

# THE LIBRARIAN

Newspaper of the Stonington Free Library

Fall 2018 Issue

## TO THE RESCUE –

Beth Walker has been part of the Stonington community for many years. She loves it here and she loves the Library. So, it is no surprise that when she approached the front door on a Friday afternoon in July and found it locked, she was incensed.

But, it is not Beth's style to just "go away mad." As someone who has worked in the book business and loved books all her life, Beth didn't want to see the Library, which she describes as "a cultural hub which serves so many needs of all those in the community," reduce hours, and so decided to take on the task of raising enough money to reopen it. She approached friends, neighbors, residents and local businesses, most of whom already support the Library throughout the year, to give extra dollars to keep the Library open full-time.

As many know, the original cut in Friday hours was part of a larger effort to reduce Library operating costs in response to budget constraints. As the Board pursues every avenue to provide a permanent path to sustainability, including working with the Board of Finance's new Task Force to examine future Library funding, we are deeply grateful that this one-time act of generosity provided an immediate stopgap, allowing the Library to restore hours of community access for one year.

It is with heartfelt appreciation that we thank the more than 20 donors who responded so generously when Beth called. The Library is now open with regular hours, six days a week for the community to enjoy.

*There really are angels among us.*



Assistant Director Micayla Hall, Beth Walker and Director Belinda de Kay

## NEW LEADERS TAKE THE HELM OF STONINGTON FREE LIBRARY'S BOARD OF TRUSTEES

*Trustees Allegra Griffiths and Denise Easton have been elected Co-Presidents of the Board of Trustees.*

**A**llegra Griffiths, a Stonington resident since 2012, has served on the board of Stonington Free Library for 5 years. With a background in business and finance, Allegra and her family lived in London for 13 years and, upon returning to the US, chose Stonington as home. She is deeply involved in several local organizations, including NESS and the Stonington Garden Club.



Allegra explains her dedication for the library with a story: "The Stonington Free Library has a special place in my heart. The first time that my family ever set foot in Stonington back in 2004, our 6-year-old daughter - until then a reluctant reader at best - spent the entire summer running back and forth to the Library checking out books under my temporary library card. She became so well known at the Library that when I tried to check out a book myself later in the summer, the Library staff refused to allow it - they told me that I wasn't Allegra Griffiths; they knew Allegra Griffiths and she was a small child who came to the Library every day!"

*Article continued inside*

# NEW LEADERS TAKE THE HELM - CONTINUED

*"I see this story as an example of two things: first, the power of a library to turn a reluctant reader into a lifelong learner (that 6-year-old is now halfway through college and still loves to read); and second, the role of the Stonington Free Library in our community. What made the difference for my daughter was being recognized, being welcomed and having the freedom to explore the Library's resources."*

**Libraries provide access: to information and technology, but most of all to knowledge and opportunity. Unusual in this day and age, libraries are open to everyone and free of charge. Their combination of information resources and the assistance of skilled staff provides a level playing field and equality of opportunity for everyone, whether it involves academic research, job searches, assistance filling out tax forms, or simply learning to use new technologies.**

Denise Easton, moved to Stonington in 2013 and joined the board of the Stonington Free Library in 2015. Denise is an entrepreneur and business consultant who appreciates the opportunity to live in Stonington and work with clients around the world.

*"The first time I visited Stonington I thought, who wouldn't love a community that proudly located its Library front and center for everyone to see? I actually visited the Stonington Free Library on that first trip, and knew I belonged here."*

*"The Stonington Free Library is an enduring link from our past to our future and is emblematic of the values, creativity and commitment of the staff, Board and supporters to keep knowledge and learning freely available to every member of our community."*

"We are looking forward to tackling the difficult things – which we can do quickly with the help of our extraordinary Board. The impossible may take a little longer."

## SUSTAINABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY UPDATE

### Serving our Community Today and Tomorrow

The Stonington Free Library aims to provide for all who want access to our space, our programs and our services. We focus on meeting existing community needs while continually planning for a rapidly changing future.

#### How are we doing?

##### 1. We have Expanded our Reach and are Reimagining our Space

In addition to launching our newly redesigned "digital branch" and reallocating our service hours to better meet the needs of our community, we have secured commitments for \$190,000 towards our planned ADA compliance building project. We continue to develop our plans for enhancing the functionality of our existing space, and are actively seeking potential grant funding to support these exciting initiatives.

##### 2. We are Building a Sustainable Future

We know that safeguarding the principal value of our endowment is critical in order to fund Library operations into the future, so we have prudently reduced our annual draw from the endowment for operating use. While in the short term this has required offsetting cuts in spending, we continue to pursue strategic avenues to provide a permanent path to sustainability, including successfully lobbying for the establishment of a Board of Finance Task Force to address the Library's municipal funding.

# BOOKWORMS: FALL 2018

By Maris Frey, Youth Services Director



*The Little Blue Truck visits the children at the Library thanks to our friends The Cooked Goose of Westerly.*

America” (Beth Hoppe, chief programming executive at PBS). A list of the 100 most popular fiction books in America was compiled by the American public and a literary advisory panel with children’s and young adult books well represented. PBS has televised authors, literary experts and celebrities talking about their favorite titles and voting began and will continue through the fall. We incorporated *The Great American Read* into our Summer Reading Program for older students and are happy to report that 44 summer readers took advantage of the opportunity. At this time, voting has topped 2 million at PBS and the list is down to 40 top titles. Anything that encourages conversations about reading has our support – we encourage everyone to exercise their vote in choosing the top 10 books in America!

A generous grant from a family foundation enabled us to continue our collaboration with area summer camps, allowing children participating in the camp at Stonington Human Services to shop weekly for summer reading prizes. The COMO summer campers visited us here at the Library and we provided performers at both locations. We also provided a weekly presence at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center, allowing registration and reward opportunities.

The Read and Feed program contributed over 530 food items to our community food bank at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center this summer. Weekly Specials helped ensure that the PNC received much needed items, while the children enjoyed the chance to earn double rewards! This is an excellent opportunity for students to help others in their community.

We anticipate a busy fall season with story times beginning the week of September 10. We will offer a story time for babies – age 2 on Tuesdays at 10:30 and ages 2 – 6 Wednesdays at 10:30. We also have a Sandwich and Story group on Tuesdays at 11:45 for ages 3 and up (bring a lunch). Please watch our website for updates.

Happy Back to School!

## SUMMER READING RECAP AND FALL 2018

Another wonderful year for Summer Reading with 611 children and teens enjoying our program! We are proud of all the students who participated and we look forward to next year! We have too many donors who help make this program possible to thank in this small space, so please see the list in our Annual Report and on our website. When you visit one of these businesses, please be sure to thank them for all they do.

After a year of planning, the PBS produced documentary series, *The Great American Read*, premiered in May. The series focuses on the role of reading in our culture and “encourages a multi-generational dialogue about literacy in



*Meet The Garde Musician, cellist Christine Coyle, performed a family concert after story time.*



*Sharpie Tee Shirt creativity!*



*Our summer readers await prize winner announcements before our finale Ice Cream Party*



## STONINGTON FREE LIBRARY

**Stonington Free Library**  
20 High Street, Stonington, CT

**Mailing address**  
PO Box 232, Stonington, CT 06378

**Hours**  
10am-6pm Monday-Tuesday  
10am-7pm Wednesday  
10am-6pm Thursday  
10am-5pm Friday  
10am-1pm Saturday

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860.535.0658

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860.535.3945

**E-mail**  
stonlib@stoningtonfreelibrary.org

**Web**  
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**Executive Director**  
Belinda de Kay

**Assistant Director**  
Micayla Hall

**Youth Services Director**  
Maris Frey

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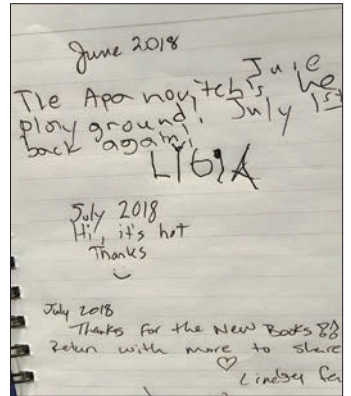
# LITTLE FREE LIBRARIES



The Little Free Library movement began in 2009 when Todd Bol built a miniature model schoolhouse, put it on a post in his front yard, filled it with books and put up a sign stating, “Free Books.” It was a way to honor his mom—a former school teacher—and to share his love of reading with his neighborhood. The idea took off, and now there are thousands of Little Free Libraries and thanks to a collaboration between the Stonington Village Improvement Association, Stonington High School and the Library, we have four of these magical structures right here in Stonington, on the East Lawn at Stonington Point, in Mathews Park across from Dodson’s Boatyard, by the Playground out at the Town Dock (this one full of children’s books) and in the quiet oasis that is Wimpfheimer Park behind the Velvet Mill.



It was at the request of the SVIA who supplied the materials that the first two kiosks were built by students of Mr. Beale in shop class at Stonington High School. It was a semester long project that Mr. Beale used as a teaching tool for much more than hammering pieces of wood together! The two most recent ones were generously purchased with SVIA funds and were installed by the Town of Stonington Highway Department. Our friends at the SVIA also help maintain and repair the kiosks as needed – and recently one of our volunteers volunteered her husband to do a small repair! All four are faithfully stewarded by two Library volunteers who restock and refresh the libraries at least twice a week year round. The books are collected here at the Library and the stock of books is kept well supplied by putting requests for donations on Facebook and our website. Each book is stamped with a special stamp to show its place of origin – it says “Little Free Library – Always to share – Never for sale. This book started its journey in Stonington, Connecticut, USA” – and then it gives the registration number by which it is shown on the world map. So this puts us, Stonington Free Library, on the world map!! Anyone can go online at [www.littlefreelibrary.org](http://www.littlefreelibrary.org) to find where the libraries are anywhere in the world. The comments that are written in the notebooks speak for themselves – a sample is pictured here!



Stonington Library is so thrilled to be a part of this project – it is a beacon of our wish to reach out beyond our walls, to help build community, to share books and foster a love of reading. For all of us involved it has been a wonderful experience in collaboration and continues as a team and community effort.

## SUSTAINERS ARE PRICELESS!

Stonington Free Library offers those who wish to support the Library the option to become a sustainer. If you would rather donate on a monthly basis, securely and worry free, we'd be happy to set you up. Each year sustainers receive a report on their contributions along with our wholehearted appreciation for their steadfast support.

You're special people and we are so grateful that you are with us for the long haul!

## GIVING TUESDAY IS AROUND THE CORNER – PLEASE SAVE THE DATE FOR US!

Actually, it is November 27th. But, we wanted to waste no time in alerting you to the amazing opportunity it presents in helping the Library!

#GivingTuesday is a global day of giving that harnesses the collective power of individuals, communities and organizations to encourage philanthropy. Following Thanksgiving and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday, this year's #GivingTuesday will kick off the giving season by inspiring people to collaborate and give back.

Watch for updates from us on local businesses who are participating in matching your donations, and then watch your gifts double in value thanks to this amazing event!



# LIBRARY PROGRAM UPDATE

## SFL Nightclub

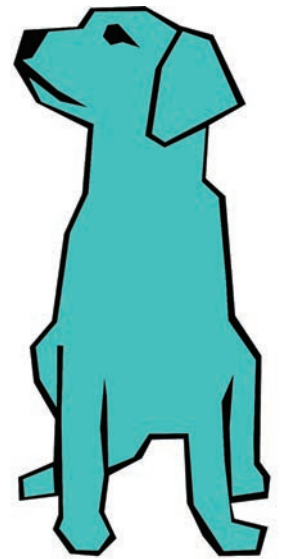


SFL Nightclub members meet Jean Baur and her Therapy Dog, Rudy

This summer the Library collaborated with Deidre Toole, Community Classroom Coordinator and Transition Counselor at Stonington High School on an inclusive pilot program called **SFL Nightclub**. The program came about after Library staff attended an event at Stonington High School called “Inclusive Schools, Inclusive Community”, which focused on including people with disabilities in community programs and the workplace and how it is beneficial to the entire community.

### Rudy's Poem

People are quite gentle.  
They pat me.  
I love treats!  
I am so sad when I don't get a treat.  
I love biscuits, bones, and to swim.  
In the water, I feel free.  
And very wet.



Deidre presented at the event and shortly afterward stopped by the Library. Deidre and Library Director Belinda de Kay began discussing what a success the event at the High School was and sharing ideas about offering an inclusive program at the Library. This discussion was the start of SFL Nightclub.

After this conversation, a planning committee was formed consisting of Deidre, Belinda, Library Assistant Director Micayla Hall and Deidre's former students – Ben Kepple and Patty Moody. Soon the committee had decided upon a name for the program, SFL Nightclub, meeting dates and times, the format and special themes for each session and most importantly finding interested participants. The committee also wrote a successful grant to the Mystic Woman's Club to fund the entire program.

SFL Nightclub ran on Mondays between May 21 and July 2. Special themes, such as Jokes, Movies, Music and Writing, were selected for each session. Participants socialized, shared and took part in activities inspired by each week's special theme. Thanks to the Mystic Woman's Club grant – participants each received their own copy of the read aloud book chosen for the program, *Love that Dog* by Sharon Creech, and enjoyed dinner and refreshments at the end of each meeting.

A very special thank you to Jean Baur and her therapy dog Rudy who took part in the session on Poetry and Writing. Jean, a local author and library patron, conducted poetry writing exercises with the group and introduced them to Rudy, who all were thrilled to meet and write poetry about!

Sincerest gratitude to the Kepple family who hosted the final group hurrah this summer with a barbecue, garden tour and corn hole game at their home.

**Due to its success Deidre and the Library plan to offer the program again in the winter.**

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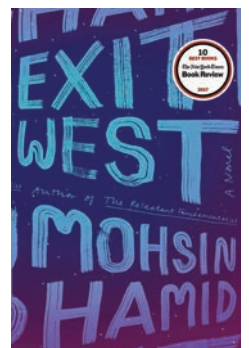
## One Book, One Region



The Library's Book Group will be discussing this year's One Book, One Region title *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid on Thursday, September 13th at 2 pm. Copies of the book are available at the Library and anyone is welcome to join the discussion on the 13th.

The finale event will be held on Wednesday, September 26th at 7 pm at the Palmer Auditorium at Connecticut College. Mohsin Hamid himself will speak about *Exit West* at the event.

The goals of One Book, One Region are to bring people together to discuss ideas, to broaden the appreciation of reading and to break down barriers among people. For more information and to view this year's kickoff event online visit - <http://onebookoneregion.org/>



## Adult Summer Reading

Our Adult Summer Reading Program was met with enthusiastic participation. Our weekly and grand prize drawings received 299 entries. There were 21 winners selected over the summer who chose from a variety of prizes in our display. This summer 6 lucky grand prize winners received either a Kindle Fire or gift cards donated by Indulge Coffee and Sandwich Co. and Bank Square Books.



Indulge gift certificate winner  
Grace Murray with Blake



Kindle winner Kathryn  
Brandl with Elliot and Henry

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## Take Part in The Great American Read at Stonington Free Library

**THE GREAT AMERICAN READ** is a PBS initiative that explores and celebrates the power of reading, told through the prism of America's 100 best-loved novels (as chosen in a national survey). It investigates how and why writers create their fictional worlds, how we as readers are affected by these stories, and what these 100 different books have to say about our diverse nation and our shared human experience.

A display of many of the adult titles on the list is located in the front lobby of the Library. Titles for younger readers are with the summer reading books downstairs. If you can't find a title you are looking for ask a staff member. You can also pick up a pamphlet at the Library which lists all 100 titles to keep track of those you have read.



This summer at the Library patrons earned extra chances to enter our Summer Reading Program raffles each time they finished a book on the Great American Read list. Summer Reading has ended, but you can still vote for your favorite novels online - [pbs.org/greatamericanread](https://pbs.org/greatamericanread). Voting is open until October 18th. You can also watch all of the PBS television episodes here - <https://www.pbs.org/the-great-american-read/watch/>. The grand finale episode airs on October 23rd and will announce the winning novel!

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## Book Groups

The SFL Book Group meets the second Thursday of every month at 2 pm at the Library.

- Upcoming Dates and Titles –
  - September 13<sup>th</sup> – *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid
  - October 11<sup>th</sup> – *In the Midst of Winter* by Isabel Allende
  - November 8<sup>th</sup> – *The Coldest Winter: America and the Korean War* by David Halberstam
  - December 13<sup>th</sup> – *Station Eleven* by Emily St. John Mandel

The Masonicare Book Group is open to Masonicare residents and meets the first Tuesday of every month at 2 pm at Masonicare at Mystic.

- Upcoming Dates and Titles –
  - September 4<sup>th</sup> – *Hillbilly Elegy* by J.D. Vance
  - October 2<sup>nd</sup> – *Half Broke Horses* by Jeannette Walls
  - November 6<sup>th</sup> – *The Wright Brothers* by David McCullough
  - December 4<sup>th</sup> – *Lisette's List* by Susan Vreeland

The PNC Book Group meets the third Friday of every month at 12 pm at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center.

- September 21<sup>st</sup> – *The Fox Hunt: A Refugee's Memoir of Coming to America* by Mohammed Al Samawi
- October 19<sup>th</sup> – *The Widow* by Fiona Barton



# THE RETURN OF A LEGEND

*Who is the imposing yet amiable man greeting you from above the entrance to the reading room in the Library?*

He is Samuel Denison Babcock, eminent financier, President, VP or Director of twenty-one different corporations including banks, telephone, railroad and steamship companies. He was born in Stonington in 1822. He was described as 'a venerable patriarch, self-made, a very respectable man'.

His good friend Erskine M. Phelps, of Phelps Dodge and Palmer (a boot and shoe manufacturer) in Chicago, also grew up in Stonington and enjoyed great success in commercial wholesaling thanks to his 'energy and keen insight'.

Lucky for us, they both maintained a 'deep interest in the welfare and progress of their home town'. They pledged \$8,000 each (more than \$200,000 in today's dollars) to build a new library building if the town would raise \$4,000 – which it did quickly. The Library you know today was built and formally opened on March 25th, 1900.

This painting, on loan from the Stonington Historical Society, was completed in 1894 and keeps the vision and memory of Mr. Babcock alive every day in the Library. Of course, when you are on the north side of 110 years of age, you benefit from a little regular 'refurbishment'. In July the portrait was removed and, thanks to the skill (and some magic) of art restoration expert Howard Park and the balancing talent of John Turrentine, Mr. Babcock was returned, cleaned and repaired, to his rightful place on the wall last month – ready to resume his lofty observation of all patrons, visitors and staff.



Great care was needed



Howard Park commences restoration



Delicate work



The secret is in the bottle



Work completed



Ready for his close-up



The Annual Report of the Stonington Free Library 2017-2018, will be available in both print and digital form in mid-September. Copies will be available in the Library, or you may request one by writing or emailing [Development@stoningtonfreelibrary.org](mailto:Development@stoningtonfreelibrary.org).



Stonington Free Library  
Annual Report 2017-2018

# THE LIBRARIAN

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## THE STONINGTON FREE LIBRARY IS EVERYWHERE YOU ARE!

### Did you know....

That SFL serves all 40 square miles of the Town of Stonington, including the villages of Pawcatuck and Mystic?

- In fact, **more than half** of our active cardholders reside **outside** the 06378 zip code!
- In addition to our location on Wadawanuck Square in Stonington, we recently rolled out a newly-designed “digital branch” at [www.stoningtonfreelibrary.org](http://www.stoningtonfreelibrary.org) which is open 24/7 and offers the ability to checkout ebooks and audiobooks, access the Library catalog, renew items and more. Since the redesign in 2017, viewership of our website has increased 54%!
- SFL also operates a satellite branch at the Pawcatuck Neighborhood Center 1.5 hours per week, providing access to local residents who may be unable to reach our main location.
- We host a monthly residents’ book club at Masonicare serving 95 participants, and residents have the option of a bus trip to the Library once a month as well.
- Our Summer Reading Program attracts over 600 children from all across the Stonington School District, and is the only summer reading program in town. Our Director of Youth Services works closely with the Stonington schools to create their summer reading book lists and ensure that we have enough copies available.

