and the Flight of The Bumblebee.

*Check our website for more programs and registration details!*

## August 2022 Statistics—Deirdre Santora

**Total Circulation: 9,567**

August 2021: 8,516

**borrowIT: 1,976**

August 2021: 1,779

**Renewals: 5,227**

**Computer Sessions: 820**

**WIFI Logins: 3,555**

**Facebook: 2,173 Likes**

**Instagram: 1,118 Followers**

**MailChimp: 7,542 Subscribers**

**Downloadable Circulation:**

**Overdrive ebooks: 1,641**

**Overdrive audiobooks: 806**

**Overdrive magazines: 108**

**HOOPLA: 1,319**

**Kanopy: 315**

**Pronunciator: 646**

**Ancestry Library: 797**

**New Haven Register: 528**

**Creative Bug: 23**

**Average Daily Visitors: 356**

**Days open: 27**

**Lucy Hammer & Conference Room Usage: 88**

**Children's Programs**

*17 programs/360 attendance*

**Teen Programs (12+)**

*4 programs/25 attendance*

**Adult programs**

*28 programs/450 attendance*

*"Greatly appreciate the help given by the computer lab staff over two days as I struggled to work through an unfamiliar process. The outcome was successful. Thank you!"*

*— Comment from Summer Survey*