Kent Library Association
ANNUAL REPORT
January – December 2023

The first full year of the Library's second century was busy with fabulous programming, successful fundraising, and a focus on improving our resources to share with our community. Details are below:

NEW IN 2023

- **Library Staff changes**: This year we welcomed two new staff members, Dorothy Shackelford in the Junior Room and Eliuth Breton as our Administrative Assistant. Both have been enthusiastic members of the team!
- **Library Board changes:** We added a new Board member, YuJung Kim, in March. YuJung comes to us with many years of expertise in digital media and enjoys living in Kent with her husband and young son. We lost a Board member this year, PH Nargeolet. PH was a beloved member of our community who was dedicated to the KLA for many years. He will be memorialized with a new illuminated globe that will be kept in the Library Reading Room.
- **Fundraising efforts to expand and renovate the Library** were quite successful in 2023. The state-of-the-art facility redesigned by Wyeth Architects of Chester will address our needs now and in the future. It also 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. In addition to private fundraising, we applied for and were awarded a significant state grant. We hope to take the next steps towards realizing this project in 2024.
- **We added Kanopy,** an online streaming video collection.
- We successfully requested **increased funding** from the Town of Kent. All assistance from the Town is happily received as it lessens the burden on our volunteers. The allocation provided 27% of our income in 2023.
- New regular programs include **Cooking Club, In the News, and a special monthly book club at Kent's Senior Center.**
- An **ARPA grant** from the Town helped us to improve our ability offer events outside, allowing us to purchase a new projector, screen, heaters, and seating for our back yard.

Highlights

- The Library won the Designer's Choice award at the annual Connecticut Library Association meeting, honoring us for the gorgeous Centennial History booklet and the

Centennial Timeline. Both were created by volunteers and staff whose hard work got noticed!

- **Grants and Tribute gifts received:** The Library was the appreciative beneficiary of many grants and tribute gifts this year. We received a grant from the Town of Kent ARPA committee for $14,981.24 which we used to improve our outdoor events infrastructure. We also received a grant of $250 from the Foundation for Community Health to offset costs for a film we screened about Lyme's Disease. Tributes were varied and generous. Friends celebrated Betty's Krasne's birthday by raising $495 for the Library. Gifts honoring Gabriel Zatlin totaled $5,183, Jean-Marie Horovitz $3,630, and Larry Rivkin $29,688. And various other tributes, birthdays, and anniversaries brought in another $2,055.
- **The Library benefits tremendously from its partnerships** with various organizations and businesses in Kent. This year we worked with the Kent Chamber of Commerce, Literacy Volunteers on the Green, The Little Guild of St. Francis, The Kent Garden Club, The Kent Collection, Kent Green, the House of Books, Kent Conservation Commission, Kent School, Marvelwood School, Kent Center School, Kent Community Nursery School, Kent Park and Recreation, Kent Selectman's Office, Kent Social Services, Kent Senior Center, Kent Affordable Housing, and more!
- 2023's **volunteer of the year** was Rick Levy. Rick started a very popular program called "In the News" that brings together a group of 8-12 people every other week to discuss current events. It's a popular and important program! He was honored at our annual Volunteer gathering in November.
- Among our slate of regular and special programs, there were some real highlights this year. We welcomed television personality Clinton Kelley **to talk to us all about style and self-esteem.** We had our first field trip to the **American Mural Project** in Winsted. We hosted a fabulous program about pet adoption with **The Little Guild Animal Shelter** and **The Dodo**, a media company focused on pets and animal welfare. We held our first **Cake Auction**, a fundraiser that also included a presentation by a local master baker, Barbara Marcone. Stage and screen actor Clea Alsip and award-winning screen and playwright Bash Doran, both highly successful in their respective arts, joined us for a fabulous presentation on **screenwriting**. As always, **Quiz Night** and the **Kent Carnival** were extremely successful and brought out a cross-section of Town.

Collections:

As the Library is basically at capacity for physical materials our collection development procedures and policies are more important than ever. We must thin our collections on a monthly basis to continue to offer new and notable resources to our patrons. That said, we have seen increased use of our streaming and downloadable resources. For example, there were 649 checkouts of videos using our new platform, kanopy. In general, print materials were steady and streaming and downloadable materials jumped 30% from last year. We also saw a 25% increase in interlibrary loan, a resource that takes advantage of the CT Library's system of sharing across the whole state. The Library of Things was also an active resource. We shared 215 items over the year, including tables and chairs, baby supplies, and cookware. In addition, we are thrilled to see that we have had 14% increase in active Library cards and a 25% increase in Library visitors.

Library Goals for 2024:

1. Begin the Library Expansion and Renovation Project.
2. Maintain as many services and availability of resources as possible in an offsite location.
3. Continue our outreach to the community to address their needs, including active participation in efforts to bridge the Digital Divide by improving infrastructure, offering training, and sharing resources. A special effort will be made to focus on underserved members of our community.

Departmental Reports

- **Youth Services (Kate Zarin and Dorothy Shackelford)** After some staffing turnover, Dorothy Shackelford joined the Junior Room staff in February 2023, and we are delighted to have her.

  Programs:
  We continue to offer Rhythm and Rhyme for 0-3s throughout the year on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, although we have discontinued Tuesday's Zoom portion of the program. Thanks to John Casey's generosity with his space, we were 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.

  We continue to offer Lunch Bunch as our weekly Storytime on Thursdays. Although attendance remains inconsistent, overall participation at Lunch Bunch throughout the year has doubled when compared to last year. A few families attend the program sporadically, predominantly over the summer or during school breaks.

  Our programs with the local schools have continued this year, with new additions and minor tweaks to standing annual programs, such as the back-to-school class visits. Among the new additions are the Grade 2 Oregon Trail program and Local Government programs. We made a particular effort to visit Grades 5 and 6 to encourage attendance at our teen and tween programs, gather ideas for programs that they might like to see, and attempt to boost participation in our Summer Reading Rewards Program. We also visited Kent Center School during their "Summer Skills" sessions, offering programs for Grades K-6.

  The Kent Education Center and Nursery School increased the frequency of their visits, so we generally see the nursery schoolers twice a month, barring unforeseen circumstances. Similarly, monthly visits to the Kent Early Learning Center have continued throughout the school year.

  Our Special Programs this year have included the usual monthly Story Hours with a related craft, our annual Library Summer Camp, Outdoor Movies, Family Dinners & a Movie, a Costume Swap, and the continuation of last year's Library Garden which the children helped plan, plant, and harvest. We also started a monthly half-day STEAM special program on Kent Center School's half days. In August, we hired Li Liu to come

perform a traditional Chinese acrobatics show in the Community House. In December, we had the Audubon bring in birds for a live Birds of Prey program in the Junior Room.

Summer Programs:
This summer we again offered our weekly 2-hour drop off Library Camp for 5 weeks and it was very well attended, although with fewer attendees than last summer. Library Camp this year followed the Collaborative Summer Reading Program theme of "All Together Now" and consisted of activities promoting collaboration, community, and friendship. We had 10 tweens help out with Camp this summer. Although we had fewer Camp volunteers this summer, those who chose to volunteer were very reliable. 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, also following the "All Together Now" theme, 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. Programs included staples such as a Movie Night and the Annual Scavenger Hunt, as well as new events like an Escape Room. We had 21 teens and tweens participate, and 4 very happy kids completed the program and earned their gift cards.

Teens & Tweens:
Teen Advisory Board (TAB) and Book Club has continued throughout the year, with a few regular participants. Our monthly teen & tween programs have stagnated slightly, although those programs have had better attendance during the summer and over breaks. We also continued to offer the SafeSitter program for teens and tweens. Due to weather and scheduling difficulties, we only held one session of the course in 2023. Another session is already planned for January 2024. The kids had a great time while learning key life skills.

Collection:
We continue to add roughly 30 items a month, and we are attentive to the interests and requests of our patrons. We continue to be mindful of space issues, and undertook several ambitious weeding efforts, particularly in the Young Adult section.

Volunteers:
We have had wonderful volunteers throughout the year in the Junior Room. We have a group of middle school students who helped out over the summer, as well as our volunteer from Marvelwood, E.R. Harrelson, who is always a great help. We were delighted to have E.R. return this fall to continue volunteering at the Library.

- **Marketing, Adult Programs and Special Events (Brittany McAllister):** The Library offered many favorable programs to the adult population of Kent. Please see the assortment of subject matters offered as a community resource, below.

  Programs: Readings from *Writing your Life* with Betty Krasne, a watercolor demonstration with artist Sandra Cointreau, presentation from Amy Wynn, Executive Director of the American Mural Project, 1:1 Apple tech help took place almost each

month on the 1st Saturday of the month with Michael Jay, *Learn Video Production* with Western CT Community Television, *In Unison* – a special gardening talk with Tovah martin, *Mindfulness & Meditation* two-part workshop, Betty Krasne's four part spring book discussion, Third Thursday adult game nights, *Tapas & Talkabout*, the kickoff to a cooking club which held 6 meetings and a cookie exchange at the end of the year, *The Truth about Assisted Living Communities* and *Dementia vs. Normal Aging* with New Season in Life, *Much More Than the Baby Blues: The Truth about Postpartum Depression* with Deborah Bain and Anne McAndrew, VAULTED workshop with founder Lara Hanson, *The Quiet Epidemic* film screening and Q&A with Director Winslow Crane-Murdoch, *Hoofing-it* art presentation and equine healing talk with Allison Gennings, *Caring for Caregivers* with Julianne Dow, *Develop your Writing* five part series, *Electric Cars, Easier Than you Think* with Michael Jay, spooky outdoor movie night, *History of Henna* and demonstration with Elysse Sadtler, *Low Back Pain* with Karen Browning, Yoga Nidri with Lisa Shea.

Art Exhibits: *Local Color* by Susan Grisell, *On the Road Again* by Michael Danon, *Hoofing It* by Allison May Gennings, *Reflections* by Kathy Flynn, *My Life's Work* by Lorraine Ryan, and *Fall into Winter* with Christine Lombardi. Each artist except Kathy chose to have a reception. The Library made close to $1,500 in commissions from this year's sales.

Author Book Talks & Signings: Jeff Benedict "Lebron", Emily J. Edwards "Viviana Valentine", Jennifer Epstein "Search for the Signers", Martha Hall Kelly "The Golden Doves".

Special Events: A special collaboration with The Dodo and our local animal shelter The Little Guild. We had a presentation and even brought in puppies from the shelter. We did an offsite program where we took a group to see the American Mural Project in Winstead, CT and got a special tour. Our Annual Benefit was held in June at board member Jan and Marc Bornn's home and we raised almost $50,000 for the Library. Clinton Kelly had a large audience at the Community House presenting on Style Esteem, Quiz Night had around 150 people and we raised over $3,000, Writing for the Stage and Screen with Bash Doran and Clea Alsip.

New programs of note: *Cakes & Cocktails* was our first live cake auction and we raised about $1,000 for the Library and learned baking tips from Barbara Marcone. *In the News* has become a very popular bi-monthly current events discussion led by Rick Levy.

Most Attended Programs: Clinton Kelly brought in 80+ people to Community House. Quiz night had 150 people.