

West Hartford Public Library Board Agenda

Virtual Meeting

Monday, January 22, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.

This meeting can be viewed live on West Hartford Community Television at www.whctv.org and www.youtube.com/whctv5

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. Approval of the Consent Agenda (Items 4, 8ai, 8aii, & 8aiii)
4. Approval of the Minutes of the November 27, 2023 Meeting.
5. Chair's Report
 - a. Election of Officers – Eileen Daly
6. Old Business
 - a. Draft Strategic Plan – Laura Irmscher
 - b. New Community Center & Library Update – Laura Irmscher
7. New Business
 - a. FY25 Budget – Laura Irmscher
 - b. Annual Report – Laura Irmscher
8. Director's Reports
 - a. November & December documents submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative reports
 - ii. Budget report
 - iii. Quarterly statistics
9. Executive Session

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 1-200(6)A) to discuss the annual performance and evaluation of the West Hartford Public Library Director.
10. Adjournment
 - a. Next Meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 26, 2024.

Anyone requiring auxiliary aid or service for effective communication or modification of policies or procedures to participate in a meeting, service, program or activity of the Town of West Hartford, should contact Suzanne Oslander, ADA Coordinator, at suzanneo@westhartfordct.gov or (860) 561-7580, as soon as possible, preferably seven days beforehand.

Public Comment Instructions: Individuals who wish to comment on an agenda item, may do so by sending an email with the subject "public comment" to Board@westhartfordlibrary.org on or before January 19, 2024.

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY BOARD MINUTES
Monday, November 27, 2023, 6:30 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

In Eileen Daly's absence, Gail Crockett called the Library Board to order at 6:37 p.m. Present, virtually, were Board members Kim Cohen, Gail Crockett, EJ Greenspan. Director Laura Irmischer, Leah Farrell, and Heidi Reagan, recorder. Eileen Daly was able to join us shortly after the meeting began and resumed the chair's duties. Member Natalia Menjivar was absent.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA (Items 4 & 8a i, 8a ii)

MOTION: On a motion made by Kim Cohen and seconded by EJ Greenspan, the Board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda.

4. THE MEETING MINUTES of October 23, 2023, were approved as part of the consent agenda.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT - None

6. OLD BUSINESS:

- a. Laura introduced Leah Farrell, the Programs and Outreach Librarian who joined the library on August 28, 2023. Leah provided a short synopsis of her experience and described the projects she is currently working on
- b. Strategic Plan Update - Laura
 - i. Feedback was received from a variety of sources which includes 1250 survey responses, in-person and virtual community engagement sessions, Post-it comments from boards located in all three branches and Town Hall, the Library Board discussion, and the staff meeting
 - ii. Responses were compiled into a spreadsheet and common themes were used to develop the strategic initiatives
 - 1. Expanding access to library resources (hours, services, other languages)
 - 2. Improve communication about what we already do
 - 3. Support staff to ensure they have the tools necessary to succeed
 - 4. Focus on the collections and programs to make sure they represent our diverse community and are responsive to current interests and needs
 - 5. Improve building use by creating welcoming and inviting spaces that adapt to our users changing needs
- c. New Community Center and Library Update – Laura
 - i. Town has issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for the design
 - ii. 11 firms have responded

- iii. Town Directors chose the top six and they will be interviewed next week with a final selection made by late January

7. NEW BUSINESS

- a. The Library Board will continue to meet virtually until the spring, 2024
- b. A decision will be made whether to hold the December meeting by the second week of December
- c. Kim Cohen recommended we hold the January, annual meeting, in person, weather permitting

8. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- a. October documents submitted:
 - i. Library Administrative Report
 - ii. Budget Report
- b. Library Updates
 - i. 7th Annual Kindness Project
 - 1. Donations will go to the WH Food Pantry and Fern Street Universalist Church Backpack Program
 - 2. Donations can be dropped off at the library until December 8
 - 3. Amazon wishlist has been created to make donating easier
 - ii. Art Banner Contest – “The Wonder of West Hartford”
 - 1. 24 banners are on light poles in the Center
 - 2. Partnership between WHPL and the Municipal Parking Department
 - 3. Great way to promote the library beyond our walls
 - iii. Health District Partnership
 - 1. Faxon is sponsoring a program series
 - 2. Topics include Domestic Violence Awareness (in partnership with Interval House), Children’s Health: Lead Poisoning and Immunization, and Holiday Safety and Winter Preparedness
 - iv. Excerpts from The Nutcracker were performed by the CT Concert Ballet at Town Hall for our preview performance
 - 1. Funding provided by Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust
 - 2. 240 people attended which is the best turnout we have ever seen
 - 3. Performers posed for pictures with children and their families afterwards
 - v. Mayor’s Youth Council
 - 1. Subcommittees have been working on their impact projects
 - 2. They have been working with Liz Buczynski from Social Services to collect donations for the Adopt-a-Family program
 - 3. They are meeting with the Registrar of Voters to organize a teen voter registration drive in 2024

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: The Library Board Meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:17 p.m. The next scheduled Board Meeting is scheduled for December 18, 2023

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Cohen
Board Secretary
or
Eileen Daly, Secretary Pro Tem
West Hartford Library Board

"This meeting was held remotely and the public had the ability to view the meeting in real-time live on West Hartford Community Television at www.whctv.org and www.youtube.com/whctv5."

Library Operating Indicators

	Fiscal Year 2024										Total to date
	FY18	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	July-Sep	Oct - Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-June	
Unexpired Library Cards (+1 year Expired)	27,006	26,426	25,538	26,383	20,922	21,283	21,477	21,509			21,509
Visitor Counts (all locations)	437,530	448,164	299,419	56,124	185,754	238,960	77,104	73,394			150,498
Visits to Library Website	315,239	308,641	283,992	229,379	257,056	296,868	26,355	74,957			101,312
Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter Followers	10,896	11,104	11,631	12,960	13,365	13,642	14,330	14,127			14,330
Newsletter Views by Email	214,151	204,944	237,924	220,029	295,181	361,557	142,299	103,962			246,261
Program Attendance & Museum Pass Reservations	29,632	31,642	22,493	7,281	14,674	13,782	6,032	5,348			11,380
Preschool Literacy Program Attendance	11,113	12,263	10,191	1,124	4,930	6,541	1,918	1,807			3,725
Physical Material Loans (including Renewals)	597,733	725,852	511,623	304,655	500,660	543,717	157,948	132,743			290,691
E-Material Loans	59,238	87,809	133,965	131,616	137,679	156,030	43,454	50,230			93,684
Loans per capita - All Items (63,268 residents)	10	13	10	7	10	11	3	3	0	0	6
Wireless Sessions	94,820	101,539	68,360	23,492	45,080	54,004	15,119	14,870			29,989
Public Computer Logins	47,538	46,560	32,167	4,041	17,340	23,002	6,462				6,462
Reference and Tech Patron Interactions	74,942	81,189	64,425	52,328	64,547	62,201	15,700	14,017			29,717
Online Database Use	444,368	388,721	414,705	427,057	445,289	336,669	54,445	62,137			116,582
Curbside Pickup Appointments		Added FY21				953	110	100			210
Bishops Corner Locker Pickups		Added FY22			974	2,259	570	519			1,089

Library Financials - January 2024
General Fund

Year	Period	Rollup Code Code	Rollup Code Description	Period Actuals	YTD Actuals	LTD Actuals	Original Budget	Available Budget
2024	7	01411	GF-Library-Personal	101,572.41	1,337,689.54	0.00	2,752,294.00	1,414,604.46
2024	7	01412	GF-Library-NonPers	8,653.29	358,639.17	0.00	652,637.00	293,997.83
2024	7	01414	GF-Library-Sundry	7,107.74	93,382.38	0.00	206,828.00	113,445.62
2024	7	29003	Library Fund-Capital	172.69	7,773.45	0.00	0.00	70,113.85

WEST HARTFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY

Looking Ahead

**Strategic Plan
2024-2028**



West Hartford
Public Library

Noah Webster
Bishops Corner
Faxon

This strategic plan will serve as the library's roadmap for the next four years. Developed with guidance from the Library Board and staff, and with thoughtful input from Town leaders and community members, the initiatives below will serve as the library's focus areas for innovation and improvement.

Our Mission

Welcoming all, the West Hartford Public Library brings people, information, resources, and ideas together to enrich lives and strengthen our diverse community.

Our Vision

The West Hartford Public Library will be a center for reading, learning, creating, and celebrating culture; where everyone will have the opportunity to pursue their interests, connect with the community, and access ideas and information freely.

1

Expand Access to Library Resources

- Goal:** Expand public service hours
- Goal:** Develop programming on the use of e-materials
- Goal:** Improve patron experience when using library technology
- Goal:** Expand library services in languages other than English

2

Increase Awareness of Library Services and Reach New Users

- Goal:** Improve communication about existing resources
- Goal:** Expand library presence within the community beyond library spaces
- Goal:** Develop and expand collaborations/partnerships with area organizations
- Goal:** Expand outreach efforts to draw in new patrons

3

Support All Employees, Encouraging Them to Thrive Professionally and Personally, to Better Serve Our Community



- Goal:** Focus recruitment on staff that reflect the diversity of the community we serve
- Goal:** Create and improve staff structures to cultivate a unified, cohesive staff and provide opportunities for professional growth
- Goal:** Provide resources and support for staff training and development
- Goal:** Build capacity in our staff to adjust to unexpected circumstances

4

Build More Responsive and Inclusive Collections and Programs



- Goal:** Develop collections that better reflect the community and their interests and needs
- Goal:** Expand in-person and virtual programming that responds to the access needs and preferences of our users
- Goal:** Increase world language collections and services
- Goal:** Develop programs that bring together different age levels and segments of the community

5

Improve Building Experience for All Types of Users



- Goal:** Create spaces that are welcoming, functional, and centered around the user experience
- Goal:** Improve building accessibility for everyone
- Goal:** Provide flexible spaces for individuals and small groups
- Goal:** Improve comfort of library seating and spaces

Strategic Plan Team

Laura Irmscher, Library Director

Heidi Reagan, Office Operations Specialist

Karen Polmatier, Branch Operations Manager

Lauren Yarnall, Adult Services Librarian

Jennifer Pfeifer, Library Specialist, Cataloging & Acquisitions

Hannah Hokanson, Library Assistant, Childrens Department

*West Hartford Public Library developed this Strategic Plan as part of the
Connecticut Library Consortium's First Strategic Planning Cohort*



Noah Webster Library 20 South Main Street

Bishops Corner Branch 15 Starkel Road

Faxon Branch 1073 New Britain Avenue

westhartfordlibrary.org

...to Looking Forward

Joining Town colleagues, Tecton Architects, and community members to develop a Feasibility Study for the new **Community Center, Senior Center, and Library in Elmwood.** In 2024, the design phase will begin, building on all the work done for the Feasibility Study and taking us one step closer to a new sustainable state of the art facility that will serve the community for generations to come.



Since navigating an opening amidst the end of the pandemic, Studio 20 South at Noah Webster Library has grown to become an essential part of library services, welcoming over 700 visitors working on an exciting array of creative projects, including the launch of a podcast about the TV show *Gilmore Girls*.



Planning for the future by developing a Strategic Plan that will serve as the library's roadmap for the next 4 years, improving programs, services, and collections that respond to the community's vision for their library of the future.

Looking Ahead

Share your voice today to create your library of tomorrow.



West Hartford Library Foundation

Established in 1891, the West Hartford Library Foundation is a tax-exempt, not-for-profit corporation organized and operated for the benefit of the West Hartford Public Library. The Foundation's mission is to support the West Hartford Public Library by offering financial support to enhance the Library's resources and services and to facilitate access to them for the benefit of all members of the West Hartford community. The following icons indicate programs, services, and initiatives that have been generously funded by the Foundation.

F Foundation Grant

K Thomas F. Kilfoil Fund Grant

Visit us online:

westhartfordlibrary.org

Sign up for our newsletter at:

bit.ly/WHPLnewsletter

Check us out on social media:



Year-In-Review

**2022
2023**



Welcome Back...

Visitors to all locations
238,960

Program Attendance
virtual, in-person
and museum pass
reservations

13,782

**Loans of physical and
downloadable materials**

699,747



Patron Interactions
via phone, email
or in person

62,201

...to a Library for Everyone



In 2023, we were delighted to welcome back everyone to their library. Coming out of the challenges of COVID, this year we found fun and engaging ways to be together again, while still meeting the wide-ranging needs of our diverse community. The highlight of this year was becoming fine-free. By eliminating overdue fines, we reduced barriers to library services and made the library a more equitable place for everyone. We are looking forward to an exciting 2024!

Laura Irmischer Director, West Hartford Public Library

Celebrating our diverse community

through the *Celebrate All of Us initiative*, which featured cultural programs such as African dance, Chinese acrobatics, Native American dance, Brazilian drumming, Japanese storytelling, and a Korean lantern workshop.



Partnering with the Office of Equity Advancement

to create programming and displays to honor *Pride*, *Indigenous People's Day*, *AANHPI Heritage Month*, and more.



Welcoming new Americans of all ages and backgrounds

through targeted services that support, encourage, and guide our immigrant communities.

Citizenship Help at Faxon

offers comprehensive and convenient guidance on the N400 application process, demystifying complex bureaucratic procedures.

Practice English at Faxon

provides a welcoming and supportive environment, encouraging participants to engage and expand their English skills without fear of judgment.

Building Connections Book Club

for immigrants, offered in collaboration with Golden Door: A Center for Immigrants, offers a unique platform for immigrants to connect with others who share similar experiences, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Funded by Hartford Foundation's West Hartford Greater Together Community Fund.



West Hartford Immigrant Teens is a peer-to-peer group focusing on socializing, community service, and advocacy for students in grades 9-12. Members have participated in celebrations around town and coordinated public programs, presentations, and a film festival.

Creating and improving spaces

to meet changing community needs by providing the *Study Pod* and *Study Room* at Noah Webster as quiet, private places for individuals or small groups to study, meet, and work, and by creating dedicated *Tween Spaces* at Faxon and Noah Webster for teens to hang out, study, and collaborate.



Expanding access to essential resources and technology,

including *Smart Lockers* at Bishops Corner, *free digital access to The New York Times* for library cardholders and visitors, *one-on-one computer help* at Faxon, and doubling the number of *WiFi hotspots* available to borrow. These services empower our community members to participate more fully in society by breaking down barriers.

Smart Locker Pick-ups



at Bishops Corner 2,259

...to Coming Together

Making new connections by offering services and programs that engage new library users, including youth leaders, green thumbs, tabletop gamers, and many more.

Mayor's Youth Council is a group of 23 students who plan community service projects with local groups, boards and commissions in order to positively impact youth in the community. In 2023, their projects included an Environmental IVdeo Contest in partnership with Sierra Club and HeatSmart CT, a Freedom & Slavery Tour of West Hartford with Noah Webster House, and adopted a family for the holidays.

Dungeons & Dragons (D&D) for teens and tweens continued to grow in popularity, inspiring the library to host its first **BookWorm Fest** in July to celebrate all things board gaming, D&D, tabletop role playing games, live action role play, fantasy, and more. A second fest is in the works for 2024.



Our **Seed Library**, created and managed in partnership with the West Hartford Garden Club, shares the joy of gardening and inspires the community to connect with nature.



Outdoor movies at both the Bishops Corner and Faxon branches saw large crowds enjoying the free movies, freshly popped popcorn, and a strong sense of community togetherness.

Creating opportunities to experience joy and fun,

from adding Nintendo Switch games to our collection to hosting a free summer camp for students.

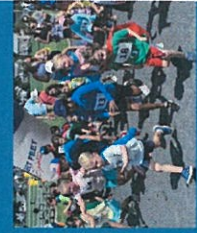
Faxon Fun is a four-week summer program where students who would not otherwise have "camp-like" summer experiences can watch a Mad Science show, play in a Brazilian drumming circle, meet animals from the Forest Park Zoo, try 3D printing, or read with a Reading Buddy.

Funded by the Stanley D. & Hinda N. Fisher Fund at the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving.



The Book It! Fun Run

saw 100 little runners in capes run cross the finish line in one of three races of varying distances. Families also enjoyed playing in the bounce house, music, and refreshments.



The **Bishops Corner Ice Cream Social** returned with 300 people enjoying 11 gallons of ice cream and sherbet topped with a couple pounds worth of candy and cookies.

The **Puzzle Exchange** is a popular attraction at Noah Webster, where people can take home puzzles to work on, leave puzzles they are done with, or work with other community members to complete a puzzle at the puzzle table.

Giving back to the community through successful donation drives, including medical supplies and warm winter clothing for *front line workers in Ukraine* and diapers for the *Diaper Bank of Connecticut*. The *7th Annual Kindness Project* collected hygiene and cleaning products from the community to stock the West Hartford Food Pantry and the nurse's offices of Hall and Conard high schools and to support the Fern Street Universalist Church backpack program. At the end of the year, library staff took part in the *Adopt-a-Family Holiday Program*. Sponsored by the Town of West Hartford Social Services Department, the program is designed to connect community members with West Hartford families in need.



November 2023 Administrative Report

Kindness Project

The Kindness Project has officially begun! Collection bins are out at all three buildings and an Amazon wish list was set up for donors to purchase items and ship them directly to the library. Additionally, Conard and Hall have set up Kindness Project boxes in their media centers. [WTNH covered the announcement.](#)



Art Banner Contest

All of the art banners from the art banner contest are now hung on light poles in downtown West Hartford! A total of 24 banners.



Seed Library Recognition

The Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut awarded the Tribute Award in Civic Development to West Hartford Garden Club member, Janice Schnabel for her role in helping to establish our seed library! Also, Beth Ann Loveland Sennett, Co-Chair, Civic Projects of the West Hartford Garden Club, received an Individual Citation for Conservation for, in part, providing a compost

education program at the library back in June. We received very positive feedback and a lot of interest from patrons who were unable to attend, so she'll be running another composting program for us in January.

Staff Updates

December GOAT – David Morse

This month the goat caught up with David Morse, Computer Tech. David works all over making sure our technology is working smoothly, but you can oftentimes find him in the the server room, where it feels like winter all year long. Congrats to a cool, chill guy!

He's a man of few words, but still waters run deep. David is a well of knowledge about all things IT here at the WHPL. Computer on the fritz? Printer being wonky? Barcode scanner won't scan? David is the guy who can fix it all. Steady and dependable, he's here day in and day out in rain, snow, sleet, and dark of screen, stealthily keeping our tech working. If you want to get him talking, just ask him about the New York Giants.



-Jae

Community Engagement & Outreach

Sam, Cherokee, and Leah attended the [Real Art Ways](#) Cocktail Hour. They talked with the public about the Studio and led a collaborative art project. We look forward to attending the event again in the future!



Pramod presented *Internet Security Tips for Seniors* at Brookdale Chatfield Senior Living. Fourteen individuals from the Chatfield Book Club attended this presentation.

Citizenship Help program at Faxon has officially launched. Individuals who need help completing their N400 application for citizenship or need help with Citizenship test preparation can call to

set up an appointment. This service is available at Faxon Library on Mondays from 1 through 4 pm.

Ellen attended Webster Hill School's Reading and Math Night on November 29 and made 18 library cards.

Sara spoke to Rabbi Zev Silver from the Hebrew High School (part of the New England Jewish Academy) about conducting school tours for students. Tours will be catered to each audience.

From Our Patrons

Here are some stories and interactions our staff recently had with patrons at the library:

We had an interesting reference question this week from a concerned frog lover. A West Hartford resident made a backyard fountain/pond this year and some local wildlife, including a beloved frog, have made it home. The patron needed our help in determining how to ensure that the frog can safely hibernate over the winter given that the man-made body of water might freeze solid.

Kudos to Joseph Landino and the rest of the staff who inspired this patron comment:

"I am a regular at the Noah Webster Library and I am impressed with everything, the staff, the cleanliness, the hours, the many services offered and especially the staff, especially those very talented techs in the computer room. Today I want to single out Joseph (I think that's his name) who helped me enormously on Thursday. What a talent. Thank you all"

- James K.

Adult Services & Programs

Highlights from some of our November programs:

Medical Cannabis 101 (49 attended in-person)

Dr. Paulina Miklosz, of Higher Med in Plainville, gave a wonderful presentation about the history of cannabis, its medicinal qualities, and how insurance might pay for it. The program was recorded by Jen Evans through Channel 5.

Your Home Is a Habitat (70 attended in-person)

A panel from the Sustainable Land Care Working Group gave a great presentation about how to be more sustainable with your lawn and to plant native plants, whenever possible.

PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS	
STANDALONE Programs	7
Attendance	260
Avg. Attendance	37
RECURRING Programs	5
Attendance	126
Avg. Attendance	25
TOTAL Programs	12
Attendance	386
Avg. Attendance	32

Local History

Pramod, Brett, and Chuck Coursey filmed the first episode of the *Trout Brook Tales* video podcast at Studio 20 South @ Noah Webster Library. Brett talked about Frank Lloyd Wright and was interviewed by Chuck.

Brett is using some of the Archive-It/Community Webs grant funding to digitize the magnetic tape in the collection as well as the vinyl of the Hall High School Jazz Band that we acquired this year.

Branch Libraries

Bishops Corner

Bailey hosted an a well-attended afternoon art cart program and Michelle Urban's toddler music program was a huge hit and everyone from babies to seniors had a wonderful time.



Faxon

West Hartford Bloomfield Health District, in partnership with the West Hartford Public Library, presented on Holiday Safety and Winter Preparedness at the Faxon Library. This presentation was the third of the lecture series.

This week's Tween Den project was gingerbread houses.



Children's Services & Programs

Programs

Families boogied and played with bubbles to songs and stories from Joy Bloom.

Programs took place at all three branches on Election Day. Ellen ran a Board Game Bonanza at Faxon. Bailey offered a drop in art at Bishops. NWL hosted Buildwave for two sessions in the afternoon.

To coincide with the early dismissal of West Hartford Public Schools, a movie was shown on Tuesday afternoon. Families enjoyed Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse.

The CT Concert Ballet performed selections of the Nutcracker at the Town Hall auditorium. Around 240 people attended this much anticipated yearly program. The performance was generously sponsored by the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust. We are so grateful for their support.



This month's Tween Tuesday was all about the Cricut! Sara taught tweens the basics of using the Cricut. Tweens then created vinyl decals for water bottles and were given a tour of Studio 20 South.



Updates

Reading volunteers from Children's Reading Partnership met with the children they are tutoring for the first time this week. For the next several weeks, the Children's Department will be providing a space for them to meet. Hannah has been working behind the scenes creating schedules and helping to match children with their reading buddy.

Teen Services

Programs

WHIT discussed promoting themselves at the Holiday Stroll 11/30 and painted diyas to celebrate Diwali.

The Teen Pumpkin Bread Take and Make Kits were a big success and all kits were claimed.

WHIT hosted a "Training Active Bystanders" webinar.

Percy Jackson Trivia & Gingerbread Parthenons got everyone ready for the new TV series.



Updates

MYC is working with Liz Buczynski from Social Services on the 2023 Town of West Hartford Adopt-A-Family Holiday Program

MYC will be meeting with Beth Kyle and Elizabeth Rousseau from the Registrar of Voters to organize a teen voter registration drive in 2024.

December 2023 Administrative Report

Library Listening Session

CLA President Sarah McCusker and CLC Executive Director Ellen Paul worked with Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz and State Representative Christine Palm to sponsor a Library Listening Session to share with members of the legislature the issues of the day facing libraries and library workers. On hand were library leaders from around the State, including Sam Lee, Chair of the CLA Intellectual Freedom Committee; Rebecca Harlow, Chair of the LION eBook Committee; Barbara Johnson, Past President of the CT Association of School Librarians and more. Over 65 library staff members from across the state attended the session.

The library listening session was a great success. The legislators responded very positively to the issues and the work of libraries across the state. The full session can be watched in its entirety on [CT-N](#).

There were several news articles that covered the session, compiled by Ellen Paul:

- [Tens of thousands down the drain. CT Officials aim for first-in-the-nation action to address eBook costs](#) from the Sunday Hartford Courant. Also posted on [Info Docket](#).
- Editorial in Hearst CT newspapers: [Librarian being harassed should be a rallying cry in culture war.](#)
- [CT Capitol Report on WTNH reports on book bans](#) (see time stamp 16:37).
- [Librarians Push for Legislative Protections in Response to Book Challenges](#) in the CT Examiner.
- [CT Librarians looking for lawmaker help as they face harassment tied to book bans](#) in the CT Insider.
- [Lawmakers discuss book banning debate with Connecticut Librarians](#) on WTNH.
- [High Licensing Costs Threaten e-Book Library Collections Across the State](#) in the CT Examiner.
- [CT had over 100 book challenges this year. Librarians ask lawmakers for help.](#) From WSHU

Kindness Project and Giving Back to Our Community

The 7th annual Kindness Project has concluded. We are happy to report that there was a robust collection of all products requested (145 boxes) and we will be able to supply the West Hartford Food Pantry, the high school nurses offices, the Fern Street Universalist Church and a few other organizations with an ample supply of hygiene, cleaning and other products for the future.

The Mayor's Youth Council teen volunteers did a final sorting and packing, as well as labeling, taping and stacking of boxes to prepare for delivery. Thank you to library staff for collecting the products over the last several weeks, and to Pramod and Brigid for delivering the remaining boxes of Kindness products to the West Hartford Food Pantry.



Adopt-A-Family

Laura and Heidi delivered the library staff's Adopt-A-Family gifts to Social Services. A giant, heartfelt THANK YOU to everyone who participated. We were overwhelmed with the generosity of our team. Thank you also to Heidi for organizing all of the contributions. Social Services staff were on hand to receive the donation and were incredibly appreciative of our efforts to help the family.

Adult Winter Reading Challenge

We launched the Adult Winter Reading Challenge to celebrate the season and the joy of reading. The program runs through February 29 and patrons will take on various reading and activity challenges for a chance to win prizes. Staff are encouraged to participate as well.

Tabletop Game Club

The **West Hartford Tabletop Game Club** is a friendly, inclusive, and accessible tabletop role playing game group for adults of ALL experience levels! Whether you've never played a game in



your life or you're a seasoned GM, this group is for you. We are open to all players, game systems, and ideas, with a focus on creating a fun, welcoming, and safe gaming environment.

We meet every other week on Tuesday evenings in the Board Room of the Noah Webster Library. Each campaign begins with a special Saturday Planning "Con" (convention) and runs for 6 sessions. See our schedule below.

Contact Leah Farrell (lfarrell@westhartfordct.gov) to join our mailing list...or just drop in to a meeting! We can't wait to meet you!

Recent Media

Follow the links below for recent media coverage about the library's programs and services.

[WeHa Library To Explore Music Of Dylan](#) (Patch)

[WeHa Library Offers Free Access To Online Classes](#) (Patch)

[West Hartford Library Hosting Author Talk with Academy Award-Nominated Jena Friedman](#) (we-ha.com)

Staff Updates

The Town held its annual staff luncheon to recognize the years of service (in 5-year increments) for Town employees. Congratulations to the library staff who celebrated a combined 65 years of service! Thank you for all that you do to serve the West Hartford community!

Jae Douglas – 15 years

Clara Gomes – 15 years

Peter Le – 5 years

Ann Marie Lund – 25 years

Susan Reboul – 5 years

Recruitment

We're excited to welcome these new staff members to our team:

Kathryn (Katie) Kottas – FT Head of Circulation Services
Saujan Sanyasi – PT Page, Faxon

Departures

We said goodbye to these staff members and wish them all the best:

Kate Fitzpatrick – FT Library Assistant, Circulation
Xavier Maldonado Morales – PT Office Assistant, Faxon
Ann Marie Salerno – FT Head of Circulation Services
Kyra Walker – PT Librarian, Reference
Wendy Mitzel – PT Office Assistant, Circulation

January GOAT – Gen Francis

Our first GOAT of 2024 is Gen Francis! Gen is our Technology Services Librarian which gives her the distinguished honor of having the phone number that the most staff members have committed to memory. Gen is easygoing and always quick to help and troubleshoot any technology issues that pop up. She's well-versed in all of the technology that keeps the library ticking – self checkout stations, our wireless network, and Microsoft 365, just to name a few (of many things). When it comes to new technologies, Gen is always willing to dive in and implement library tools that, in addition to making our work easier, help us grow and improve as a library. Recently, Gen has switched over our computer management and print system from Pharos to LibData! Three cheers for Gen!



Community Engagement & Outreach

The Mayor's Youth Council held a donation drive and then dropped off holiday donations (totaling about \$850) to Social Services for the Adopt-a-Family program.



Pramod has been recruiting readers from the community for the Celebration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The celebration will take place at the West Hartford Town Hall on Jan 17th, 2024. The main feature of the celebration is the reading of the articles from the declaration in various languages. To date, individuals are reading 30 articles in 17 different languages. This is a program organized by the West Hartford Human Rights Commission. Pramod serves as a liaison between the commission and the Town of West Hartford. Students from Yale University's *Ethnicity, Race, and Migration (ER&M)* program will be interviewing and collecting stories from refugees from Southeast Asia living in Connecticut. Pramod is a member of their advisory committee and will help them connect with this group of refugees living in West Hartford and some surrounding towns.

From Our Patrons

Here are some stories and interactions our staff recently had with patrons at the library:

"Thank you so much for making it possible for me to read this book through Interlibrary Loan. I really enjoyed the essays in *Tolkien on Film* [...] and I hope to check it out again sometime. Merry Christmas!"

Adult Services & Programs

Highlights from some of our December programs:

Bob Dylan Revisited: What a Song Can Be (79 attended in-person)

Robert Cohen, of West Hartford, gave an hour and a half long presentation about Bob Dylan's music. Fun fact, Bob Dylan is a Nobel Prize winner!

Multicultural Holiday Music with Guitar and Mandolin (77 attended in-person)

This is the second time we've had Judy Handler and Mark Levesque in for a concert. They always pack the house, the Meeting Room was completely full. They played holiday music from around the world.

Smartphone Photography Workshop for Intermediate Users (70 attended in-person)

This is the second time the library has had Andy Mars in for a smartphone photography workshop. This time for intermediate users.

Author Talk: Darrell Hartman's "Battle of Ink and Ice" (31 attended virtually)

Darrell Hartman is a freelance editor and writer based out of New York City. He recently wrote a book called *The Battle of Ink and Ice*, which is about newspapers in the early 1900's and the battle to see who got to the North Pole first.

Below is a picture of a bunch of us from the Faxon Poets. We all went out after class to The Corner Pug in West Hartford. A really great group of people!



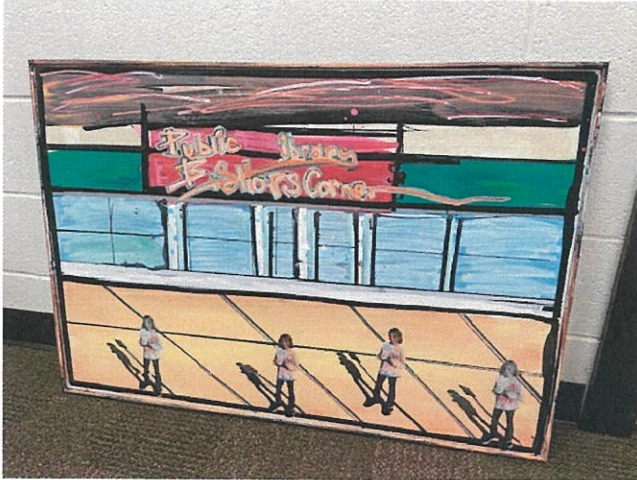
PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

STANDALONE Programs	4
Attendance	206
Avg. Attendance	52
RECURRING Programs	4
Attendance	139
Avg. Attendance	35
TOTAL Programs	8
Attendance	345
Avg. Attendance	43

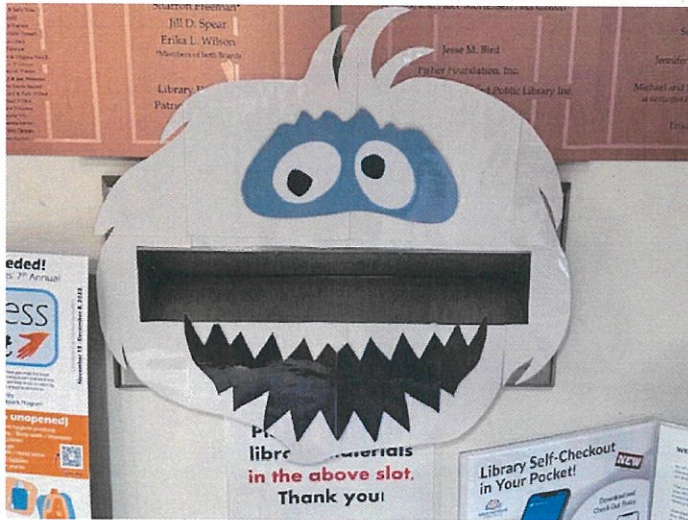
Branch Libraries

Bishops Corner

Custom Bishops Corner art! A Bishops Corner patron dropped off a custom art piece that he and his daughter created to commemorate the day she got her first library card.



BC Book Return A HUGE thanks for Meredith for her incredible winter themed book return!



Faxon

The Building Connection Book Club completed their Fall 2023 session on Dec 13th, 2023. Students brought cuisines from their native country on the final day of the session. The Winter session of the Book Club will start Tuesday, Jan 2nd 2024 at the Noah Webster Library from 10 am to 11:30 am. The Book Club will be back at Faxon for the 2024 Spring session.

Recent rain storms have caused flooding in the Faxon basement. Town facilities were informed of the condition and came over to vacuum the water, though the problem persists with each new storm.

Faxon received new furniture for the Welcome Center and a new hold shelf. These furniture purchases were funded by The Thomas F. Kilfoil Memorial Bequest, West Hartford Library Foundation.



Children's Services & Programs

Programs

Bailey hosted a well-attended afternoon gingerbread house program at Bishops Corner on December 13th. 10 kids had a great time making (and eating!) gingerbread houses and a grandmother came in the following day to tell Bailey how much fun her granddaughter had attending the program.



Students in Grades K-4 were thrilled to come to another popular session of Lego Club this week. They were allowed to "free build" and create any amazing structure they wished.



Tween Tuesdays featured “Decorate Your Own Gingerbread House” for students in grades 4-7. This is an annual event that Miss Sara offers.



Children ages 6-10 danced their way into the New Year with DJ Red Supreme on the afternoon of December 28. Austin Dailey has offered his programs at our libraries for many years. The participants learn new dances and rock out with Austin and his daughter. Funding for this program was generously sponsored by the Ellen Jeanne Goldfarb Memorial Charitable Trust.

Updates

Our collaboration with the Children’s Reading Partners program has been up and running for a little more than a month. We have five volunteers who travel to our library on either Monday or Wednesday evening to mentor their students. As of right now, six students are partnered with a volunteer, and we are considering offering applications again so that the volunteers can make the most of their time with us.

Teen Services Programs

The West Hartford Immigrant Teens members, alumni, and friends met at the Faxon Library on December for a Friendsgiving/End of the Year Celebration. They listened to holiday music, hung out, and ate dinner together. Students shared homemade dishes, including friend rice, samosas, gaajar ka halva, paanee puri, kugel and pierogis and exchanged gifts in a Yankee Swap. It was amazing to taste all the flavors of everyone's cultures and traditions.



Updates

Mayor's Youth Council Meeting & Holiday Party where they conducted their regular business and celebrated with a Kahoot trivia game with fun facts about MYC members.

