

Annual ²⁰²⁴₂₀₂₅ REPORT



WESTERLY LIBRARY
& WILCOX PARK



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BOARD OF TRUSTEES

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Mary Carol Kendzia
President



Maria Bernier
Vice President



Peter B. Robinson
Treasurer



Mary Jo Girard
Secretary



Deborah L. Bell



Thomas F. Boll



Mojie F. Friel



Robert Gervasini



Deborah Harold



Kenneth Julian



Ann Lain



Gara LaMarche



William J. Miller, Jr.



Jennifer Obrey



Colleen Sullivan



Louis M. Toscano



Mary E. Scialabba
Town of Westerly
Ex Officio



Ben Tamsky
Town of Stonington
Ex Officio



Gail Kahover
Friends President
Ex Officio

2024-2025

The annual meeting of the Memorial and Library Association was held on Wednesday, September 18, 2024 at 5:30 pm in the Auditorium, pursuant to written notice duly given.

Incorporators present: Greg Ahern, David Bell, Deborah Bell, Maria Bernier, Thomas Boll, David Culton, Anne Driscoll, Fritz Eckel, A.J. Fortier, Carol Fortier, Mojie Friel, Paul Geise, Robin Geise, Robert Gervasini, Mary Jo Girard, Mary Goodman, Doryanne Hamel, David Hannon, Deborah Harold, Scott Harold, Robert Holland, Christine Julian, Kenneth Julian, Gail Kahover, Mary Carol Kendzia, Ann Lain, Gara LaMarche, Sue Lemp, Torey Malatia, William Miller, Sharon Morgan, Peg Murphy-Bright, Helena Nulick, Jennifer Obrey, Pete Ogle, Susan Ogle, David Rathbun, Peter Robinson, Geoffrey Serra, Robin Springborn, Margaret Stamatis, Colleen Sullivan, Louis Toscano, Ruth Tureckova, and Becky Woodward.

Staff present: Executive Director Brigitte Hopkins, Assistant Director Bill Lancellotta, Park Superintendent Alan Peck, Director of Development Stacey Jackson, Head of Adult Services Caroline Badowski, Business Office Manager Sara Ross Clark, Data Entry Specialist Elizabeth Rannenber, Groundskeeper Martin Neiberg, and Custodian Teresa Peck.

President Mary Carol Kendzia presided. She welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm, noting the presence of a quorum.

Consent Agenda Approval | September 20, 2023 Minutes & Reports

President Kendzia asked for a motion to approve the minutes and reports of the September 20, 2023 Annual Meeting. Maria Bernier made a motion to approve and was seconded by Jen Obrey. The motion passed unanimously.

Call for Suggested Amendments to the Agenda

President Kendzia inquired if there were any suggested amendments to the agenda. There were none.

Recognition

Kendzia recognized Betty-Jo Cugini in absentia who is leaving the Board after finishing her three terms, as well as serving as Board President for two years. She was honored at the previous evening’s Board of Trustees meeting where she was gifted flowers, a bookmark, and a book on Napatree Point. Kendzia thanked Betty-Jo for all she has done for the library and park during the past nine years.

President’s Remarks

Kendzia said it has been a great year here at Westerly Library and Wilcox Park. She highlighted the completion of the park cottage and the hosting of the first artist-in-residence, Susan Stevenson. She also mentioned the renovation of the fountain and the generosity of Lions Club in making it happen. The library has more programs than ever for children, teens, and adults. She thanked the incorporators for their interest, passion, and their investment in then library, saying it “makes the heart of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park keep beating and remain the jewel that it is in our community”. Kendzia then handed over the meeting to Deborah Bell for nominations.

Nominations

Debbie Bell presented the Incorporators with the slate of nominations for new Incorporators, Incorporator renewals, Board officers and Trustees.

Incorporators for Election to an Additional 4-Year Term:

H. Margaret Anderson	Robert Anderson	Donna Celico
Kimberly Anderson	Garett Babij	Meredith Eckel

Mary Jo Girard	Malcolm Makin	David Panciera
Charles Glew	Ian Newbury	Fred Paretta
Kathleen Glew	Kim Newbury	John S. Payne
Ardis Holliday	Susan Ogle	Peter Robinson
Ellen Madison	Gary Palmer	

Incorporators for Election to Initial 4-Year Term:

Greg Ahern	Robin Geise	Geoff Serra
Alexander Fortier	Katie Goode	Robin Springborn
Carol Fortier	Casey Payne	John Stamatis
Paul Geise	Margaret Sano	Rebecca Woodward

Trustee for Election to an Initial 3-Year Term:

Kenneth Julian

Trustee for Election to a Second 3-Year Term:

Maria Bernier	William Miller	Lou Toscano
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Mary Jo Girard made a motion to accept the nominees and was seconded by Jen Obrey. The motion passed unanimously. Bell then presented nominations for Board of Trustees officers.

Officers:

Mary Carol Kendzia - President Mary Jo Girard - Secretary

Sharon Morgan made a motion to accept the nominees and was seconded by Maria Bernier. The motion passed unanimously.

A Year in Review – Brigitte Hopkins

President Kendzia introduced Executive Director Brigitte Hopkins. She talked about the importance of libraries and parks to our communities, saying “I can’t imagine Westerly Library without Wilcox Park. Or vice versa. We are lucky to have them together. Libraries and parks are shared spaces where people have the opportunity to gather, make connections, and enrich their lives. And that is what we do through indoor and outdoor spaces, program offerings, services, and resources”.

She discussed our core services which make up the majority of our activities, including circulation (checkouts of materials), program attendance, use of services and resources, patron assistance, and much more. We have 15,003 active library card holders; 5,705 unique borrowers with 168,838, transactions; plus 71,441 checkouts for e-material borrowing.

We provided 1,197 programs with a total of 36,462 attendees. Highlights included enriching storytimes with RI Ballet’s Nutcracker and Cinderella; author talks such as Carissa Broadbent with Lara Ehrlich in partnership with Bank Square Books, Deborah Goodrich Royce, Lara Ehrlich, Ann Hood, and Vanessa Lillie; Cookbook Club’s Cookie Swap; and Sewers in Stitches.

Youth programs included Comic Con featuring a cosplay contest, a free Power-Up Pack from Wellbeing Collaborative, competitive gaming circles, table top games in Old Main Reading Room, free subs courtesy of Jersey Mike’s, and free popcorn courtesy of Mystic Luxury Cinema; Fiddle n’ Fun; Dumpling Day; guest reader Dr. McCarten from Wood River Health; Building a Story with Flowers; Denison Pequot Nature Center; Painting with Joy Lin for Lunar New Year; Storytime with Miss Sandy; Reptile Nook; and Eco Explorers for Tweens. We provided programs and events for all ages including a Solar Eclipse Watch Party in April, where we gave away 200 pairs of solar eclipse glasses for safe viewing, and Fall Fest and Pumpkin Stroll. Community Connections provided a day filled with support, guidance, and connections to valuable resources from

financial assistance programs to housing resources and beyond.

The Association's many services include the Youth Garden, free notary services, mobile printing, exercise classes such as Yoga in the Park with Lianne, and technology assistance. The Hoxie Gallery featured an exhibit on Banned Books. The Community Art exhibit showcased the work of Polly Seip, John Craig, Richard Inserra, Elizabeth Goor, Tom O'Connell, Lois Lawrence, Jillian Barber, and Guy Daigle. Other exhibits featured Westerly School students, and members of the New England Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators, just to name a few.

This year saw the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Artist-In-Residence Cottage. Anyone who has not yet seen the renovated space should reach out to Hopkins or Stacey Jackson.

We have lots of resources including a Seed Library. The Makerspace has a laser cutter & engraver, sewing machines, light table, media conversion equipment, and fiber crafts. We have STEAM to Go Backpacks, a World Languages Collection with popular titles in languages such as Spanish and Chinese, and the Comics Plus Database offering 4,000 comics and manga. Our Library of Things contains many items. Some recently added items are a hand truck, Happy Light, laser measure, light meter, metal detector, projector, Putt Partee game, and a stroller.

Hopkins discussed the Strategic Plan which helps guide the Association. The plan has four goals with 17 strategies and 95 tactics. We are about a year and a half in and have completed 17 tactics, with 39 in progress.

Goal 1 is to ***Strengthen Financial Sustainability and Organizational Stability***. Every day, we work to maintain and improve all organizational assets to ensure our longevity in the community. We do this through development and prudent fiscal management, ensuring operational stability, and expanding our outreach. We help fund our operating budget and additional needs in many ways from Annual Fund, to grants, and large private donations. We have added a phone charging station funded through a legislative grant sponsored by Senator Gu. Tweens Stow and Go Closet for craft materials, snacks, period products, and a white board the teens LOVE to decorate was funded by our generous Friends. They also funded StackMap, a collection mapping tool that will help you locate the book in the library once you find it in the catalog. We couldn't do all of this without our staff. Proper staffing is critical to organizational stability. And we have the best staff! Hopkins recognized the staff members in attendance: Bill Lancellotta, Sara Clark, Caroline Badowski, Alan Peck, Martin Neiberg, Stacey Jackson, Elizabeth Rannenberg, and Teresa Peck. Fundraisers of note included the Sanderson Sisters Halloween Spooktacular, Garden Market Fair, Holiday Wreath Making, and Jack Spratt Talk with the proceeds funding digitization of the Westerly Sun. This year we were the recipient of the Black & White Ball at the Ocean House.

Goal 2 is to ***Be Resilient, Be Adaptable to Change***. Resilience and adaptability are important for all of us in a time of unrelenting change at an unparalleled pace. Being agile when it comes to predicting, withstanding, adapting to, and recovering from whatever "change" we are faced with is imperative so that we can continue doing what we are doing. This past year we have funded a Building Envelope Study done to see where the building was vulnerable so that we can be proactive with repairs and upgrades. We have planted native plants on the Esplanade and Pollinator Garden and park staff have diligently improved drainage in the park holding beds.

Goal 3 is to ***Build Lifelong Relationships***. We work on forging and strengthening good relationships with everyone throughout their entire lives with us. From the patrons we interact with each day to the collaborations and partnerships we have with local businesses and organizations. Some of our collaborations have been La Befana with Dante Society, Funda Fest with RI Black Storytellers, Chorus of Westerly-Pre-Concert Lecture: Mozart – Mass in C Minor, Get Your Bike Ready for the Season with Remy's

Bikes, and Senior Day at the YMCA. We are building relationships with donors and volunteers, and honoring them with the volunteer luncheon and the Gold Leaf Event. We also provide donor tours both of the library and in the park. Pride in the Park helped strengthen our ties with the community and such organizations as the United Congregational Church of Westerly, Wood River Health, Pompelmo Gelato, Wellbeing Collaborative, Rhode Island Regional Coalitions, Westerly Pride Club, Stonington Pride, and many more.

Goal 4 is to ***Serve as the Access Point to Resources that Contribute to Enhancing Quality of Life***. Providing a connection to information and resources is just one of the many things we do to enhance the quality of life for our community members. We are teaching our youth how to grow food and donating it people in need. Our Community Resource Advocate or Mental Health Advocate can help people during stressful times. People can enjoy the outdoors with a sound bath, as well as access the past with Westerly Yearbooks and local interest photos. There are so many resources that patrons have access to, including printing, emailing, scanning, faxing, learning basic computer skills, file management and organization, word processing, internet navigation and searching, job searching, resume writing and review, navigating government websites, voter registration, DMV appointments and forms, filing for unemployment, new device setup, accessing online services such as library eBooks and eAudiobooks, streaming services, and healthcare portals.

Hopkins concluded, "I don't have to tell you how impactful Westerly Library and Wilcox Park are. But, it's nice to hear it from our patrons. It is a meaningful place for so many people, and it provides peace and respite, a place to connect with friends, time to learn and grow, and so much more. We strive to provide the highest quality spaces and experiences for our patrons in a welcoming environment. Based on feedback over the past year, it appears we are doing a rather decent job". She then shared some of the kind words that the public has told us over the past year. Hopkins thanked everyone for their support and for everything they do every day to help make Westerly Library & Wilcox Park the place to be.

Good of the Order

Kendzia recognized Fritz Eckel who moved a resolution from the floor that "all of the acts and resolves of the Officers and Board of Trustees of the Association since the Annual Meeting of September 20, 2023 are hereby approved, ratified and confirmed." The resolution was seconded by David Rathbun and unanimously approved.

Announcements

Kendzia encouraged everyone to pick up a copy of the Annual Report and for new Incorporators to look at the various committees to see if they would be interested in joining one. She commended the staff for their great friendliness, thanked the Board of Trustees for their support and encouragement, and thanked all those present for their passion for Westerly Library & Wilcox Park.

Adjournment

At 6:05 pm Maria Bernier made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Deborah Bell. The motion passed unanimously. The next Annual Meeting of the Memorial and Library Association will be on September 17, 2025.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Jo Girard, Secretary

Executive Committee:

Mary Carol Kendzia, President
 Maria Bernier, Vice President
 Mary Jo Girard, Secretary
 Pete Robinson, Treasurer, Finance Chair

Audit Committee:

Colleen Sullivan, Chair
 Maria Bernier, Trustee
 Chris Fusaro
 Scott Harold
 Bill Meyer
 Bill Miller, Trustee
 Pete Robinson, Trustee
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio
 Deana Filippelli, CPA

Building Committee:

Tom Boll, Chair
 Rick Constantine
 Bob Gervasini, Trustee
 Scott Harold
 Jim Moran
 David Rathbun
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Development Committee:

Jen Obrey, Chair
 Deborah Bell, Trustee
 Bill Miller, Trustee
 Deborah Harold, Trustee
 Ken Julian, Trustee
 Helena Nulick
 Rose Weston
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Education Committee:

Lou Toscano
 Robin Geise
 Mary Goodman
 Deb Harold
 Tim Flanagan
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Finance Committee:

Pete Robinson, Trustee, Chair
 David Bailey
 Rick Constantine
 Doryanne Hamel
 Rob Holland
 Ken Julian
 Gara LaMarche, Trustee
 Colleen Sullivan, Trustee
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio
 Deana Filippelli, CPA

Investment Committee:

Rick Constantine
 Rob Holland
 Ken Julian
 Bill Meyer
 Pete Robinson, Trustee
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio
 Deana Filippelli, CPA

Nominating/Governance Committee:

Debbie Bell, Chair
 Mojie Friel, Trustee
 Ann Lain, Trustee
 Lou Toscano, Trustee
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Ocean Community Collaborative:

Mojie Friel, Co-chair, BOT Liaison
 Mary Goodman, Co-chair
 Representatives from various local nonprofits
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Park Committee:

Bob Gervasini, Trustee
 Sandi Carmichael
 Mary-Jo Girard, Trustee
 Buz Callaghan
 David Hannon
 Heather McGregor
 Lisa Mueller
 David Osborne

Fred Paretta
 David Rathbun
 Don Weiss
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

Technology Committee:

Maria Bernier, Trustee, Chair
 Mark Benson, Pastor, Joy Fellowship
 Carly Callahan, United Theatre, Director
 Theresa Gregal, Literacy Specialist, LVWC
 Sarah Hazelton, WARM Center
 Brianna Lord, Jonnycake Center of Westerly
 Tom Pearce, Director, Westerly Education Center
 Maureen Tissiere, Tri-County Community Action
 Ruth Tureckova, Director, Olean Center
 Kathy Walsh
 Mary Carol Kendzia, BOT President, Ex Officio

**President's**

Dear friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park,

As my term as President of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park Board of Trustees comes to an end, I'm happy to say that the Association is thriving and ready to meet the challenges of our times.

It's been great to get to know people on the staff of the library and park. Seeing the knowledge, creativity, and enthusiasm of everyone who works here confirms that the Association is a unique foundation of the Westerly and Stonington community. The tremendous support and contributions of incorporators, donors, and committee members strengthens the work of the staff and administration of the library and park.

The Association has many unique services to offer the public. The technology department is a stronghold for computer needs, and the makerspace has equipment to facilitate many DIY projects. Stop by the Kids Room any day of the week if you need a reason to smile; you'll see children playing with the games and puzzles, reading books, listening to storytime or making crafts, and caretakers grateful for the chance to have a fun and educational place to bring their kids. The various activities, clubs, and programs offered at the library give patrons of any age the chance to meet others with like interests and explore new opportunities. And Wilcox Park continues to be a haven for all. Almost 120 years later, this Victorian strolling park still provides a place for quiet walks and runs, family outings, and many kinds of community events and celebrations.

The financial support of the community continues to grow, confirming the value and appreciation of all the library and park has to offer. Since the first thread of life took place for the Association back in 1895, Westerly Library & Wilcox Park is well positioned to meet the needs of the community for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,
 Mary Carol Kendzia

President, Westerly Library and Wilcox Park

"I've never seen a more community centered library in my life—thank you for the work you do."



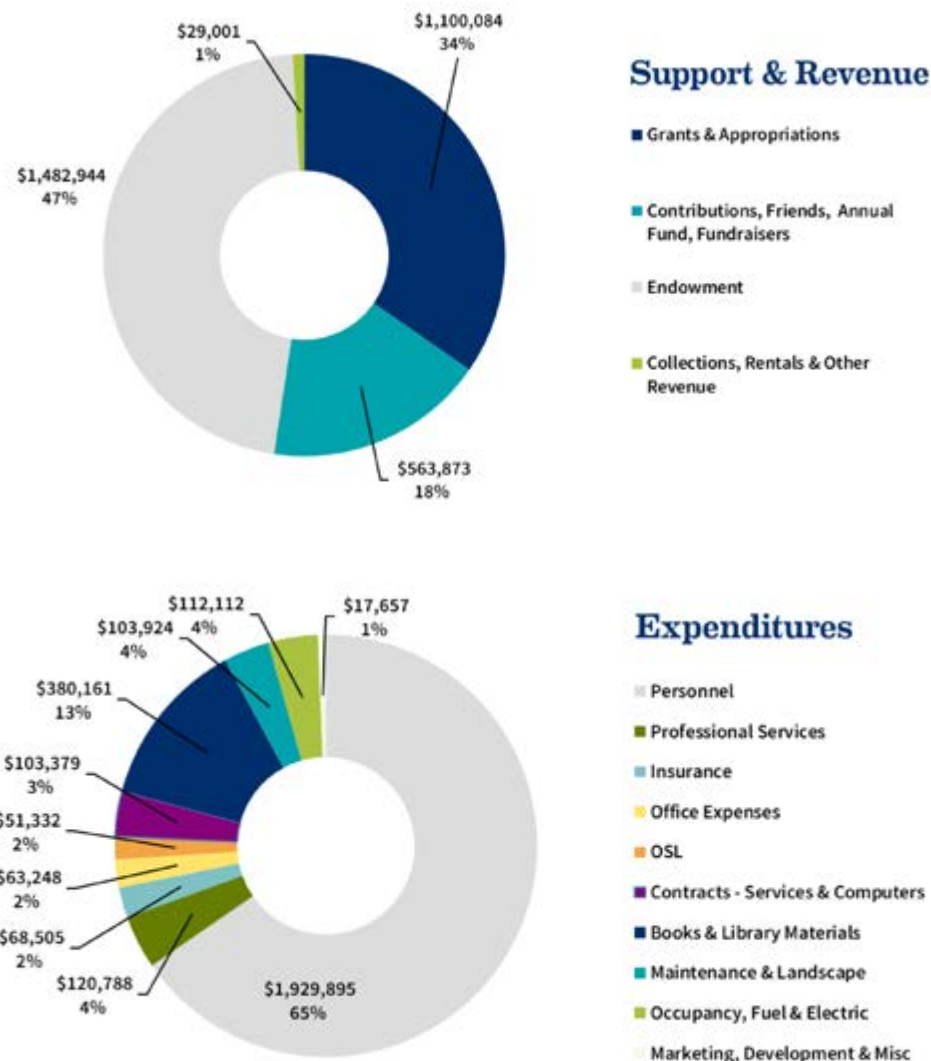
Treasurer's

As we close out FY25, we are pleased to report that we remain in a strong financial position. Following a sharp market decline in April, the markets have recovered. We will be replenishing our fixed income portfolio to ensure five years of inflation-adjusted cash flow.

We anticipate ending FY25 with a surplus (final amount to be determined). As with last year's surplus, the Finance Committee and Board agree that these funds should be set aside to address anticipated capital expenses for the building and park. These may include, but are not limited to, improvements to the building envelope, heating system, and pond. The Board will determine the specific use of these funds on a case-by-case basis, based on timing and need.

I want to extend my sincere thanks to our patrons, supporters, library staff, consulting accountant, and the volunteer members of our Finance and Investment Committees. Their kindness, wisdom, and dedication continue to inspire and sustain our work.

Respectfully submitted,
Peter B. Robinson, Treasurer



Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met with the Auditors, Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan LLC on November 25, 2024. The committee reviewed the draft of the Memorial and Library Association of Westerly Financial Statements as of June 30, 2024 and 2023 together with independent auditors' report. An unmodified (clean) opinion was expressed. The Committee voted unanimously to accept the report and pass it on to the Board for acceptance. The Board unanimously approved the report as presented at its December 17, 2024 meeting.

The 2024-2025 audit schedule is consistent with prior years and is expected to be completed in November 2025. We anticipate no significant issues to arise.

Respectfully submitted,
Colleen Sullivan, Chair

Building Committee

A detailed study was performed to identify areas of the Library's exterior surfaces that will need attention in the short term and also provide a timeline and estimated cost. The items identified have been incorporated into the overall budget. Some items have already been addressed.

The Library has updated the interior signage to provide clearer information and add some color.

An evaluation of the existing, 30+ years old heating system is underway. We anticipate a significant expense, and this evaluation will assist in financial planning.

The Committee meets monthly and we address maintenance issues ranging from roof leaks, doors that need replacing, exterior masonry repairs, and interior/exterior room finishes. This year we will prioritize the long-term mechanical and cosmetic issues so that this wonderful building continues to age gracefully.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas F. Boll, Chair

Development Committee

The Development Committee assists the Director of Development and the Executive Director in raising funds to meet the Annual Operating Budget, along with support to the Association's management board and staff with fundraising efforts and event planning.

The 2024-2025 fiscal year was an outstanding one for the Development Committee, marked by strong fundraising efforts and a highly successful Annual Fund. We not only met our Annual Fund goal of \$220,000, we surpassed it by an incredible \$138,619, reaching a total of \$358,619. 2024-2025 Annual Fund was up \$120,010 over FY 2023-2024. We were thrilled by the significant increase in giving this year! Thanks to the dedication of the Committee and the leadership of Director of Development, Stacey Jackson, our fundraising events were a tremendous success and played a key role in this remarkable growth.

This year, the Committee brought back the Mini Golf fundraiser as the main event to help meet our \$32,000 fundraising goal. The event was a success, thanks in large part to the generosity of our sponsors, who contributed \$18,900, exceeding our goal. The Committee, board, and library staff all played vital roles in making the event a success. To improve the experience, the event layout was updated from the previous year, allowing for smoother play and a more relaxed pace. Families and children participated during the day,

while adults enjoyed evening sessions across three time slots. In total, the fundraiser brought in \$26,783 in gross revenue—an outstanding outcome!

Several additional smaller fundraisers took place throughout the year, including Dine-to-Donate and Duck Race sales. We also began to offer ongoing programs that educate the community on giving opportunities such as IRA contributions, stock donations, and more. These efforts not only supported our fundraising goals but also helped raise awareness of the valuable resources and services the library provides to the public.

The Committee held monthly meetings over this past fiscal year via ZOOM. Much appreciation to the volunteer committee members Deborah Bell, Deborah Harold, Ken Julian, Mary Carol Kendzia, Bill Miller, Helena Nulick and Rose Weston for their work this past year. We truly appreciate the continued support and advice during the year. Also a special thank you to the Library and Park staff for all of your work to make this past year a success.

Respectfully,
Jennifer Obrey, Chair

Education Committee

Continuing its charge to “provide support in the promotion, development, and implementation of special programming”, the Education Committee has overseen tremendous growth in special programming, particularly in the Youth Services Department. Having undergone substantial staffing changes during the year, Youth Services, under the direction of Mel Fricchione, has provided the bulk of programming and served literally hundreds of attendees in Kids, Tweens, and Teens. She has dedicated herself to strengthening current programs such as Pride Club and Summer Reading as other programs, Kindergarten Gear Up and 1,000 Books before Kindergarten gain traction. Lynn Dougan has seamlessly returned to the Teen space as Teen Librarian and has brought her flowered tiara enthusiasm to all the young patrons that enter. She is focused on building the numbers of attendees by providing diverse opportunities, recently using card playing and music.

Ben Green continues to bring his unique approach as Dungeons and Dragons is a mainstay in Tween programming. He has focused much attention on STEM related programs through outreach to organizations such as The Society of Women Engineers and creation of the Tween Alliance for Acceptance. Recently, Julianna Risica has brought her enthusiasm and experience to the department as the newest Kids Librarian. She will supervise the ever popular Storytime backpacks, adding new themes regularly.

The Committee is made up of diverse talents, who are always willing to step up as volunteers, but also provide experienced guidance to the development and creation of programs. Members include Mary Goodman, Tim Flanagan, Deb Harold, Robin Geise, Mel Fricchione, Ben Green, Lynn Dougan, and Julianna Risica.

Respectfully submitted,
Lou Toscano, Chair

Nominating/Governance Committee

The Nominating/Governance Committee’s purpose is to concern itself with matters pertaining to the qualification and identification of Incorporators and Trustees. Further, the committee shall assist the Board in matters of governance.

Strategic Board and Incorporator recruitment is the focus of the Nominating Committee’s work. We continually monitor and assess the current and anticipated needs of the Association to recruit individuals who possess specific expertise to ensure that the Board and all committees of the Library and Park are comprised of highly qualified community-minded individuals.

This year we reviewed the Committees of the Board. Given the critical importance of our investments to the financial stability of the Association, it was recommended that the bylaws be amended to make the Investment Committee a full committee of the Board rather than a subcommittee of Finance. This recommendation was approved by the board, subject to approval of the Incorporators at the Annual Meeting.

The following list of nominations was presented and approved by the Board of Trustees at its July 15, 2025 meeting.

Incorporators for Election to an Additional 4-Year Term:

Leigh Algieri	John Lathrop	Amy Randall
Cynthia Arsenault	Walter Lentz	Gene Renz
Susan Capalbo	Robert Liguori	Paulette Retsinas
Alison Croke	Almedia Livingston	Cynthia Sculco
Jeanne DeMovick	Torey Malatia	Lauren Sposato
Ann Driscoll	Lido Mochetti	Nicholas Stahl
Frederick Eckel	Mary Jo Orsinger	Margaret Stamatis
Mojie Friel	Victor Orsinger	Louis Toscano
Stephen Greene	John Payne, Jr.	Rose Weston

Incorporators for Election to an Initial 4-Year Term:

Susan Gridley	Warren Miller	Dorie Singer
William Gridley	James Moran	Elissa Sweet
Bethany Kearsch	Anthony Perrone	Geri Theadore

Trustee for Election to First Term:

Timothy Flanagan

Trustee for Election to Second Term:

Mary Carol Kendzia

Trustee for Election to Third Term:

Mojie Friel	Jennifer Obrey	Peter Robinson
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Officers:

Maria Bernier - President	Mary Jo Girard - Secretary
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Respectfully submitted on behalf of the Nominating/Governance Committee,
Deborah Bell, Chair

Ocean Community Collaborative

The Westerly Library & Wilcox Park contributed again this year to the success of the Ocean Community Collaborative (OCC) as an active participant and host of many of its meetings. The OCC is composed of local nonprofit leaders who share an interest in connecting on topics in common. We come together to share updates about our organizations, to exchange knowledge and expertise, and to discuss current issues that impact our work.

This year our topics of conversation have ranged from the usage of social media platforms, to attracting youth volunteers, to challenges given federal budget uncertainties. Our discussions include sharing best practices, policies, and online resources. Often our meetings prompt suggestions for future speakers.

It was a pleasure to host speaking programs, open to the public, on relevant topics. Erica Busillo Adams, President of Association of Fundraising Professionals Rhode Island chapter, spoke about “Philanthropy and Working Across Generations.” Senator Victoria Gu talked about “What Rhode Island is Doing About Climate Change.” Both talks were well-received and well-attended. Members enjoyed attending meetings at Ocean Community YMCA, The Chorus of Westerly, and The Cottage in Wilcox Park which included tours of their sites.

Engaged participation has come from representatives of organizations including: Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park, Gateway Health, Literacy Volunteers of Washington County, Ocean Community YMCA, Olean Center, Stand Up for Animals, The Chorus of Westerly, The Dante Society, The United Theatre, The Westerly College Club, WARM Center, Inc., Weekapaug Green, Westerly ARC, Westerly Armory, Westerly Education Center, Westerly Land Trust, Westerly Lions Club, Westerly Museum of American Impressionism, Westerly Village, Wood River Health, and Young Global Leadership Foundation among others. We have seen increased participation this year with the addition of new members, providing additional perspectives.

A special thanks to Brigitte Hopkins and Bill Lancellotta for their continued contributions to the OCC and for hosting our meetings and speaking programs.

Respectfully submitted,
Mojie F. Friel, Co-chair
Mary M. Goodman, Co-chair

Park Committee

Wilcox Park experienced another extremely active year of events and activities. Use of the Park by individuals and groups was, and continues to be, extensive.

Many notable events were held. The annual Chorus of Westerly Summer Pops Concert, Virtu Arts Festival, Colonial Theatre, Flock Theatre, smaller concerts, wedding ceremonies, exercise classes and wreath making classes, as well as the annual Garden Market Fair and Friends pop-up book sales.

Many projects, small and large, were also completed. Most notably the exterior renovation of the barn, the construction of a 300’ retaining/seat wall near the band stand, bluestone paving replacement at the library bike rack as well as many small maintenance projects throughout the park.

A major database was completed that records all dedication memorials from the 1960s to the present. This database includes 147 trees, 33 shrubs, 54 benches and 22 monuments and markers.

Alan Peck and his staff along with many volunteers work tirelessly to complete many projects each year that serve to ensure the viability of our park and to enhance its beauty and versatility. A group of URI Master Gardeners, the Friends of the Library and Park as well as many community volunteers oversee the many garden areas throughout the park. This year over 70 volunteers participated, a truly outstanding effort that reflects just how much the park is appreciated.

The park achieved ArbNet accreditation as a Level 2 Arboretum. This is a major accomplishment as we are the only level two arboretum in the state west of Narragansett Bay.

The next major challenge for the park committee is the restoration of the pond. Over the years the pond has suffered from an infestation of green algae and evasive vegetation. Treatments to the pond are ongoing with nutrient analysis indicating high concentrations of phosphorous. The pond study is underway by park staff and GZA, a large national geotechnical, water, ecology and environmental engineering firm with offices in Providence, RI. Testing should be completed this fall, along with a preliminary corrective plan for consideration.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert J. Gervasini, Chair

Technology Outreach Committee

This was the third full year for the Technology Outreach Committee, after its initial formation in February 2022. The committee has a dual purpose: (1) to provide ideas, feedback, advice, and connections to library staff for technology related services, programs, and initiatives offered by the library, and (2) to help community organizations and individuals make connections to the technology that the library can provide them. The committee is currently composed of two library staff members (Head of Public Services and Technology & Innovation Coordinator), one library Board member as committee chair, and two employees from local nonprofits.

During this year, the library installed a new grant-funded secure indoor charging locker for phones and tablets, and the Committee helped to spread the word of its availability. Committee members also provided input on a grant application to bring more hands-on tech help to Westerly residents. The grant of \$4000 from the Public Library Association was received in Fall 2024 to support the use of specific Digital Navigator curriculum for all ages, with lessons both for patrons as well as tech staff. Committee members provided suggestions on how to collaborate with community partners, especially through upcoming programs, classes, and events. The Committee also suggested potential local businesses with a technology aspect to invite to the Community Connections event in the spring.

In spring 2025, Mary Carol Kendzia joined the Committee as an additional Board member. She will attend the meetings of the Basic Needs Network to represent the Tech Outreach Committee. This is an important opportunity for sharing information about the library services as well as learning more about the technology barriers in our community.

In the coming fiscal year, the Tech Outreach Committee will invite new membership from a broader range of community organizations and will transition to new leadership.

Respectfully submitted,
Maria Bernier, Chair

“The library is the place to be in Westerly. I love the community engagement!”



Executive Director’s

Looking back at FY25

This past year marked a renewed focus on community engagement, accessibility, environmental sustainability, and cultural enrichment. As stewards of knowledge and nature, Westerly Library and Wilcox Park continues to serve as a vital hub for lifelong learning and shared experience. From expanding digital resources to hosting inclusive programs in our historic park, we strive to meet the evolving needs of our community while honoring our past. We could not have been successful without our mission, vision, and values and strategic plan, guiding every decision, inspiring action, and ensuring long-term impact.

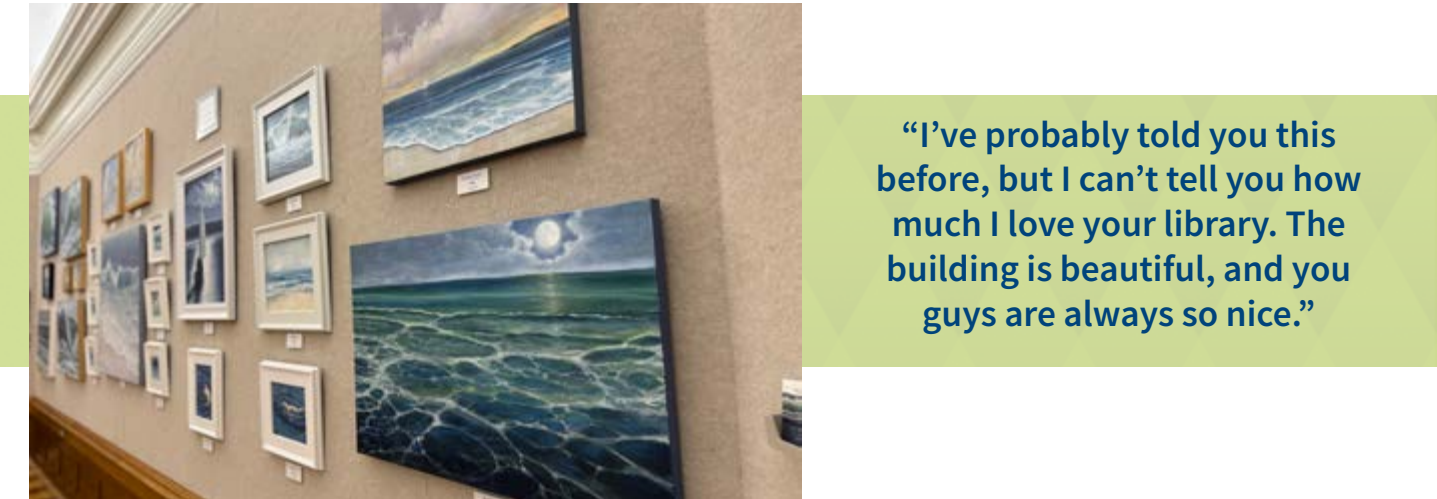
Mission: To strengthen community and enrich lives by stimulating intellect and sparking imagination through access to literature, information, technology, nature, and the arts.

Vision: Strive to be a premier intellectual, cultural, and botanical asset for the region.

Core Values: Stewardship, Equitable Access, Respect, Collaboration, Enrichment

Our mission, to strengthen community and enrich lives by stimulating intellect and sparking imagination through access to literature, information, technology, nature, and the arts, helps us stay focused on serving our community and our users. Our vision, to strive to be a premier intellectual, cultural, and botanical asset for the region, inspires us and sets a high bar for growth and excellence. Our core values shape our culture and behavior ensuring that our decisions are ethical, inclusive, and community centered. And our Strategic Plan ensures that everything we do stays aligned with community needs; that we make thoughtful, transparent decisions, and we deliver services that are impactful and future ready.

This past fiscal year is proof that we continue to stay true to our guiding documents which act as a compass, road map, and fuel for both the library and park. And our connection to our primary charge - serving our community - is always at the forefront of what we do. Whether a child discovers the joy of reading, a volunteer plants hope in the park, or a neighbor finds warmth in a community event, Westerly Library and Wilcox Park remain a place where stories - both written and lived - flourish.



“I’ve probably told you this before, but I can’t tell you how much I love your library. The building is beautiful, and you guys are always so nice.”

The preceding Committee Reports capture so much of what it takes to operate Westerly Library & Wilcox Park from fiscal management, to fundraising, facility maintenance, and park supervision. The following is just a snapshot of both the outward facing services, programs, and resources we offered, as well as the internal administration of the organization, the progress of our strategic plan strategies, human resources, and the review and development of policies.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Programming plays a vital role in enriching the community we serve: it provides engagement and connection, provides additional access to lifelong learning, offers cultural and intellectual enrichment, serves marginalized groups, and can be a catalyst for broader social impact. We are so proud of the programming we offer in the library and the park - and we are grateful for all of our community partners and collaborators that work with us to provide such wonderful programming to our community members free of charge.

Weekly Snapshot - Following is a week in library & park life. We have 35 staff members creating, collaborating, and executing programming which are offered during the 60 hours we are open each week. Here are just a few of the 1,078 programs and events attended by an estimated 38,827 people in FY25:

Mondays

- Eco-Explorers (kids & tweens)
- Freedom to Read Panel Discussion
- Monday Night Book Discussion
- Poetry Gathering
- Sewers N Stitches
- Stop Motion Mondays
- The Rhode Island 39 Club: Your Passport & Guide to Exploring RI
- The Truth Behind Investigating the Unknown

Tuesdays

- Patricia Walsh Chadwick: *Breaking Glass: Tales from the Witch of Wall Street*
- Decoding the Mysteries of Cats (virtual program)
- Flutes and Piano Recital with John Graham, Karen Toy, & Sara Boyd
- Knit & Crochet
- Mostly Fiction Book Club
- Sewing Basics
- Teen Dungeon & Dragons
- Tween Dungeons & Dragons (3 different sessions)
- Youth Garden Club

Wednesdays

- America and the Holocaust
- American Senior Benefits Informational Session: Medicare and Medicaid parts A, B, C and D
- Animation Nation (tweens)
- Dr. Adaira Landry and Dr. Resa Lewiss: MicroSkills: Small Actions, Big Impact
- Community Resource Advocate
- Cookbook Club
- Essentrics Stretch in the Park (seasonal)
- Genealogy Workshop: Do You Have a Revolutionary War Ancestor?
- Healthy Aging Meet-Up
- Irish Coastal Club Irish Language Classes
- Literacy Volunteers of Washington County: Immigration Lawyer Q & A
- Napatree Hawk Watch: 30 years of Identifying & Counting Migrating Hawks
- Pride Club
- Romance author Elissa Bass: Happy Hour
- Silent Book Club
- Tech Socials

- The Serviceberry Book Club with Westerly Land Trust
- The Stonington Madrigal Singers presents “Italia Mia”
- Storytime (kids)
- 4th Annual Head to Toe Wellness Fair with Wood River Health

Thursdays

- Baby Playtime
- Hilary Klotz Steinman Doc Screening: “Change, Not Charity: The Americans with Disabilities Act”
- Friends Book Sale Pop-Ups on the Esplanade (summers)
- Get Organized & Clear the Clutter: Clearing Your Way to a Brighter Summer
- Laser Cutter Basics
- Mental Health Advocate
- Science Storytime (kids)
- Teen Crafternoons and Kids Craft Times
- The 3 Foragers: Edible Plants and Fungi of Autumn
- Tween LEGO Club

Fridays

- AFP, RI Chapter: Philanthropy and Working Across Generations
- Project Outreach Veterans Assistance
- Tween Librarian Club

Saturdays

- 2nd Annual Community Connections: Every Neighbor Counts
- 3rd Annual Fall Fest & Pumpkin Stroll
- Westerly Writers Group
- Author Talk and Illustration Demo with Regina Linke: Big Enough
- Comic Con (all ages)
- Community Yoga Class in Wilcox Park
- Funda Fest 27
- Library of Things Demo Day
- Lunar New Year Celebration: Year of the Snake
- Master Gardener Walking Tours
- Pride in the Park
- Sensory Saturday (kids)
- Wreath Making Workshop and Annual Tree Lighting

Sunday

- Annual Garden Market Fair

Hoxie Gallery - Our vibrant public exhibition space showcases the work of local artists throughout the year. Here is who we hosted this past year:

- July - local author-illustrator Regina Linke
- August - local artist Qimin Liu and his son Ethan Liu
- September - 2nd Annual Community Art Show
- October - local artist Ivona Herzog Verbeke
- November - Cryptid Museum
- December – “Paper Visions” group show with members of 19 on Paper
- January - Transcending the Blue: Touch, Look, and Wonder by artist Jen Wilkosz.
- February - local artist Ellen Gregory
- March - Paul Helgesen: Life in the Maritimes

- April - The Artists of the Olean Center: See ME
- May - Westerly Public Schools: Student Exhibition
- June - Connecticut Academy of Fine Arts | 114th Annual Juried Exhibition

Artist-in-Residence (AIR)

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Susan Stephenson | o Musical Theatre Audition Workshop |
| o Provided an Informal Exhibition: Reconnecting | • Christine Koubek Flynn |
| • Dave Solomon | o Imagination and the Transformation of Personal Experience in Fiction and Memoir |
| o Film Screening and Q&A Mr. Holmes | o Introduction to Personal and College Essays |

The Pop-Up @ Coy - A temporary activation zone for non-profits, small businesses, artists, community groups, and individuals. The space was used for several purposes including:

- | | |
|----------------------------|---|
| • LRNZ Art & Design | • Friends Book Sales / Friends Hidden Book Shoppe |
| • The Candy Box | |
| • Holiday Pop-Up at Coy | • Hygge & Hot Chocolate |
| • Girl Scouts Cookie Booth | |

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

We offer a wide range of services that go far beyond lending books. This includes a robust summer reading program for all ages, digital access such as free Wi-Fi, public computers, eBooks and e-audiobooks, digitized Westerly Sun, digital historic photo library, and notary services. We strive to enhance what we offer by improving existing services and establishing new ones such as:

- Access to New York Times online including News, Games, Cooking, Wirecutter, and The Athletic
- New local author shelf, located near the new books on 1st floor
- Expansion of the world language collection (mostly Spanish)
- Kids Library of Things
- Additional museum passes: Niantic Children’s Museum and Slater Memorial Museum
- Public and Staff Wi-Fi upgrades
- New carpeting in the Old Main Reading Room and Auditorium
- Plant Cutting Library
- ArbNet Level II Arboretum accreditation
- New interior signage/wayfinding
- “Homeless Training” for staff
- Artist Community Alliance membership for global Artist-in-Residence opportunities
- Free period product dispensers in public restrooms thanks to the Friends

COLLABORATION / PARTNERSHIPS

We collaborated with so many wonderful local/regional partners including:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Chorus of Westerly | • New England Shoreline Section of the Society of Women Engineers |
| • Colonial Theatre | • Next-Up Music |
| • Dante Society of Westerly | • Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce |
| • Flock Theatre | • The Rotary Club of Westerly |
| • Florence Griswold Museum | • The United Theatre |
| • Frank Olean Center | • URI Master Gardeners |
| • Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park | • Westerly and Stonington Public Schools |
| • Irish Coastal Club | • Westerly ARC |
| • Literacy Volunteers of Washington County | |

- Westerly Area Peace and Justice Group
 - Westerly Town Band
- Wood River Health

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

We play a vital role in engaging with our community - not just as a place to borrow books, but as dynamic hubs of connection, learning, and support. It’s not just about what we have for our community, but what we do for our community. Here are just a few statistics to show how much we reach the members of our community with our services, resources, and programs. Please see the infographic at the end of this report for more information.

- Newly refreshed monthly E-magazine sent to 9,902 people - 14.4% increase over last year
- School Visits
 - To: 29 visits reaching 2,437 students
 - From: 790 students during 39 visits
- Social Media followers increased by:
 - Facebook 6.8%
 - Instagram 17.1%
 - YouTube 43%
- Homebound deliveries made to 3 patrons each month
- Seed & Plant Cuttings Libraries registered
- 1,218 library cards issued
- Makerspace equipment used 254 times
- Private event/meeting spaces booked 102 times with 1,675 attendees
- Study Rooms were booked 1,226 times
- Museum passes checked out 262 times
- 15 lbs. of leafy greens and herbs from the Youth Garden donated to Jonnycake Center of Westerly

STRATEGIC GOALS

Our strategic goals help us shift from being a reactive service provider towards a visionary community leader. They help to ensure that we remain vital, inclusive, and innovative and ready to meet today’s challenges and tomorrow’s possibilities.

We just finished year two of this four year plan. Here is our progress to date:

Goal	Tactic	Completed	In Progress	Not Started	Totals
1	24	10	12	2	24
2	25	14	8	3	25
3	15	4	6	5	15
4	31	13	8	10	31
	95	41	34	20	95

Over the past year we have completed 23 more tactics (of the 95) including the following:

Goal 1: Strengthen financial sustainability and organizational stability

Standardized the staff onboarding process

- Repurposed the Café space as a community Pop-Up space
- Developed a Social Media Policy & Strategy to improve engagement with our followers

- Succession Plans developed for all key personnel
- Secured Human Resource Consultant to assist managers on all levels with consistent oversight

Goal 2: Be resilient; be adaptable to change

- Achieve ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation

Goal 3: Build lifelong relationships

- The Hoxie Gallery is reserved every April for Olean Center artists, May for Westerly Schools Student Exhibition and every September for a Community Art Exhibit

Goal 4: Serve as the access point to resources that contribute to enhancing quality of life

- Installed charging lockers for phones, tablets, & laptops in the library
- Community Connections annual event established
- Installed new interior wayfinding and designed new interpretative signage for the park

Future Initiatives / Looking Ahead

- Renovating key library spaces with modern amenities
- Expanding bilingual collections and services
- Developing a new “Art in the Park” public installation series
- Launching a digital history archive in partnership with regional institutions

STAFFING AND OPERATIONS

Staff and policy are absolutely foundational to the successful operation of the library and park. They’re not just behind-the-scenes elements—they shape the experience, safety, and effectiveness of these community spaces. Our staff bring the mission to life. Policies keep it on track. Together, they ensure that libraries and parks are not just functional—but transformational. We appreciate what each and every staff member brings to the table for the time they are with us.

Staff who transitioned out (* remain on-call):

- Brianna Botelho
 - Maria Burgess
 - Kelli Butler
 - Kelley Clairmont*
 - Gina D’Ambrosia*
- Rebecca Graebner
 - Colleen King
 - Meghan King
 - Evelyn McLaughlin
 - Raisa Norberg
- Debbie Northup*
 - Kayla Polanco
 - Elizabeth Rannenberg

Staff who transitioned in:

- Anna Jones
 - Robin Bell
 - Ericka Carranza
 - Pat Cleary
- Kelley Clairmont
 - Keith Kimberlin
 - Karen LaMotte
 - Talia Temporal
- Franklin Timmons
 - Hannah Williams

Staff who transitioned up:

- Penny Barrington
 - Lynn Dougan
- Mel Fricchione
 - Claire Morgan
- Julianna Risica
 - Amanda Wagner

Policy, Plans & Procedures approved by the Board of Trustees

- I.D.E.A Statement - New
 - Wilcox Park Collections Policy - New
 - Social Media Policy - New
 - Rules of Conduct - Updated
- Continuous Performance Management - New
 - Non-Traditional Materials Borrowing Policy - New
 - Strategic Plan - Updated

Donations and Grants

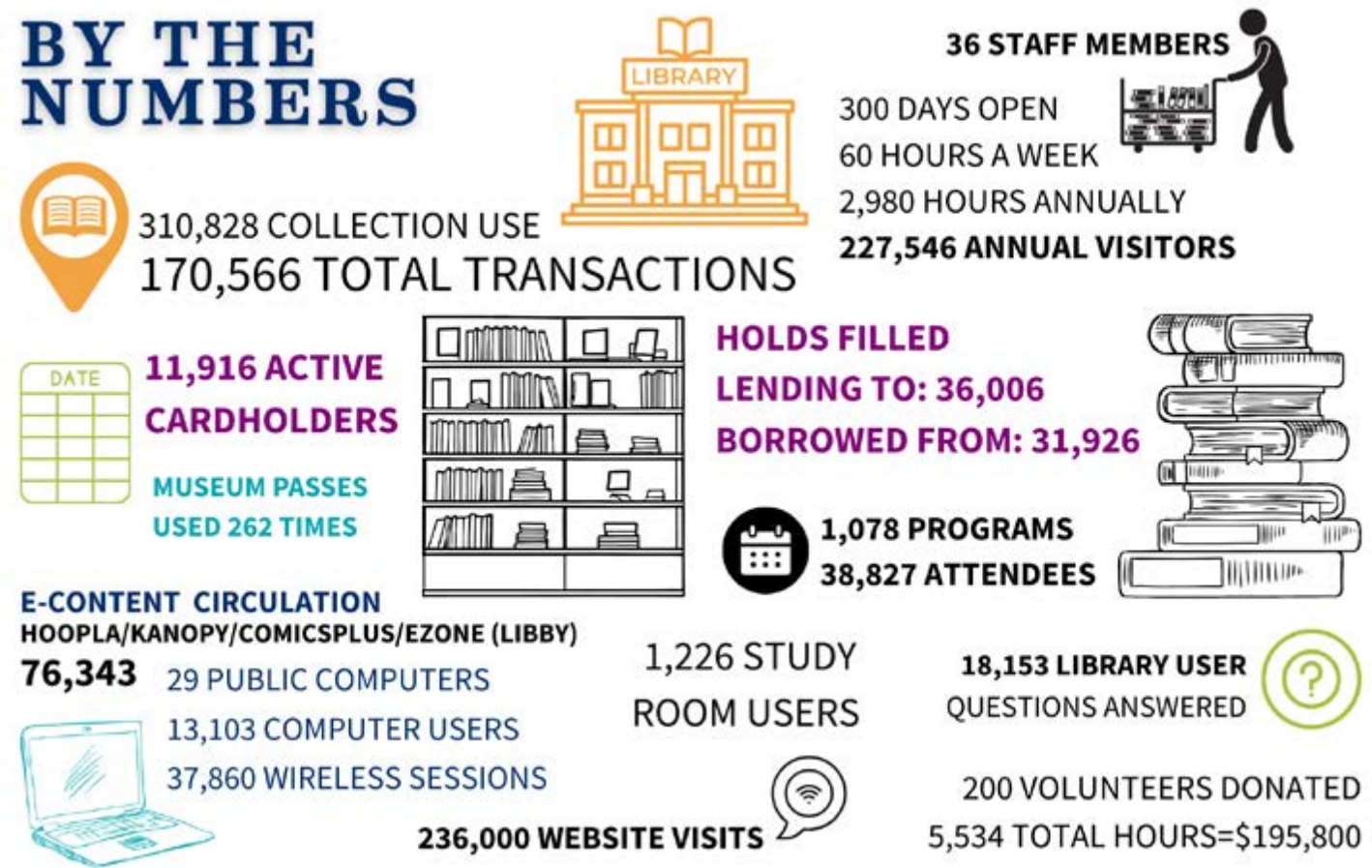
Funding is also crucial to our success. In addition to our annual operating budget funding sources, here are some of the funds we received that allowed us to go above and beyond.

- Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park
- PLA’s Digital Navigator Pilot Incentive Program grant: \$4,000 award funds training for staff to teach basic digital literacy skills using DigitalLearn platform funded by AT&T
- RI Legislative Grant from Senator Gu for staff de-escalation training
- Private donations towards the ongoing digitization of the Westerly Sun
- Private donations towards the construction of the retaining wall adjacent to the bandstand

This past year, we welcomed thousands of people through our doors and walkways; each visit is a testament to the enduring power of libraries, parks, public spaces, and community.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our donors, volunteers, patrons, and visitors for using and supporting the library and park in so many ways. A special thanks to the Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park for granting all of our wishes; our dedicated Board of Trustees for their continued support and leadership; and our amazing library and park staff for all they do to make Westerly Library & Wilcox Park a welcoming community space for everyone.

With sincere gratitude,
Brigitte Hopkins
Executive Director, Westerly Library & Wilcox Park



Administration

Brigitte Hopkins
Bill Lancellotta
Sara Ross Clark

Marketing

Amanda Wagner
Hannah Williams

Development

Stacey Jackson
Anna Jones

Public Services

Kristen McLeod
Robin Bell
Keara Bergey
Pat Cleary
Talia Temporal

Technology

Penelope Barrington
Ericka Carranza
Keith Kimberlin

Youth Services

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Ben Green
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Julianna Risica
Franklin Timmons

Tween/Teen Space

Casey Howley-Brigham

Teen Space

Lynn Dougan

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Nina Wright

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Kim Ihne

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Martin Neiberg
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Trevor Tetlow

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*We are FOREVER
GRATEFUL for our
volunteers, who
dedicate so much time
and talent to make us
who we are. Thanking
you for PLAYING A
ROLE in our success!*

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Douglas Woodard
Rebecca Woodward

*Deceased



*Incorporators serve as liasons
between Westerly Library &
Wilcox Park and the communities
of Westerly and Stonington.
Incorporators also form the pool
of candidates for the Board of
Trustees. We thank you for your
support!*

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Westerly Virtual Golf
The Wine Store
Winnapaug Country Club
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 & Adam Kaufman, DMD
Yale New Haven Health
Westerly Hospital

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Victor & Mary Jo Orsinger

GIFTS & AID



The Mary C. & Joseph E. Pucci Fund
The Family of Louis*
 & Evelyn Thavenet

Government Support

Town of Stonington
Town of Westerly RI
State of Rhode Island Senate Grant
Rhode Island Office of Library
 & Information Services

In-Kind Contributions

Adventureland
Andiamo
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Colleen Sullivan & Jack Cannon
Eagle’s Nest Gallery
Evie’s
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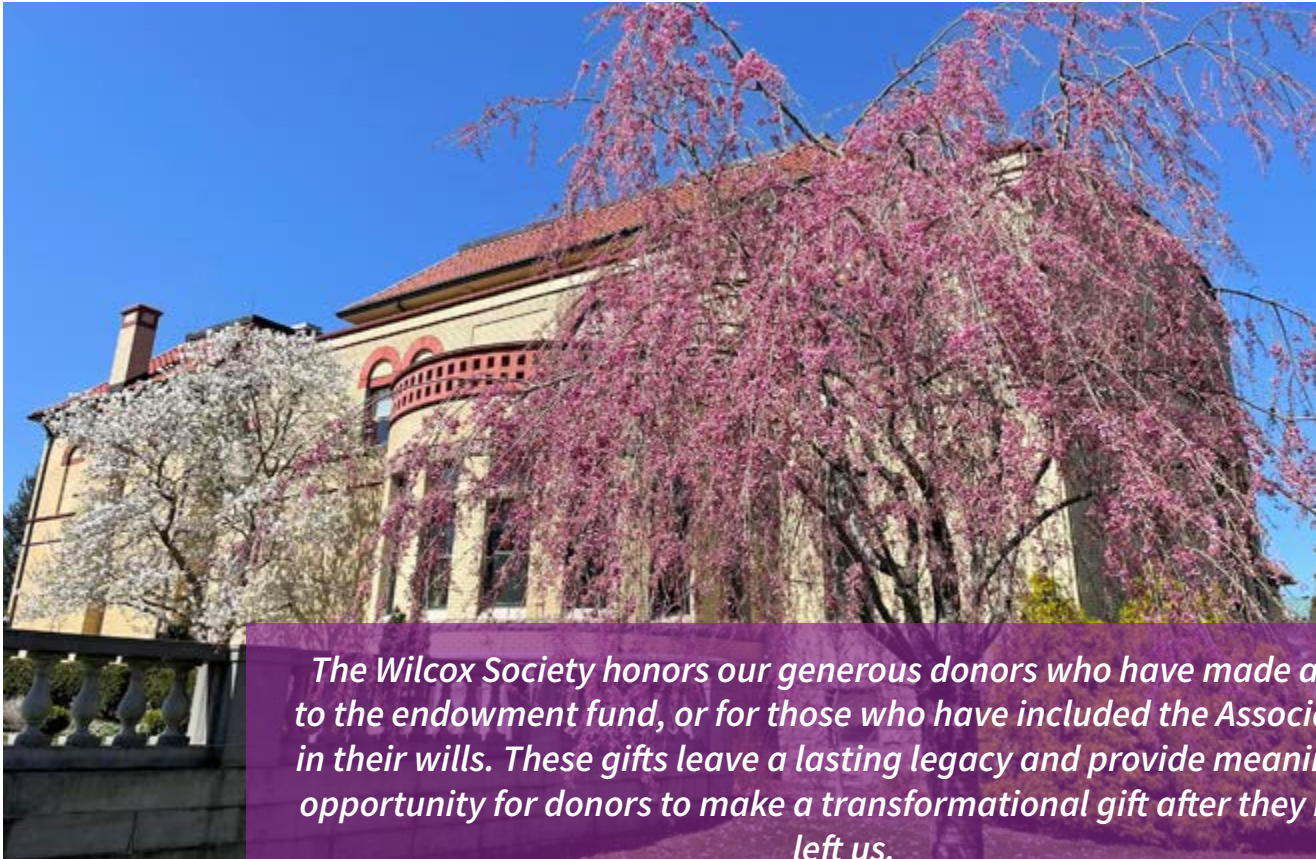
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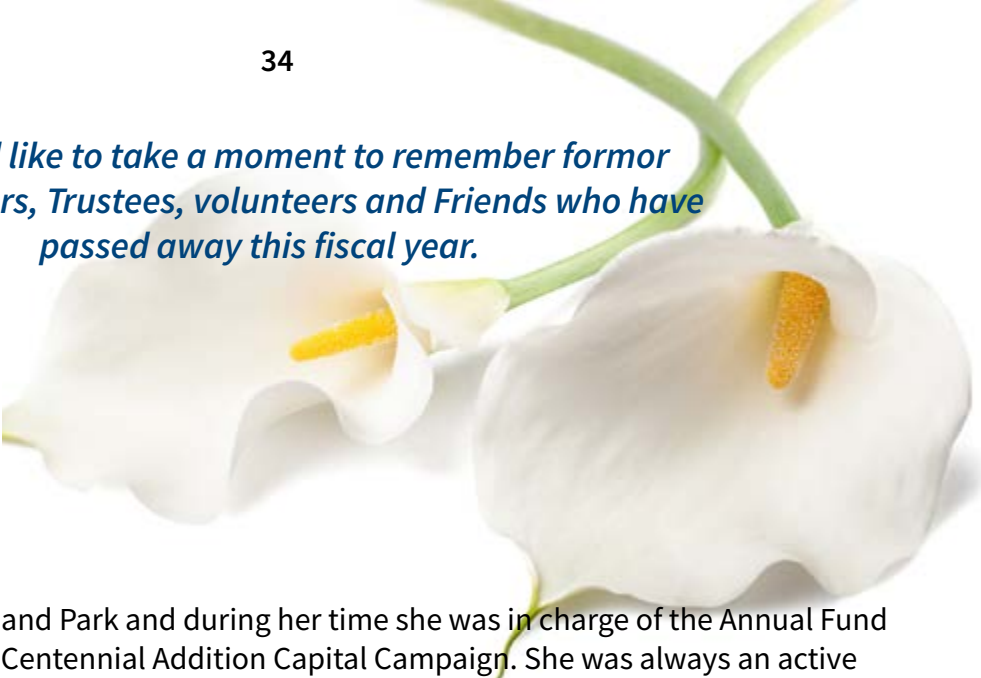
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We would like to take a moment to remember formor Incorporators, Trustees, volunteers and Friends who have passed away this fiscal year.



Incorporators

Ellen L. Bell | July 2024

Ellen was a Trustee of the Library and Park and during her time she was in charge of the Annual Fund and an active campaigner for the Centennial Addition Capital Campaign. She was always an active volunteer in the community. She helped establish the Meals on Wheels program for Westerly, and was a volunteer tax preparer for many years. She was an Incorporator for several decades and a member of the Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park.

Marion S. Palm | July 2024

Marion had a deep appreciation for libraries. She had worked as a librarian at Leicester College in Massachusetts. She served as an Incorporator and a volunteer over the years and was a member of the Wilcox Society as well as the Friends.

Candace “Candy” Sanford | January 2025

Candy was an educator and champion for literacy. After graduating from Columbia Teachers College, she held various teaching positions, tutored children with dyslexia, and taught Sunday school. She even published her own children’s book, *Captain Nathaniel Brown Palmer: a Maritime Pioneer*. Candy served as an Incorporator and supported the library and park philanthropically.

Volunteers

Susan E. Hayes | January 2025

Susan immersed herself in volunteer efforts in Westerly, sharing her time and talents with the Babcock Smith House, Christ Church, State Street Elementary School, and Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. She was an avid reader and volunteered at the annual Friends book sales.

Nancy Sutton | August 2024

Nancy was an avid reader, and she loved her book clubs and the close friends she made through the love of reading. Nancy enjoyed countless hours participating in aqua aerobics classes at the Cornerstone pool, volunteering at the West Hartford Food Pantry, and in the Circulation Department here at the library.

The individuals listed above passed away between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025. Every effort was made to ensure a complete list, but please notify us of any corrections or omissions.

2024

2025



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