



**Kent Library Association
ANNUAL REPORT
January – December 2019**

The Kent Memorial Library ended the decade with a very strong year. Our fundraisers were successful and each exceeded its budgetary expectations, a challenging feat considering all ventures are weather-dependent. Membership was robust with 299 families supporting us financially. Our volunteer pool again worked tirelessly, logging over 5,329 hours. Our programs were attended by over 9,200 people and reflected a variety of interests. We circulated over 30,000 materials locally and across the state, and our patrons took advantage of our digital offerings in rapidly increasing numbers. We built upon our true endowment fund so that it will generate income in perpetuity. We began a much needed renovation project. And finally, we have begun working towards a potential Capital Campaign that will tie into our upcoming 100 anniversary. The Kent Library Association was officially established in 1915, and building construction began in 1921. We opened in 1922 and the plaque in the reading room was dedicated to veterans of WWI in 1925. The Association is planning to celebrate this important milestone in 2022, and we would welcome any members interested in joining the committee.

The Library is one of the busiest places in the Town of Kent. We offered programs for children, teens and adults, and these programs, along with regular Library users, brought in almost 45,000 people in 2019. People use the Library for reading materials, free streaming of ebooks, audiobooks, music and movies, free Wi-Fi, computers, office services like scanning and faxing, and we have seen a growing need for meeting and quiet work space for telecommuters. Our patrons enjoy baby groups, story hours, teen events, technology training, films, book clubs, art shows, speakers, contests, writing classes, and more. Most importantly, we provide a friendly, helpful place for Kent residents and visitors to access whatever resources we can provide.

NEW IN 2019

- **Library Staff changes:** Kim Seeger left the Children's Room after three great years of service. Abigail Parker became Co-Director of Children's Services with our new hire, Samantha Saliter.
- **Library Board changes:** Eric Roper joined the Board this year, and Ken Cooper will not be renewing his term after December 2019. We are grateful for his many years of work on behalf of the Library, particularly the development of a top-notch speaker series that put our little library into the big leagues. We expect he will continue to be involved at a significant level as a member our new Advisory Board, beginning in 2020. The Library Parents' Committee welcomed a new Chair, Lara Hansen Barrett. We thank Wendi Love for her many years of fundraising and cheer.
- We added Wifi printing, a welcome convenience for our patrons, as well as beginner and intermediate computer classes. The Library received a generous donation of 12 laptops from Kent Center School to make these classes possible.
- We completed a feasibility study for a potential Capital Campaign along with a study of the possible uses of the Firehouse next door. The Board held a Strategic Planning retreat and enters 2020 with a renewed focus and clear objectives.

- We began a renovation project that included painting, tree work, roof work, skylight removal, and will culminate in early 2020 with asbestos remediation and new carpet through the entire building. We are so thankful for the financial support of the Town to make this a reality.
- The Library built upon our true endowment funds and moved the investment of these funds to the Northwest Connecticut Community Foundation. We expect that these funds will help to infuse our annual budgets with much needed income and, we hope, alleviate some of the reliance on constant, weather-dependent fundraising.

Highlights

- **Grants & tribute gifts received:** Grant from the Town of Kent (in addition to our annual amount, \$40,000, Buildings and Grounds); Matching Grant from the Dorsey and Whitney Foundation (\$3850, Endowment); Donation from the Estate of Vincent DeMarco (\$3000, undesignated); Matching Grant from the Dyson Foundation (\$150, undesignated); Grant from the Ayco Charitable Foundation (\$500, undesignated); Grant from Dr. Eric Grossman Philanthropic Trust (\$500, undesignated); Various Tributes (\$3730). **Total: \$51,730**
- **The Library benefits tremendously from its partnerships** with various organizations in Kent. This year we worked with Kent Parks and Recreation, Kent Center School, Kent Chamber of Commerce, Kent Land Trust, Kent Conservation Commission, Kent Garden Club, the Town Democrats and Republicans, The League of Women Voters, and more!
- The **Book Sale** had a banner year aided by good weather. Dori Smith and Elise Cieplik led the hordes of enthusiastic volunteers, and, with the help of lead volunteer Dianne Lang, raised over \$62,000 for the Library.
- Our **Children's Programming** is among the best in the area. Weekly events like Baby Group and Lunch Bunch are supplemented with a host of great special programs like Cupcake Wars, Li Liu the Chinese Acrobat, Yo-Yo Guy, a town-wide Scavenger Hunt, Science Fridays, LEGO parties, Teen Movie Nights, Family Movie nights, Special Saturday story hours, the Science Tellers, and Babysitter Training, just to name a few.
- The **Annual Benefit Party** in June was held at the home of Lisa and Bill Hoadley in South Kent. Peter Woytuk's sculptures were a particular hit in the auction! The crew of volunteers led by Roz Molho, Liddy Baker, Jane Zatlin, Susan Forbes, and Patsy Stroble put on a fabulous event.
- The annual **Car Raffle** attracted lots of attention and its healthy ticket sales supported Library operating expenses. This year's winner, our own Ned Babbitt, was thrilled to drive off in a gorgeous red Porsche! Our volunteer of the year, Ed Epstein, was a stalwart raffle ticket seller.
- The Library participated in many **Chamber of Commerce events:** The Gilmore Girls Fan Festival, Sidewalk Sale Days, the Pumpkin Run, the Kent Carnival, and the Gingerbread Festival. The Champagne Stroll alone brought in almost 900 visitors! Sarah's position as a Board member of the Chamber keeps the Library deeply involved in their efforts to draw people to Town. We have been instrumental in starting a new spring event, Daffodil Days, which will begin in 2020!
- Adults enjoyed both a **summer and winter reading program** with great prizes! Both Adults and Children participated in the Peeps Diorama contest which we hope will be an annual event.
- A **Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon** in November was hosted for over 60 people who enjoyed the camaraderie and good food catered by JP Giffords. The Friends of KML do so much for us!
- The Library received a discounted rate (through a NWCTCF grant) for Sarah to attend **LEAP**, Leadership Enrichment for Advancing Professionals this past spring. The classes were informative and interesting, focusing on Board development, Personnel Management, Strategic

Planning, Fundraising and Donor Management, Budgeting, and Communications/Public Relations.

- The Library updated and streamlined its **budget** with the help of an accounting services firm and improved its retention of donors by using **new fundraising software**.
- **New Materials:** We added 393 Fiction and Mystery books, 199 Biography and Nonfiction books, 55 Audiobooks, and 36 DVDs to the adult collections. And almost 550 items of various types were added to the children's and teen collections!

Buildings & Grounds: Our year-long renovation projects will be done in early 2020. Once the interior was patched and painted we added a "hole-free" art display system for our gallery space. The roof was repaired and the skylights, a constant source of leaks, were removed and Gleason Electric and Kent Glass installed very attractive new lights. The exterior of the building was brightened up with the removal of a few dying trees and many more trees and shrubs were treated for disease. The exterior was also power washed. The Children's Room replaced its beloved train table with an even better one and changed the room decorations to keep the fresh paint looking good. The final phase of the project will happen in January 2020 with asbestos remediation, new carpet installation, and the final interior painting.

Library Goals for 2020:

1. Begin the Capital Campaign with our 100th anniversary in 2022 as the focus.
2. Complete the renovation project with minimal disruption to our patrons.
3. Seek out grants to help support the Library's operating budget.
4. Strengthen our relationships with local organizations and individuals to be on the forefront of cultural institutions in Litchfield County.

Departmental Reports

Children's Services: (Kim Seeger, Abigail Parker, and Samantha Saliter)

Programs: This year we had changes in the Junior Room. In August, Kim, Director of Children and Teen Services, left for a job as Librarian at the Thomaston Elementary School. Samantha Saliter was hired in September to join Abigail as Co-Directors of Children's and Teen Services.

The regular monthly programs such as Rhythm and Rhyme for 0-3s every Tuesday remains a steady draw, often with over forty in attendance. While the Lunch Bunch attendance has always fluctuated, we collaborate with the Kent Park & Rec. Camp in the summer to visit them every week, which helps with attendance. Regular weekly numbers have begun to be spotty, but we always try to think of new ways to draw more people. We also continued our outreach with the local schools to keep the Library involved with the town's children on a regular basis. In the 2019-2020 school year, we continue to visit Kent Center School twice a month, both the P.M. and A.M. Pre-K classes. We also visit Kent School Early Learning Center and Kent Education Center and Nursery School twice monthly. We have offered LEGO free play, LEGO robotics, and STEM program, and Samantha has offered some new ones: Knitting and Science Friday. We hosted three paid performers this year, including Li Liu the Acrobat (Co-sponsored by KML Parent's Committee and Kent Park and Rec), the YoYo Guy, and Science Tellers Aliens Show. These programs attracted 75, 70, and 40 patrons respectively. We are grateful for the free use of Kent Community House for our Chinese Acrobat program, which wouldn't have been possible without it.

Our summer reading program followed the popular BINGO board format that we introduced a few years ago. We offered a weekly drawing of fun prizes that kids earned tickets for by participating in library BINGO. We had over 450 tickets turned in this year, which was a slight increase from previous summer. We were happy to see the programs continued popularity among children and families. We

also continued our collaboration with Kent Center School for monthly early dismissal programs that include a 1.5 hour drop off for families affected by the school schedule change. This program has been extremely popular with kids and parents.

Again this year, we followed the Collaborative Summer Reading Program theme which was “A Universe of Stories.” Both the Children’s and Teen events were focused around this theme. As part of library camp we focused on stories about outer space and built our activities, learning, art, and crafts around this theme. We continued the 2-hour drop off program, which many of our busy families enjoy. The teens also followed the same theme and had programs such as our annual scavenger hunt, slime making, movie night, and galaxy tee shirt painting.

Teens & Tweens: The Teen Advisory Board (TAB) has remained a constant monthly program and the book club has continued this year. TAB members have also volunteered as buddies for younger children during our Afterschool Buddies programs. The Summer Reading Rewards program continued its 8 point system of allowing teens to volunteer, attend weekly programs, or complete book projects in order to win a \$25 gift card at the end of the summer. Monthly, we hosted larger events for the teens such as Game Night, Teen Cupcake Wars, a teen-requested Glow in the Dark Party, Lip-Sync Battle movie nights, and the ever popular quiz nights. We offered two Safe Sitter courses this year, one in January and one in August.

Collection: We still have space issues in our collection. Adding roughly 30-40 items a month to the Junior and Young Adult collection has resulted in limited shelving room. Because of this we are currently in a weeding project to ensure that we have room for our new materials as well as making sure our collection is current and meeting the needs of our patrons.

Volunteers: The Parents’ Committee sponsored their two annual fundraisers for the Library, Family Skate Night in February and the Memorial Day Bake Sale in May. These fundraisers brought in a total of \$730 for our budget. We are looking forward to continuing the tradition of both these fundraisers next year. Lara Hansen Barrett, the Committee Chair, is always looking for more fundraising ideas for future endeavors and welcomes any suggestions.

We also rely on volunteers for tasks within the Junior Room. We have a shelper who comes in most weeks and a weekly volunteer from Marvelwood who takes care of any task we assign him. Both are very helpful.

Adult Programs & Events: (Lucy Pierpont)

The Library offered many favorable programs to the adult population of Kent. Below, please see the assortment of subject matters offered as a community resource.

Programs: Tech Workshops; Adult Coloring, Origami, Creative Journaling; Gardening; Birds; Poetry & Music Nights; Chess Clubs; Yoga; College Workshops; Bridge for Beginners; Computers for Beginners; Financial Workshops; CTV-192 Workshop; Immigration Information; UNICEF Program; Kent First Selectman Debate; Quiz Night; Winter and Summer Adult Reading Programs.

Art Exhibits: There were 6 art exhibits. January/February Treasa Pattison’s *In Living Color*; March/April Karen Chase’s *A Collection of Stuff* (sold 12 pieces + misc. prints); May/June Kent Center School Alumni’s *KCS Alumni Reunion* (sold 3 pieces); July/August Paul Sakren’s *Born To Be Wild* (sold 5 pieces); September/October Kathy Wismar’s *Snapshots Along the Way* (sold 1 piece); November/December Heather Scofield’s *Third Eye* (sold 2 pieces). The Library’s profit from the sales was \$1,143.00.

Author Book Talks & Signings: We had an assortment of authors, some local, some not: Martha Hall Kelly: *Lilac Girls*; Henry Kissinger: *Kissinger On Kissinger* (sold 147 books); the late Edmund Morris with the late Sylvia Morris & Christopher Buckley: *Edison*; Betty Krasne: *The Good Life?*; Joanna Kelly: *The Jolly Woodman*; and Betty Krasne's Spring Book Discussion: *Nationality and War* and Fall 8-week Memoir Writing Program: *Writing Your Life*.

Special Events: We did a 3-part series on *To Kill A Mockingbird*. Anyone who attended all three programs earned a chance to win two Broadway tickets to see the play. Patrons were exceedingly complimentary about this series. Another winner in the first quarter of the year was *The History of LGBTQ People*. In March two "Karen" programs had the most attendance: Karen Chase's Art Opening had 95 visitors and Karen Bussolini had a popular gardening lecture which was co-sponsored by the Kent Garden Club. May brought *Birds in Your Backyard* co-sponsored by Kent Land Trust, Sharon Audubon Center and Kent Greenhouse & Gardens. This event took place at Kent Greenhouse and 40 people attended. In June the House of Books and KML presented Martha Hall Kelly with 60 people in attendance while 100 people came to the KCS Alumni Art Exhibit. Betty Krasne had a well-attended book talk and signing with 43 attendees. Our First Selectmen Civil Dialogue had a large crowd (105) of interested town folk. We co-sponsored a book talk featuring the late Sylvia Morris and Christopher Buckley to celebrate the newly published book *Edison* by the late Edmund Morris.

June's benefit was held at the home of Lisa & Bill Hoadley in South Kent. Their Adirondack-style home amid beautiful birch trees had a killer view and was the perfect setting for our annual party. As in past years, there was great music, delicious food, an open bar and wonderful silent auction items. Seven hundred and eighty invitations were mailed and 325 people attended the party.

The Annual Summer Book Sale & Car Raffle ran from Memorial Day to mid-to-late October. In September, the Library held the fourth annual Quiz Night at the Kent Fire House to a full house of trivia experts. The Library was a big part of The Gilmore Girls Fan Fest Weekend in October offering free hot cider and hosting one of the events planned by the Fan Fest: Meet & Greet one of the cast members from the show. The Champagne Stroll was held the weekend after Thanksgiving, which included the Holiday Boutique, the Board's Winter Treasure Basket Raffle and Heather Scofield's Art Exhibit Opening.

New This Year. Since there was an election this November, KML decided to hold a First Selectmen Civil Dialogue. We couldn't have had such a success if not for the assistance of the League of Women Voters of Litchfield County. Barrie Kavasch and her son Christopher offered some interesting and fun things to do in the Reading Room every Sunday during Summer Sundays such as Creative Journaling. Because of a donation of 12 laptops, we began offering computer classes for beginners.

In addition to Adult Programming and Marketing. For the sixth time, KML is the recipient of a Connecticut Library Association Publicity Award. This year it has been awarded Outstanding Library Public Relations in the Small Library Category. The winning materials were the invitation and program for the Library's 2018 Annual Spring Gala.

All of the 2019 programs/events were marketed extensively with press releases, eBlasts, social media posts, graphics for print and the Library's website, including over 50± web pages, 571± Facebook, 359 Tweets, 131± eBlasts, 1269± Constant Contact Subscribers, 66± Press Releases.

Most Attended Programs. Henry Kissinger Book Signing, To Kill A Mockingbird, The History of LGBTQ, Karen Bussolini's Garden Talk, Birds in Your Backyard, Martha Hall Kelly, Edison, Kent Carnival, Quiz Night, Gilmore Girls Meet & Greet Event, Apple Computer Products Lecture, Civil Dialogue, Betty Krasne's Spring Book Discussion Group, Artist's Exhibit Openings.

