

# Blue Hill Library Notes

Fall 2020

## BACK TO THE...LIBRARY

I remember, as though it were yesterday, the first time I walked into the Blue Hill Public Library. It was June, 1975, the June it rained 24 days out of 30. Thirteen friends and I had managed to maneuver our well-traveled school bus up the old and very steep logging trail onto our newly purchased 70 acres of cut-over land. Yup, we were back-to-the-land kids, in our 20s, ready to say hello to Blue Hill. No water, no electricity, no usable road, no nothing except scrub and stumps, and now tepee and tents.

I soon made my soggy way into town. The library sign was mesmerizing. To be honest, I really just wanted to use a flush toilet, maybe wash my hands in warm, running water, see what was offered in the village. Opening the door to the library on that black-fly infested day, decades before the internet, when most people in Blue Hill still shared a telephone line—2 longs & a short; “hello, operator?”—I had absolutely no idea what a treasure awaited.

Fern McTighe was the first to greet me, with a HUGE smile and

warm welcome -- and it just kept getting better. By the time my son was born the next year, she and Gloria Tarr very smoothly ran interference for me while I used the (tiny) downstairs bathroom as a full-service baby & mama wash. Had she known about it, Mrs. Parker, Head Librarian, certainly would not have approved.

This fall, 45 years later, the library is still one of my most magical and adventurous places to be on this beautiful peninsula, one that my grandchildren (!) now adore, too. I still approach the library's door with anticipation and joy. I walk in, do a slow pirouette, and am prepared for the most wonderful and unexpected people, books, art exhibits, movies, programs, and experiences imaginable. All in our very own small village library. So, please, c'mon in. We're open and waiting for you, and now we even have a changing table in the downstairs bathroom, should the need arise.....

~ Marjorie Yesley



Now



1975

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR

I don't need to tell you that it has been a weird year at BHPL. Things began normally, with the library being its typical self, a gathering place/sanctuary/community living room, right along until winter things started to melt.

You know what happened next. One Friday the BHPL board of directors and staff gathered to consider the mounting COVID-19 crisis. The next Monday, as we concluded that the safest course was to temporarily shutter operations, we thought that it would be for a couple of weeks. That was March 16. We stayed closed right up until June 1, when we began offering curbside services. In July we opened the library to patrons in accordance with guidance from the state and we muddled through what I hope will forever be the oddest summer ever.

After reading in the Weekly Packet about Blue Hill municipal budget difficulties, we reduced our 2020 Town Meeting request from \$87,000 to \$77,000. That's when we learned that town officials had already used their emergency powers to reduce our municipal funding, which is 15% of our annual operating budget, to \$43,650, half of 2019's amount.

Then the community came through for us Big Time. Belinda Lawrence read of our challenges and she and Chuck committed to match up to \$10,000 in gifts to BHPL made at Tradewinds. Thus began the "Catchup Challenge" during which patrons helped BHPL 'catch up' when they bought ketchup' (or



anything else). Bruce Stahnke made a catchy graphic and we spread the word. That effort raised over \$43,000, nearly the same amount as the reduction in funding from municipal sources and, combined with a generous PPP loan from the US Small Business Administration, righted our ship for the time being, helping to make up for cancelled fundraisers. I am extremely grateful to each of you who helped us get to that point.

As of this writing, we are in a stable place. We are doing a good job connecting with patrons virtually, offering engaging online programs and storyhours, as well as tech help to anyone who is struggling with trying to work online. We continue to offer curbside services and, to patrons who can't make it here, home delivery. As of this writing, the library interior is open for use by patrons following specific safety protocols. While the library still cannot be that gathering place that so many have come to know and love, we are still doing everything we can to support our community and each of our cherished patrons.

Although it has not been the year that we planned, I could hardly imagine a better place to be facing these challenges. The staff has stepped up to face every challenge, the BHPL Board of Directors has been engaged and supportive at every turn, and the community has turned out to support the library like never before—and that is saying something!

~ Rich Boulet



## THANK YOU TO THE MANY INDIVIDUALS, HOUSEHOLDS, AND FOUNDATIONS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THE BHPL ANNUAL FUND IN 2020 (THROUGH OCTOBER 31)

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## STAFF NEWS

In January we announced the creation of the “Ruth Slaven Teen Services and Outreach Librarian.” Thanks to a generous donation from the Anahata Foundation in honor of former Blue Hill Public Library staff member, Ruth “Rudy” Slaven, this new position serves a long underserved segment of library patrons. Kendall Chapman has been serving in that capacity since January and her energy and ideas have already translated into some new programs for teens. See article on page 7.



Speaking of Mrs. Slaven, we just hired Merrill Slaven Brache as a part-time circulation assistant. Merrill partly replaced Leda Beth Gray, who graciously shifted roles to be our Development and Communications Coordinator. Merrill is Ruth Slaven’s granddaughter and the two spent many happy afternoons visiting the library together.

Asked about her new gig, Merrill replied, “I’m so happy to be working in the library that my grandmother loved so much.”



These three high school students fit working at the library into their busy lives. From left to right Magnolia Vandiver, Tobey Hester and Millie Fleming. Fun fact: Millie took her first steps as a toddler in the library’s Larchwood Room.

### THE LIBRARY RECOGNIZES WITH GRATITUDE THE FOLLOWING FOR THEIR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO OUR ENDOWMENT FUND IN 2020

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## NEWS FROM THE FRIENDS

The Friends of the Blue Hill Public Library—like all of us—have had to adapt to this unusual year. Being holed up at home has inspired many households to declutter their bookshelves Marie Kondo-style, and at the same time has created a need for a fresh stockpile of reading material. With sales in the basement Book Nook on hold, the Friends instead organized four outdoor sales during the late summer and fall. Open-sided tents went up in the parking lot, an abundance of books were hauled outside, and people had the chance to find a good read in a sunny, well-spaced setting.

In addition, a new book kiosk has been installed on the library's front walkway. Until the true winter weather arrives, you can pick out new tomes for your collection while admiring the construction details: Bruce Stahnke donated the design; Phil Norris, Blue Hill's Tree Warden, contributed wood



Our new and popular outdoor kiosk.

from elm trees that once graced the town; and Jeep Gulliver put it all together. The Friends also have an expanded ongoing sale on the second floor, so don't feel shy about leaving with an armload of hardcovers for the chilly days ahead!

The Friends never forget that the books they sell come from the community—from you—and over the course of the year they see donations both large and small: a bagful, a boxful, sometimes an entire estate's collection. These books add up, and recently the Friends' sales have generated close to \$25K yearly, all of which goes back to the library.

Not to be forgotten in this equation are the volunteers who sort and clean books in the basement every day of the week. Ask them what it's like to sift through so many boxes of books and they will tell you that in the midst of 2020's uncertainties, it is satisfying to have a straightforward task that brings utility and joy to the community, which is what the Friends are all about. Please join us!

For volunteer opportunities, contact [FOLvolunteers@bhpl.net](mailto:FOLvolunteers@bhpl.net).

~ Nina Fleming



A mom sent us this photo of her kids getting their curbside pickup.

Michael Donahue **FSG**

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**FSG = Four Seasons Giving**

## FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

As current library board president, nearing the end of my ninth year, I am soon to be term-limited off the board so this is my final opportunity to tell all of you how proud I am of the library—the staff, the handsome building, the dedicated board members. I struggle to find the exact words to tell you how truly wondrous our library is but, in the end, you already know. You use it regularly, donate to it generously, and tell all of us about aspects of it which delight you. Thank you.

Thank you to those of you—so, so many of you—who stepped up when some of our municipal funding was drastically reduced. If you know what the library offers, then you also know the library counts on your support, so you probably already make an annual donation. Thank you! Did you know that by changing to Four Seasons Giving (<https://www.bhpl.net/fourseasons/>) and making monthly or quarterly donations, rather than just one lump sum, you increase the value of your support of the library by helping to create a steady, dependable income stream? As one donor noted, “I’m a Four Seasons donor because I hate the feeling when I forget to make my annual donation to the library. I mean to do it, but I



am prone to forget. Four Seasons lets me set it and forget it.”

Please help me warmly welcome new board members Caroline (Callie) Curtis, John Diamond, and David McDonald. Board service is a pleasure but requires a real time commitment and we’re thankful to have talented people willing to step in,

especially when we have big shoes to fill. We’ve had to say goodbye to Frank Marsteller, who served a term on the board, and Rit Dojny, who joined the board in 2011. Frank brought fresh ideas to our development committee and Rit served many roles, including two terms as our president. Both will be sorely missed.

Will Taylor, who has been a board member since 2011, had to resign because of term limits. He has been retained as an honorary board member, to continue, with board member Kathryn Dillon and a committee of passionate patrons, work on the library’s endowment campaign.

*Books are keys to wisdom's treasure.*

*Books are gates to lands of pleasure.*

*Books are paths that upward lead,*

*Books are friends: come let us read.*

~Emilie Poulsson

This quote was read to my second grade class in rural Wisconsin every week on Reading Wednesdays. For me, this was a glorious, unarguable opportunity to pull out the paperback I carried with me everywhere, and it’s not hard to imagine me as the girl on the playground with a book, not a ball, is it? Books were as promised—a gate to lands of pleasure, a friend. My family moved a lot and my home life was rocky to say the least, but books? Books were an escape



Patrons have been quite inventive in their office set-ups outside the Library while using Wi-Fi.

continued on page 6...

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Kelly Cunnane	<i>- in honor of lovers of libraries everywhere</i>	Mr. Richard Maier	Mr. & Mrs. Richard D. Priester	Mollie S. Toll
Matthew Curtis & Tracy Malloy-Curtis	Margo Harvey	<i>- in honor of Patricia Maier</i>	Dale & Karen Prinkey	Ms. Elyse Topalian
Jonathan & Malinda Curtis	Nancy Hathaway	Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Manyak	Janice W. Prior-Crofoot	Bucksport High School
Mrs. Martha Dane	Keith Herklotz	Della Martin	Janice & Reg Puckett	<i>- in memory of Donna Hickson</i>
Susan Daniels	Eckley & Caroline Herrick	Sarah, Mitch & Maisie McCarthy	Mr. Douglas Pulitzer & Ms. Tammy Vu	Johanna Turnquist
Ms. Daphne Daunt & Mr. Edward Begley	Joy W. Hoffman	<i>- in memory of Robert H. Pfeiffer</i>	Ms. Heather Pusey	Liz & John Vickery
Stu Davis	Pamela H. Holden	Mr. & Mrs. Stuart McClean	Mr. & Mrs. John E. Richardson	Carolyn & Parker Waite
Ms. Windy Dayton	Pat & Peter Horton	Molly McMillan	Ann Rittenberg	Anne M. Walker
Suzanne & David Decrow	Dr. Lorraine Huckel & Robert Bauer	Sidney McNab	Peter & Judy Robbins	Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Wheeler
Ms. Bernadette Dempsey	Mr. & Mrs. Paul & Marilyn Huss	Babs & Paul McNulty	Christy Ross	Norman & Lynn Whyte
Marcia Diamond	Richard Hutton & John Cogswell	Dr. Margaret E. McVey	Mr. Jasper Rossney	Ms. Sylvia Wilder
John & Marcia Diamond	Wendy Jagger	Mr. & Mrs. Dennis Mechem	Eileen & James Sack	Stephen Willey & Gretchen Gende
Leslie Diodati	Fran Jennings	Ray Merrill	Ms. Jocelyn Sanders	Sally Wilson
Lorraine Duffy	David Jolly & Royce Hardin	Ms. Katherine Mills	Dr. Marina Sapir	Gayalyn & Wallace Wojtowicz
Mrs. Gayle Durnbaugh	Marshall Kaiser	Barry & Susie Mills	Ruth Saxl	<i>- in memory of Roland M. Howard</i>
Lynn Duryea	Janice T. Kath	Mr. Stephen Minett	Ms. Anne Schroth	Eleanor Wright
Jean Ellis	John & Joanne Kimball	Ms. Brook E. Minner	Mr. Joan Gurley Scopinich	Susan Yaruta-Young
Ms. Virginia Emerson	Erlynn Kitagawa & Bruce Stahnke	William & Carolyn Mor	Mr. Timothy Seeley & Ms. Jill Clendenen	Paul Zierk
Ms. Rosemary Evans-Banks	Judith Knight		June E. Sendrowski	
<i>- in memory of Brian W. Banks</i>	The W. C. Koch Family		Fredrick & Constance Shair	
			Judith Shapiro	

*FSG = Four Seasons Giving*  
*Our goal is to properly acknowledge every single gift to the library. See something that is incorrect or missing? Please let us know so we can make it right!*

easily come by and mostly with the assistance of a librarian.

Librarians were like magicians to me. As soon as I finished one book, or the whole work of a favorite author, the librarian would put her finger right on the next book to try, saving me yet again. Remembering my own childhood, imagine my dismay when the pandemic closed public libraries, and my relief when Rich and the staff found a way to reopen, and then open even more.

Growing up has not gotten easier and the library is part of the village that it takes to raise a child. Recognizing this led

to the creation of the Ruth Slaven Teen Services and Outreach Librarian position last year. This allows Kendall Chapman to focus on older kids and Claire to spend more time on the youngest of our library users. We are eager to get beyond the restrictions covid-19 has placed on our library services but our online offerings have filled a niche for kids unexpectedly staying home.

Pandemic or not, online or in person, our library, with all of our support, will remain the heart of our community.

~ Sarah Pebworth

## THANK YOU! TO THESE ARTISTS WHO SUPPORTED THE LIBRARY IN 2020 THROUGH THE SALE OF THEIR ARTWORK

Louise Bourne  
 Annie Curtis  
 Heidi Daub  
 Pamela Elias  
 Sarah Faragher  
 Jill Finsen  
 Susan Finsen  
 Scott Goldberg  
 Margery & William Irvine  
 Diane Lyon

Mrs. Lyn W. Mayewski  
 Caroline Mayher  
 Jennifer Mitchell-Nevin  
 Corey A. Paradise  
 Vivian Pyle & Anthony Anemone  
 Rebekah Raye  
 Dennis Riley  
 Mr. Codey Stange & Ms. Elise Teixido  
 Marcia Stremlau



## CHILDREN'S SERVICES, 2020 STYLE

This year has shaped up to be much different from what we all expected. Even though there have been many changes and challenges, we are all in this together and doing the best that we can to keep ourselves and each other safe. I feel very fortunate that the library has been able to be open with safety precautions in place and that families have been able to access library materials, either by coming into the library or by utilizing our curbside service. It has been a great pleasure to have families back in the Children's Larchwood Room, reading books aloud and checking out big stacks of books to take home. Also, families can now make 30-minute appointments in advance to have the room to themselves.

One of my favorite parts about being a Youth Services Librarian is getting to plan and host fun and educational programs for kids. Since the pandemic began, I have moved storytime online, and increased it to twice a week, and this has been a great way to maintain connections with kids and families. Even though most of us would prefer to gather in person, this online approach has allowed us to reach new audiences. There are some families who were not able to attend storytime at the library in the past due to scheduling conflicts, but are now able to enjoy it whenever it works out for their schedule. This also makes it possible for folks who don't live on the Blue Hill Peninsula to enjoy storytime.

I love sharing picture books with kids and it is such a joy when families come to the library to check out books featured in storytime to read again and again at home. It has been really fun to hear stories from families about kids singing

storytime songs at home and performing their own storytimes. I also love receiving photos from



parents of their kids with crafts that they made at home after watching storytime!

Another program that I was hosting before the library shut down was Wild Sun Catchers, a monthly collaboration with Blue Hill Heritage

Trust. Each month, we learn about a different native plant on the Blue Hill Peninsula and do a project involving that plant such as dyeing fabric or making tea or a craft. We have now turned the program into an online offering with wonderful feedback from the community, and teachers and homeschooling families letting us know that they are using the videos as teaching materials for their students.

In other Youth Services news, Kendall Chapman was hired as the Ruth Slaven Teen Services Librarian in January and has been a wonderful addition to our staff. She has great interpersonal skills with teens and shares a lot of their interests in

graphic novels, fantasy genre fiction and role playing games such as Dungeons and Dragons. Since the library shut down in March, she has come up with many ways to engage young adults including blog posts for teens with great reading recommendations, craft-ernoons online and so much more. It has been

really great for me to be able to focus on the younger children, knowing that the teens are being well-attended to!

I look forward to the time in the future when we can gather in person with less restrictions, but until then, we will keep singing songs, being creative and con-

tinuing to read lots of stories. See you at the library—or on YouTube, email, the phone, Zoom—however we can connect!

~ Claire Malina



## STAFF TO THE RESCUE

As noted elsewhere in these pages, 2020 didn't go as planned. However, the measure of a person is not how they handle success, but rather how they respond to adversity, and in that regard our staff has done yeoman's work in this COVID year.

Thinking of patrons first, in the early days of being closed, staff reached out to some of our regulars, people who had made the library a big part of their lives, and check in to see how they were doing.

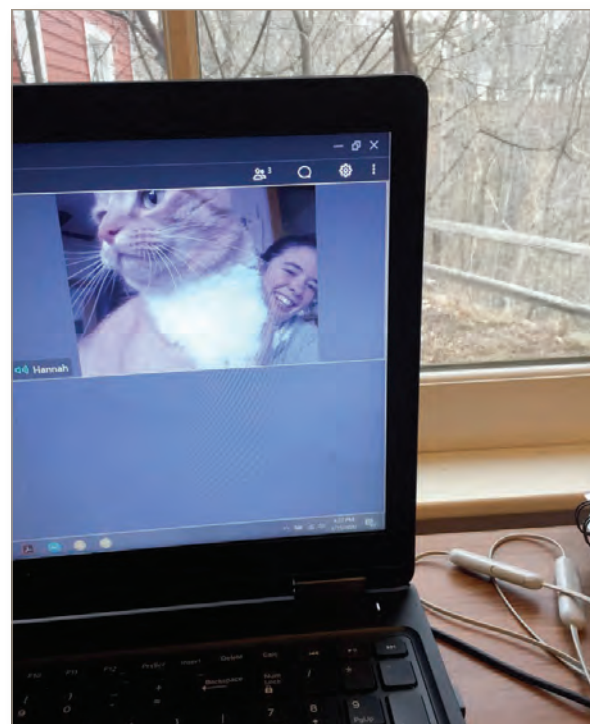
They were also determined to make our weekly newsletter a ray of sunshine in our patrons' otherwise confusing pandemic lives. We branched out into gardening and birdwatching columns by Dale and Leda Beth, an online trivia contest series by Kendall and a "stuff to do" list of staff picks of videos, book picks and other resources that could be enjoyed from home. Halle, Sheri and Leslie all kicked in staff spotlight features and staff picks to help add interest to the newsletter.

Susan Brookman, our bookkeeper, worked flexibly and well beyond the scope of her normal job, providing invaluable administrative support for a suddenly scattered staff, helped secure funding through a CARES Act PPP loan, and generally maintained good cheer along the way.

Two of our staff members consistently demonstrated leadership through this uncharted territory. Hannah Cyrus, Assistant Director, and Claire Malina, Youth Services Librarian, both went above and beyond their normal duties, working out details of reinventing library services.

Claire became a video star with online storytimes, complete with songs, stories, and craft projects that kids could do at home, later moving on to helping produce video programming for monthly Wild Sun Catchers programs and hosting other programs, such as an author event, outside.

Hannah has helped patrons adapt to their new "Zoom" world which requires even more digital expertise than before, conducting individual zoom sessions with patrons to show them how to do downloadable books, or host zoom meetings, and any other sort of digital hurdle patrons might come up against. Some have had the treat of Hannah's kitty cat hogging the zoom shot as she worked from home. She has done a number of how-to video programs that were recorded so that patrons could watch them as needed



*Hannah's cat Pippin likes to get into the Zoom shot while she's attending meetings.*

via YouTube, including "Digital Decluttering," "How to Find Reliable Information Online," and a series on how to use Gmail and Google drive features.

We honor these two outstanding individuals for their wonderful contributions to everyone's efforts to serve our patrons in this unusual year.

## NEW GRANITE BENCHES



These new benches were recently installed along the Tenney Hill walkway. One commemorates a generous gift by Rex and Lisa Thors to the Blue Hill Public Library Endowment Fund. We also thank Bob and Linda Slaven for donating the granite and Mystic Stoneworks for the construction work. A naming opportunity is still available for the second bench.

## PRAISE FROM A GRATEFUL PATRON

This much appreciated comment was received via email at the circulation desk from a grateful patron, not Paula Deitz, also appreciative of her summer office and pictured at right.

"Because of COVID, I was lucky enough to work remotely at my family's summer place in Brooksville and I just wanted to thank the whole team at the BHL for being so accommodating with supporting remote workers. When I would be on (endless) Zoom calls, my colleagues were amazed that the library set up chairs and tables and even extension cords for people to come use the good Wi-Fi at the library. It speaks so much to the amazing community in and around Blue Hill. Thank you to all the library staff for doing so much to help me (and others) during the pandemic."



*For a couple of days this summer, BHPL patron Paula Deitz had her office set-up tucked in next to the water faucet and (more importantly) the power outlet, just outside our Tenney Hill door.*