



**Kent Library Association
ANNUAL REPORT
January – December 2022**

2022 was a year of continued growth and progress here at the Library. Highlights include great programs, a record setting Membership campaign, our Centennial celebration, #1 status in CT across various statistical categories, many steps towards our Capital Campaign for expansion, and more. Details below!

NEW IN 2022

- **Library Staff changes:** This year we said goodbye to long time staff member, Mary Ellen Casey. She served KML with precision and care since 2006. While it was a challenge to find her successor, we were lucky to hire Libby Mueller, a very experienced, MLS-degreed librarian who agreed to move to Kent and join the team. This October we lost Debbie Moerschell in the Youth Services department. We continue to look for the right replacement. Kate Zarin has adeptly picked up the slack and is managing the entire department alone with some help from other staff members.
- **Library Board changes:** We added two Board members in 2022 - Jee Mee Kim in March and Ellen Gutierrez in December. Both come with great energy and expertise, and help continue our efforts to broaden the age demographics on our Board.
- This year we added a **Library of Things** to our collections. Household items in good condition are shared with patrons for free – all they need is a valid Kent card! Items include extra tables and chairs; baby items like highchairs, pack ‘n’ plays, and safety gates; a wide variety of kitchen items; ice chests and coolers; projectors, and more! It has been well-received by our patrons.
- We increased our service hours by returning to **Summer Sundays** and offering extended hours on **Late Thursdays**. All library services are available. We intentionally schedule programming at those times to make it a good use of staff hours, including “**Young Locals,**” a monthly game night that is geared at the very elusive 21-30 year old demographic.
- We worked with the Kent Community Fund to bring back access to **Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library**, a program that offers free books by mail to any registered child in Kent between 0 and 5 years of age. Families sign up at the Library and the books arrive at their homes monthly.
- Our impact on local literacy continues to grow. “**Book Buddies**” is a program that pairs middle- and high-schoolers with younger students to practice their reading skills in a fun, stress-free environment. In addition to our monthly “**Reading with Wynton**” program, and greatly increased tutorials with the **Literacy Volunteers on the Green**, KML has become a hub for developing literacy skills for all ages.

- **Efforts to expand the Library** went into high gear in 2022. Focus groups met in the winter, and that information along with our building program informed the architects as they designed and proposed a beautiful, state-of-the-art facility that meets our needs now and in the future. The design reflects the values of our town and community by respecting the scale and aesthetic of Main Street while increasing our ability to serve the public. All expenses for the architect and fundraising consultant have come through private fundraising and a foundation grant. The Campaign Cabinet was assembled and capital campaign documents were drafted. We also attended early meetings for a State construction grant and hope to apply in 2023.
- Covid-19 continued to affect our ability to hold programs and meetings. However in 2022 we improved our skills and hardware to be able to hold completely **hybrid meetings and events** with simultaneous in-person and virtual attendance. We also took advantage of the new A/V system in Town Hall with great success.

Highlights

- **We turned 100!** The Library's Centennial Celebration was an incredible collaborative effort that culminated in a whole day of parties for all ages. We welcomed over 300 people for two birthday parties on March 25th and it was a joyous occasion. At the adult party, the Library was honored to receive two original hand-colored Rex Brasher prints that are now on display in our historic reading room. We shared our gorgeous and informative Centennial history booklet and feasted on appetizers, cocktails, and cake. The interactive Centennial timeline that was created along with the booklet continues to be available on our website for all to enjoy. And earlier in the year we were fortunate to enjoy Bricks and Books, a dramatic reading of the Kent Memorial Library's storied history written by our own Georgianne Kent.
- The Library is proud to be **#1 in Connecticut** in a few categories this year. We ranked first in Children's and YA programming attendance per capita. We also are #1 in volunteer service hours.
- **Grants and Tribute gifts received:** The Library was the appreciative beneficiary of many grants and tribute gifts this year. We received a \$3,000 grant from the NWCT Community Foundation to cover expenses for our capital campaign consultant. We also received a grant of \$750 from Eversource Energy to offset costs for our October green energy program. In the summer we received a grant for a state-sponsored technology assessment for \$4,751. Tributes were varied and generous! Children were sponsored in a spring read-a-thon that raised \$523 for children's programs. The Molho birthdays raised \$1,685. Sandy Edelman's birthday and retirement garnered \$2,659 in gifts. \$1,665 was raised in honor of Pat and John Noneman. And various other tributes, birthdays, and anniversaries brought in another \$805.
- **The Library benefits tremendously from its partnerships** with various organizations in Kent. This year we worked with the Kent Chamber of Commerce, Literacy Volunteers on the Green, Kent Quilters, Kent Green, the House of Books, Kent Community Fund, Scribble Art Workshop, Kent Conservation Commission, Kent School, and more!
- We had the highest number of **Kent Library Association members** ever, with 360! And this year's Benefit was the most successful ever, with income of almost \$84,000.

- 2022's **volunteer of the year** was Ruth O'Meara, a stalwart Book Sale worker and Board member. We also honored Elise and Eric Cieplik who volunteered to serve as substitute Book Sale managers every Friday and many weekend shifts. They were honored at our annual Volunteer gathering in November with certificates and gifts.
- Among our slate of regular and special programs, there were some real highlights this year. We welcomed television personality and comedian **Seth Meyers** to read and sign copies of his newly released picture book. **Nadine Strossen**, former President of the ACLU, came to speak to us about censorship issues. We collaborated with **People's Action for Clean Energy (PACE)** and the Kent Conservation Commission on a large program to help residents to "green up" their energy consumption. A final highlight was a visit from **Douglas Brinkley**, renowned presidential historian, who shared his book about American presidents and their impacts on environmentalism.

New Materials: The Library is nearly at capacity regarding shelf space for books and other items. The Youth Services department adds an average of 30 items per month, and the Adult collections adds an average of 60. Hence, the collections are being weeded thoroughly while we add new materials.

Net changes:

- Adult audio – (increase) 22 items
- Youth audio - (increase) 1 item
- All video – (increase) 36 items
- Adult books - (decrease) 403 items
- Children's books – (increase) 45 items

Library Goals for 2023:

1. Successfully raise the funds needed to support our efforts to expand the Library.
 - Apply for and receive a State construction grant
 - Privately fundraise from our loyal supporters
 - Seek out various additional grants to address improvements in environmental sustainability and disability access
2. Increase our impact in the community with a slate of popular programs and growth in circulation of library materials, all to reflect a wider breadth and diversity of people and interests.
3. Continue to diversify and increase our revenue streams to decrease our reliance on volunteer-heavy events.

Departmental Reports

Youth Services (Kate Zarin) This year we had some changes to the Junior Room staff as Debbie Moerschell left in October of 2022. We were sad to see her go.

Weekly Programs: Rhythm and Rhyme for 0-3s has been offered throughout the year on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings. Thanks to John Casey's generosity with his space, we were once again able to hold Wednesday's Rhythm and Rhyme outside on the lawn behind the Visitor Center for as long as the weather would allow. Lunch Bunch attendance was consistently low this year, with a few families stopping by sporadically for the program.

Outreach: In the spring, we met with Grades K-5 to discuss the Library's Summer Reading programs. We met with Kent Center School's Grades K-4 in the fall to discuss upcoming programs and encourage everyone to get Library cards. Most of the teachers have been enthusiastic on further collaboration, with a few visits on various topics throughout the semester, and more plans upcoming for spring of 2023.

In the spring, we did weekly visits to the Kent Education Center and Nursery School (KECNS) for stories and songs every Tuesday. That program was replaced in the fall by a bi-monthly visit to the Junior Room by the Nursery School for stories and a craft. We were unable to coordinate with the Kent Early Learning Center (KELC) for our usual visits in the fall.

Centennial Events: Spring of 2022 saw the tail end of our monthly "Celebrate Our Centennial" events, where we focused on a different decade each month for a special event. The culmination of these programs was the official Centennial Celebration party in May. Some of our Centennial programs, such as "Paint like Bob Ross," have since made recurrences due to their popularity.

Special Programs: We offered a number of Special Programs, including various Story Hours, our annual Library Summer Camp, Outdoor Movies, Family Dinners & a Movie, and a Costume Swap. We created a Library Garden which the children helped plan, plant, and harvest. Over the summer, we began a Book Buddies peer-to-peer tutoring program which pairs a younger student with an upper grade student to help improve their confidence and fluidity in reading. Initially, it was planned to be a month-long program in May, but it ended up running through the summer, with a few families continuing into the school year.

We also had three paid performances throughout the year, including a magic show by Scott Jameson this summer as the grand finale to the Summer Reading Program and both Nappy's Puppets and the Playful Engineers over Winter break. We are grateful for the use of the Golden Falcon Field, the Kent Community House, and the green by the Welcome Center for our programs.

In addition to our paid events, we also had some exciting collaborative events this year. In March, we started a new monthly Storytime with Lee Sohl and her dogs, Wynton and Wylie, where kids can come, hear stories, and pet the dogs while learning how to appropriately interact with them. In April, Seth Meyers came to read his new picture book and do a signing. In May, we collaborated with Scribble Art to offer a free bookbinding workshop. In June, we worked with the Kent Conservation Commission, Kent Land Trust, and Kent Sustainability Committee to learn about native plants, pollinator pathways, and plant the Library Garden. In July, we were invited to KCS for their Summer Skills Program, where we had 4 separate programs for various age groups. Non-profits throughout the town came together in September for the revival of the Kent Carnival, where the Junior Room handed out snow cones. In November, we invited Samantha Hasenflue, the new director of Social Services, to introduce herself to the kids, briefly explain her role in the town, and read for the Thanksgiving Share. We also participated in the "Where's Waldo" hunt during July, as well as the Gingerbread House Walk in December.

The Parent's Committee, led by Clark Gifford and Amanda Branson this year, held two fundraisers for the Junior Room. They had a Memorial Day Bake Sale and held a Read-a-thon over spring break.

Summer Programs:

- **Library Camp:** This summer we offered Library Camp for 5 weeks, and it was very well attended. The camp consisted of activities both inside and outside, and even around town. We had a total of 20 tweens help out with Camp this summer, and even more participate in the Summer Reading Program. We were so fortunate to have so many enthusiastic tweens ready to help out.
- **Summer Reading Program:** Again, our summer reading program for 0-10s followed the popular BINGO board format. We had weekly BINGO boards for kids to fill out to enter into weekly prize drawings. The drawing boxes were filled to the brim each week!

The Summer Reading Rewards program for teens and tweens continued its 8 point system of allowing teens to volunteer, attend weekly programs, or complete various projects in order to win a \$25 gift card at the end of the summer. We had 25 teens and tweens participate, and 14 very happy kids completed the program and earned their gift cards.

As in past years, we followed the Collaborative Summer Reading Program theme which was "Read Beyond the Beaten Path." Both the Children's and Teen events were focused 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 and Movie Night. We decided against a recurrence of Bonfire Night this summer, but threw in an extra Quiz Night as well as a Murder Mystery Night.

Teens & Tweens: Teen Advisory Board (TAB) and Book Club has continued throughout the year. This program had a steady following in the spring, with very sparse attendance in the fall. Monthly, we hosted events for the teens such as Teen Cupcake Wars, Movie Nights, Quiz Nights, "Minute-to-Win-It", Friendship Bracelet Making, LEGO Robotics, Murder Mystery Nights and Dungeons & Dragons.

We were also able to bring back the SafeSitter program for teens and tweens. We held two sessions of the course in 2022, with another already planned in 2023. The kids had a great time while learning key life skills.

Collection: We added roughly 30 items a month, being attentive to the interests and requests of our patrons. We continue to be mindful of space issues, and undertook several ambitious weeding efforts of the non-fiction and middle-grade chapter books.

Volunteers: We have had wonderful volunteers throughout the year in the Junior Room. We have a group of Middle School students who have helped throughout the year, as well as our volunteers from Marvelwood, Emma Lake in the spring and E.R. Harrelson in the fall, both of whom have been a great help.

Marketing, Adult Programs and Special Events (Brittany McAllister): The Library offered many favorable programs to the adult population of Kent.

- “Journaling through January” with Barrie Kavasch, which turned into “Journaling through Winter;”
- “Peek into Kent's History” with Andrew Rowand of The Sloane Stanley Museum;
- *Bricks and Books*, a play about the history of KML;
- *Vikings* with Tom Ryan;
- *Apple Grafting* with Justin Potter;
- *Anti-Paint Night* with Scribble Art;
- Summer outdoor movie series (3 films in June, July, & August);
- An Estate Planning Seminar;
- *Phishing Attacks, Passwords, and Security Basics* with Michael Jay;
- Memoir Writing program with Gabi Coatsworth;
- 8 week *Writing Your Life* Workshop with Betty Krasne;
- 1:1 Apple Tech help month a month with Michael Jay;
- Spring Book discussions (4) with Betty Krasne;
- *Living with a Grieving Heart* with Marianne Bette;
- Chess Mondays began in the fall, and ESL tutoring went on throughout the year.

Art Exhibits: There were 6 art shows this year. January/February’s show was entitled *Eclectic Collective*, and featured the Monday Morning art group Karen Bahrenburg, Dorli Di Gregorio, Beth Dooley, Connie Freer, Connie Horton, Sue Lopardo, Halstead Lovig, Joan Macfarlane, Xiang MacFarlane, Roz Molho, Tamara Muscarell, Carla Shere, Jane Sirovica, Patsy Stroble, and Trudy Walter (9 pieces sold). March/April also included a group of artists, Kathleen L’Hommedieu, Mary Eddy, Kathy Flynn, Janet Greco, Elizabeth Kaney, Didier Malaquin, Katushka Millones, and Carla Shere. The show was entitled *An Exploration of Color* and sold 6 pieces. Dennis Stuart was our featured artist in May/June and the show was titled *Paintings of the Litchfield Hills*. The July/August show, *A Weaver and The Furniture Maker*, was a unique show featuring Barbara Dull’s weaving and Stephen Dull’s woodwork. Four woven pieces were sold and one wooden bench. *Places & People (and the occasional Airship)* was a joint show in September/October featuring Bill Merklein and Don Sexton (1 piece sold). Finally, Dee Dee Ball Calvey’s show, *Pieces of Me*, was our November/December show. The Library made \$897 in art sales.

Author Book Talks & Signings: Nan Rossiter: *A Good Measure*, Seth Meyers: *I’m Not Scared, You’re Scared*, Ann Jamieson: *For the Love of the Horse* series, Gabby Bernstein: *Happy Days*

(co-hosted with Cornwall Library), Mark Rozzo: *Everybody Thought We Were Crazy*, James R. Benn: *From The Shadows*, Hugh Eakin: *Picasso's War*, Doug Brinkley: *Silent Spring Revolution*, Terry Walters: *NOURISH*.

Special Events: 100th Birthday celebrations in March, both kids and adults, our annual benefit which netted about \$64,000, *Banned Books and Beyond* with Nadine Strossen and Olivia Scully, Annual Quiz Night which raised \$2,650, Green Energy Initiative with PACE and Kent Conservation Commission.

New!: Third Thursdays board game night for young patrons started in October and will continue into the New Year. Our first showing was popular with 28 people.

Most Attended Programs: Doug Brinkley's talk was hosted at Kent School and had 125 people in attendance. Quiz Night had 170 people in the Firehouse. Seth Meyers brought in 131 people to the Junior Room. Our 100th birthday celebrations brought in 300 adults and children throughout the day. Our program with Nadine Strossen had 65 guests, and the Green Energy Initiative had 75. And finally, our annual benefit had the highest attendance with 250 people.