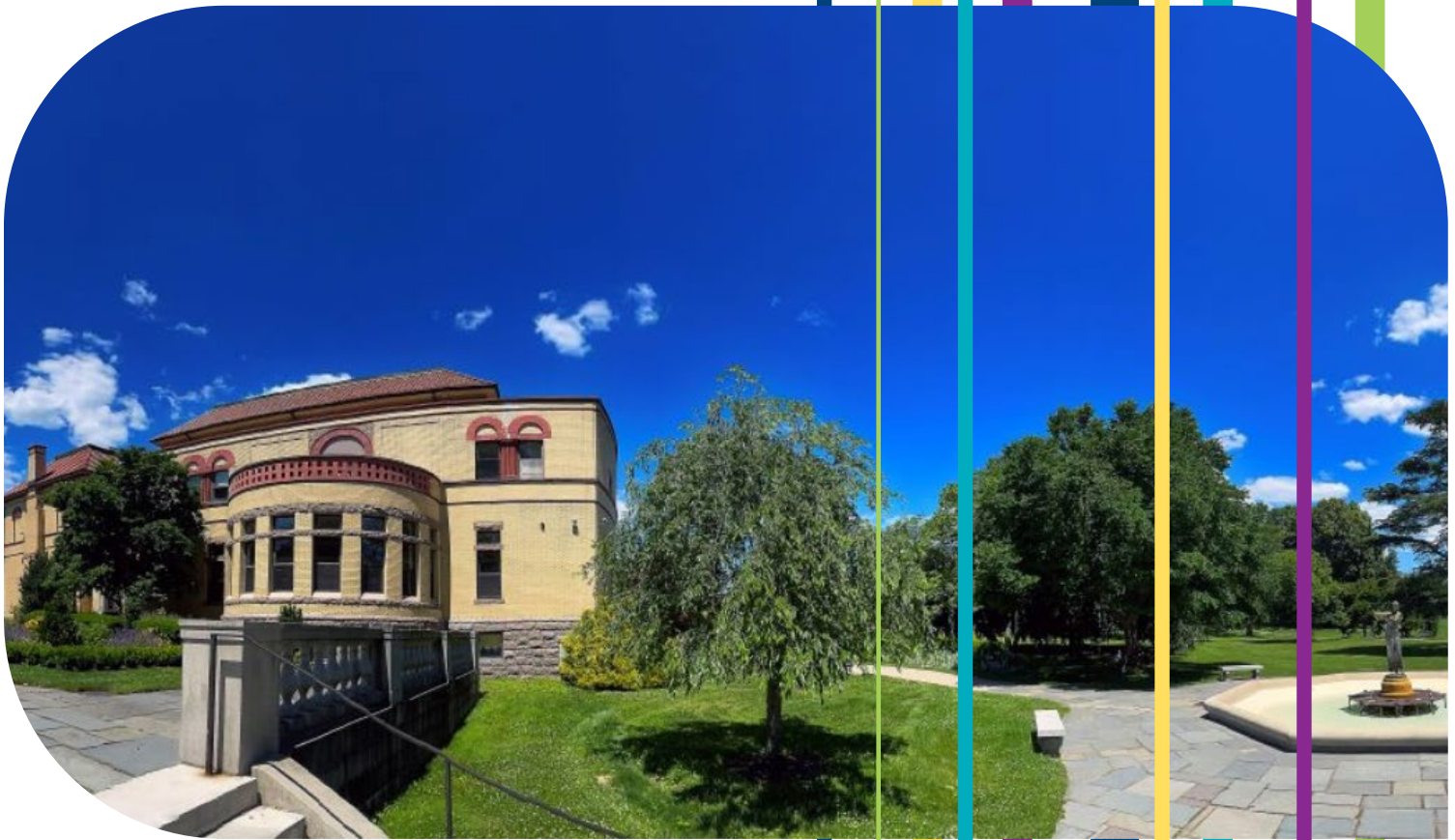




WESTERLY LIBRARY
& WILCOX PARK

2025/2026 Annual Report



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Maria Bernier
President



Gara LaMarche
Vice President



Peter B. Robinson
Treasurer



Mary Jo Girard
Secretary



Thomas F. Boll



Timothy Flanagan



Mojie F. Friel



Robert Gervasini



Deborah Harold



Kenneth Julian



Mary Carol Kendzia



Ann Lain



William J. Miller, Jr.



Jennifer Obrey



Colleen Sullivan



Louis M. Toscano



Mary E. Scialabba
Town of Westerly
Ex Officio



Deborah Norman
Town of Stonington
Ex Officio



Gail Kahover
Friends President
Ex Officio

Board of Trustees

The Annual Meeting of the Memorial and Library Association was held on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at 5:30 pm in the Auditorium, pursuant to written notice duly given.

Incorporators present: David Bell, Deborah Bell, Maria Bernier, Thomas Boll, Richard Constantine, Fritz Eckel, Mojie Friel, Mary Goodman, David Hannon, Robert Holland, Christine Julian, Kenneth Julian, Gail Kahover, Mary Carol Kendzia, Tom Kendzia, Ann Lain, Ellen Madison, James Moran, Jennifer Obrey, Pete Ogle, Susan Ogle, Anthony Perrone, David Rathbun, Peter Robinson, Tom Sanford, Dorie Singer, Lauren Sposato, Margaret Stamatis, Colleen Sullivan, Elissa Sweet, Geraldine Theadore, Louis Toscano, and Rose Weston.

Staff present: Executive Director Brigitte Hopkins, Assistant Director Bill Lancellotta, Park Superintendent Alan Peck, Director of Development Stacey Jackson, Director of Marketing Amanda Wagner, Head of Adult Services Caroline Badowski, Head of Youth Services Melanie Fricchione, Business Office Manager Sara Ross Clark, Groundskeeper Trevor Tetlow, Groundskeeper Lee Sadosky, Data Entry Specialist Anna Gorman, and Program & Outreach Coordinator Hannah Williams.

President Mary Carol Kendzia presided. She welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 5:33 pm, noting the presence of a quorum.

Approval of Minutes from September 18, 2024, Annual Meeting

President Kendzia asked for a motion to approve the minutes and reports of the September 18, 2024, Annual Meeting. Maria Bernier made a motion to approve and was seconded by Jennifer 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.

President’s Report

Board President Mary Carol Kendzia shared that when she was asked to serve as President of the Board of Trustees, she immediately thought of her father, who had served as president of the Clifton Public Library in New Jersey. His service brought him great satisfaction and instilled in her a strong appreciation for community involvement, making her own service to Westerly Library & Wilcox Park especially meaningful.

Kenzia noted that everyone present is a stakeholder in the library and park and encouraged greater involvement with the Association. She highlighted the opportunity for attendees to meet committee chairs, learn about the work of each committee, and explore ways to contribute through committee service, volunteer opportunities, or by promoting the library’s programs and resources.

Reflecting on a Board retreat held in the spring, Kendzia said trustees initially focused on potential challenges facing libraries and concerns about how changing policies might affect services and programming. However, the discussion quickly shifted to the Association’s many strengths, including an outstanding staff, strong leadership, stable funding, and numerous opportunities to engage with the community. She described the retreat as an eye-opening experience that reinforced how fortunate the Association is and how important it is to continue building on its successes. Kendzia concluded by encouraging continued investment of time, talent, and financial support to ensure that both the Association and the community continue to grow and prosper.

Treasurer’s (Finance & Investment) Report

Finance Committee Chair and Acting Investment Committee Chair Pete Robinson recognized the members

of the Finance Committee: Rick Constantine, Dave Bailey, Doryanne Hamel, Rob Holland, Ken Julian, Gara LaMarche, and Colleen Sullivan, as well as consulting CPA Deana Filippelli and Business Office Manager Sara Clark. He then recognized Investment Committee members: Rick Constantine, Rob Holland, Ken Julian, and Bill Meyer, as well as Garrett Babij the outgoing investment chair, who he said did a fantastic job. Robinson gave an overview of the Association’s finances, explaining that about half our operating expenses are funded by and drawn from the endowment. He reported that the endowment has done very well and answered questions from the Incorporators. The group discussed capital expenses and how to get the most out of the Association’s investments.

Audit Committee Report

Chair Colleen Sullivan discussed the activities of the Audit Committee which meets annually with the accountants to review the Association’s finances. When satisfied, they recommend acceptance of the annual audit, as well as the Financial Statements, to the Board of Trustees. She thanked the committee members and CPA Deana Filippelli for sharing their unique perspectives, time, and expertise. Sullivan announced that the audit committee received a clean audit opinion for the fiscal year ending June 30th, 2025.

Building Committee Report

Chair Tom Boll discussed the goals and activities of the Building Committee which meets monthly. With a 130-year-old building there is a lot to do, from current projects to long-term challenges. Issues range from major projects like carpet replacement and boiler replacement, to ongoing upgrades, elevator maintenance, and exterior masonry work. The Artist-in-Residence Cottage restoration was overseen by the Building Committee. Boll thanked the committee members for their time and expertise and asked anyone interested in joining the committee to let him know.

Development Committee Report

Chair Jennifer Obrey discussed the Development Committee’s activities. They work closely with Director of Development Stacey Jackson to raise funds that support operating expenses, building needs, and community engagement. A key focus is increasing awareness that the organization supports both the library and the park.

The committee is supported by a dedicated team, including Debbie Bell, Bill Miller, Deb Harold, Ken Julian, Rose Weston, Mary Carol Kendzia, Bill Lancellotta, and Brigitte Hopkins, whose efforts help advance fundraising and outreach initiatives.

In addition to the annual appeal, the committee organizes fundraising events throughout the year. Recent efforts have focused on hosting more events at the library to encourage community members to visit this unbelievable building and everything that it has to offer. These events have attracted both longtime supporters and first-time visitors. The next major fundraising event is planned for January and will feature a murder mystery theme. The event is designed to engage the community, showcase the library’s spaces, and provide a unique and enjoyable experience for attendees. Obrey thanked everyone for their generosity over the years, as well as for their continued support.

Education Committee Report

Chair Lou Toscano said that the Education Committee was charged with supporting the Association through special programming. He said they do a lot with children’s programming and that it is remarkable how many children come through this building, each and every day. He thanked committee members Mary Goodman, Tim Flanagan, Deb Harold, and Robin Geise, as well as Youth Services staff Mel Fricchione, Ben Green, Lynn Dougan, and Julianna Risica DiPanni.

Ocean Community Collaborative Report

Co-Chair Mojie Friel thanked Co-Chair Mary Goodman for her mentorship. She described the Ocean Community Collaborative as a group of local non-profits who get together to talk about common topics. She invited anyone present who works with a non-profit to attend future meetings. She thanked Hopkins and Lancellotta and said the group meets at 9:30 am in the Terrace Room on the second Friday of the month.

Park Committee Report

President Kendzia announced that Park Committee Chair Bob Gervasini could not attend the meeting. She encouraged everyone to read the Park Committee report on page 13 of the Annual Report. She thanked members Bob Gervasini, Sandi Carmichael, Mary Jo Girard, Buzz Callahan, David Hannon, Heather McGregor, Lisa Mueller, David Osborne, Fred Peretta, David Rathbun, and Don Weiss, as well as Park Superintendent Alan Peck.

Technology Outreach Committee Report

Chair Maria Bernier reported that the committee mainstays were Theresa Gregal from the Literacy Volunteers and Sarah Hazelton from the WARM Center. They also receive support from library staff Kristen MacLeod, Penny Barrington, and Maria Burgess. Going forward, Mary Carol Kendzia will be the new committee chair, and the group is expanding to include a dozen different representatives from local nonprofits and community partners. The role of this committee is to get information from our community partners about their constituents, patients, members, and clients, about what they might need in terms of technology in their lives. We then communicate information out from the library to those partners about what the library offers already that could help them.

Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Brigitte Hopkins announced that this past fiscal year marked her 12th year with the Association and she is honored every day to be a part of this amazing place we call Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. This past year, we welcomed thousands of people through our doors and along our walkways; each visit is a testament to the enduring power of libraries, parks, public spaces, community, and Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. Highlights of our accomplishments from this past year can be found in the Executive Director’s Report on pages 15-21 of the Annual Report.

She extended heartfelt gratitude to our donors, volunteers, patrons, and visitors for using and supporting the library and park in so many ways. She gave special thanks to the Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park for granting all of our wishes. Hopkins thanked our dedicated Board of Trustees for their continued support and leadership, including Mary Carol Kendzia, whom she thanked for her leadership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to our mission.

Hopkins thanked the library and park staff for all they do to make Westerly Library & Wilcox Park a welcoming community space for everyone. She recognized and thanked the staff in attendance: Assistant Director Bill Lancellotta, Business Office Manager Sara Clark, Head of Adult Services Caroline Badowski, Director of Marketing Amanda Wagner, Program & Outreach Associate Hannah Williams, Director of Development Stacey Jackson, Data Entry Specialist Anna Jones, Head of Youth Services Mel Fricchione, Park Superintendent Alan Peck, Groundskeeper Lee Sadosky and Groundskeeper Trevor Tetlow.

Nomination/Governance Committee Report

Chair Debbie Bell discussed the goals of the committee which is, with the Strategic Plan, to research and find those able to serve as board members and Incorporators. They also focus their time on assisting the board in

governance matters. She thanked committee members Ann Lain, Mojie Friel, Lou Toscano, Brigitte Hopkins, and Stacey Jackson.

Nominations

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:

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

Tom Sanford made a motion to accept the slate of Incorporators and was seconded by Rob Holland. The motion passed unanimously.

Incorporators for Election to an Initial 4-Year Term:

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

Rob Holland made a motion to accept the slate of Incorporators and was seconded by Fritz Eckle. The motion passed unanimously.

Trustee for Election to an Initial 3-Year Term:

Ken Julian made a motion to elect Timothy Flanagan for an initial 3-year term. The motion was seconded by Rick Constantine. The motion passed unanimously. Bell then presented nominations for Trustees’ second and third terms.

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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David Rathbun made a motion to accept the nominees for second and third terms and was seconded by Ellen Madison. The motion passed unanimously. Bell then presented nominations for Board of Trustees officers.

Officers:

Maria Bernier - President Mary Jo Girard - Secretary

Tom Boll made a motion to accept the nominees and was seconded by Lou Toscano. The motion passed unanimously.

A Bylaw Change - Call for vote

Ann Lain led a discussion of the proposed change to the Association’s Bylaws, which seeks to add the Investment Committee as a stand-alone committee of the Board, rather than as a sub-committee of Finance. She explained that, as the Association has grown, the investment responsibilities have become more sophisticated. It is the opinion of the Board that Investment become its own committee which would include members that have the appropriate knowledge and expertise.

Ellen Madison made a motion to approve the Bylaws change and was seconded by Rick Constantine. The motion passed unanimously.

Awards & Recognitions

Kendzia recognized Debbie Bell who is leaving the Board after nine years. She started her service as a Development Director for the Association from 2000-2003 and supported many of the initial development and human resource initiatives during that time. Throughout, she has consistently been a donor to the Annual Fund and support of fundraisers. Debbie became an incorporator in 2016, and that same year was elected as a trustee. Her involvement has been prolific. She was a member of the 125th Anniversary Steering Committee in 2017, part of the Strategic Planning Task Force in 2018, and she has been an ongoing member of the Development Committee. Perhaps most importantly, Debbie has been the chair of the Nominating and Governance Committee of the Association. Her expert guidance and sage counseling have helped bring talented and engaged stakeholders to the association as incorporators, trustees, and committee members. She was a member of the Bylaw Review Committee in 2021, helping with changes that significantly improved the productivity of Association practices and functions. Kendzia said that Bell was a joy to work with and praised her integrity, attention to detail, and ongoing dedication to Westerly Library and Wilcox Park. Bell was presented with a bouquet of flowers from Wilcox Park and a silver bookmark.

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 18, 2024, are hereby approved, ratified and confirmed.” The resolution was seconded by David Rathbun and unanimously approved.

Announcements

Kendzia thanked everyone for coming and invited them to stay for refreshments and to talk with committee chairs. Hopkins presented Kendzia with a bouquet of flowers from Wilcox Park in recognition of her service as President of the Board of Trustees.

Adjournment

At 6:11 pm Rick Constantine made a motion to adjourn and was seconded by Lou Toscano. The motion passed unanimously. The next Annual Meeting of the Memorial and Library Association will be on September 16, 2026.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Jo Girard, Secretary

Executive Committee:

Maria Bernier, President
Gara LaMarche, Vice President
Mary Jo Girard, Secretary
Pete Robinson, Treasurer,
Finance Chair

Audit Committee:

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

Building Committee:

Tom Boll, Chair
Rick Constantine
Bob Gervasini, Trustee
Bill Gridley
Scott Harold
Jim Moran
David Rathbun
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio

Development Committee:

Jen Obrey, Chair
Deborah Bell, Trustee
Deborah Harold, Trustee
Bill Miller, Trustee
Helena Nulick
Rose Weston
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio

Education Committee:

Lou Toscano, Chair
Tim Flanagan, Trustee
Robin Geise
Mary Goodman
Deb Harold, Trustee
Robin Springborn
Geri Theodore
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio

Finance Committee:

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

Investment Committee:

Ken Julian, Chair
Rick Constantine
Rob Holland
Gara LaMarche, Trustee
Bill Meyer
Pete Robinson, Finance Chair
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio
Deana Filippelli, CPA

Nominating/Governance:

Ann Lain, Chair
Debbie Bell
Mojie Friel, Trustee
Lou Toscano, Trustee
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio
Gara LaMarche, BOT Vice President,
Ex Officio

Ocean Community Collaborative:

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

Park Committee:

Bob Gervasini, Chair
Buz Callaghan
Sandi Carmichael
Mary-Jo Girard, Trustee
David Hannon
Mary Carol Kendzia, Trustee

Stu Marvin
Heather McGregor
Lisa Mueller
David Osborne
David Rathbun
Don Weiss
Maria Bernier, BOT President,
Ex Officio

Technology Outreach Committee:

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



President

Dear friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park,

This was a good year for Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. In July, the development and marketing staff edited a short video showing highlights from the past twelve months. It was chockablock full of smiling, engaged patrons and visitors of all ages who came to a variety of programs indoors and out. The video overflowed with the spirit of positivity, creativity, and enjoyment that our library and park staff bring to their work. It encapsulated how special our Association is.

It was also a good year behind the scenes, as the organization is in a stable financial position with knowledgeable advisors. The Board members, who each bring decades of expertise in their fields, lead committees and provide input into the running of the organization, as you’ll see detailed elsewhere in this Annual Report. They generously contribute hundreds of hours of volunteer time each year.

In a larger context, this was also a good year for libraries in Rhode Island, as they were supported by the Rhode Island state legislature and governor with the Freedom to Read Act and an ebook licensing bill. These laws prohibit censorship of library collections and encourage fair pricing and licensing terms for audiobooks and ebooks. The State of Rhode Island is a proud leader in this kind of legislation.

Sustaining our library and park is truly a community effort, as it takes many people to make this organization successful: staff, volunteers, donors, supporters, Incorporators, Board members, patrons, and visitors. Thank you for being part of the magic.

Sincerely,
Maria Bernier
President, Westerly Library and Wilcox Park



Treasurer

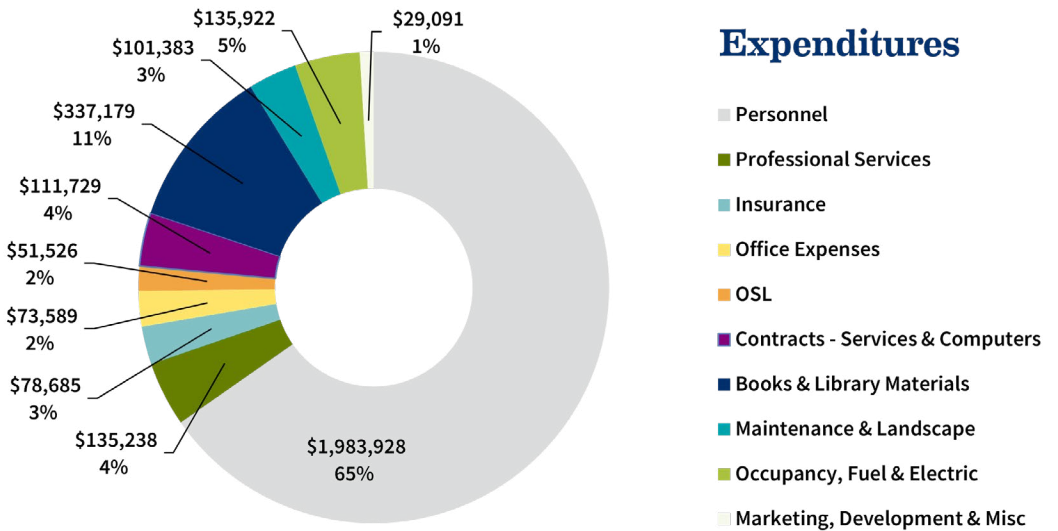
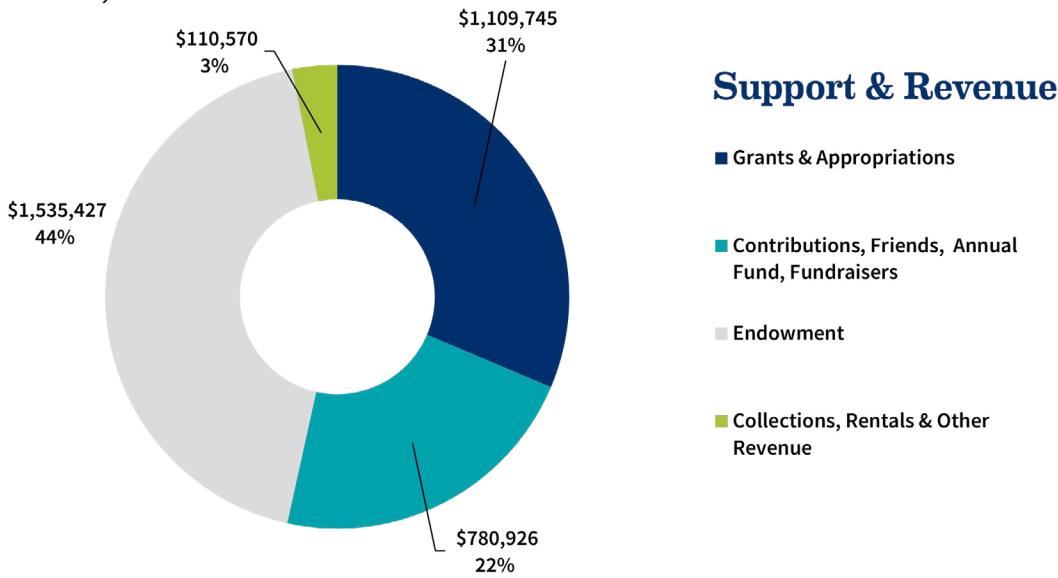
As we close out FY26, I am pleased to report that we remain in a strong financial position. Despite economic uncertainty, the markets were up significantly over the year. We plan to replenish our fixed income portfolio to maintain five years of inflation-adjusted cash flow.

We were also able to establish a new Strategic Capital account with operating surpluses from the previous two fiscal years. This will allow the organization to spend money on necessary large capital expenses, such as a new boiler system. The Investment Committee will oversee this account, and the Board will approve the use of funds on a case-by-case basis.

We will close out FY26 with another surplus, due to higher-than-expected revenue. The Board will decide on how to allocate this money.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Peter B. Robinson, Chair



Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met with the auditors, Hoyt, Filippetti & Malaghan LLC on November 21, 2025, and reviewed the draft of the Memorial & Library Association of Westerly Financial Statements as of June 30, 2025, and 2024 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 16, 2025, meeting.

On November 21, 2025, the Committee also reviewed the 990 Tax Return for the period ending June 30, 2025 prior to filing.

The 2025-2026 audit schedule is consistent with prior years and is expected to be completed in November 2026. We anticipate no significant issues to arise.

Respectfully submitted,
Colleen Sullivan, Chair

Building Committee

Our beautiful Library is about 65,000 square feet in size and almost 135 years old. As you can imagine, there is always something to address regarding the condition of the building.

We meet monthly to discuss issues ranging from roof leaks, doors, painting/staining, possible renovations and upgrades. Last year, in addition to many small upgrades and repairs, we were able to replace the carpets on the first and second floors. Next year, we are planning to replace the boilers. Both are significant projects.

Some of the relatively small issues are addressed by facilities staff. But often the Committee works with library staff identifying the concern, making recommendations on corrective action and/or design, and selecting a design firm or contractor as needed.

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 2025–2026 fiscal year was very successful for the Development Committee, driven by the launch of a new fundraiser and a strong performance in our Annual Fund. We surpassed our \$245,000 annual fund goal by \$93,232, bringing our total raised to \$338,232. We are deeply grateful for our community’s extraordinary generosity this year. Thanks to the hard work of our committee and the leadership of Stacey Jackson, Director of Development, our fundraising events were a resounding success and pivotal to this remarkable growth.

This year’s fundraising efforts exceeded expectations, raising a total of \$41,819 and surpassing our \$32,000 goal by \$9,819. To help reach our fundraising target, the committee and library staff debuted a brand-

new signature event: “Murder by the Book.” This immersive, original whodunit challenged guests to solve a mystery across various library spaces, fostering community connections while raising an incredible \$34,775. In addition to our signature event, several targeted fundraisers contributed to our overall success throughout the year. Highlights included the Garden Market Fair, Duck Race sales, Dine to Donate events, Wreathmaking workshop, and ongoing merchandise sales. Alongside these events, we continued to expand donor education programs focused on strategic giving—including estate planning, IRA contributions, and stock donations. Thanks to the overwhelming generosity of our sponsors, attendees, board members, and staff.

The Committee held monthly meetings over this past fiscal year through ZOOM. Much appreciation to the volunteer Development committee members Deborah Bell, Deborah Harold, Bill Miller, Helena Nulick, Rose Weston and Maria Bernier, sub-committee volunteers that helped with the details, and sponsors for all the events, for their work this past year. We truly appreciate the continued support and advice during the year. Also, a special thank you to Library and Park staff for all their work to make this past year a success.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Obrey, Chair

Education Committee

The Education Committee continues to provide special programming to literally hundreds of attendees in Kids, Tweens, and Teens departments. Head of Youth Services, Mel Fricchione has taken outreach to levels never seen before as the entire department has committed to visit local schools and recreation programs to inform students and teachers about library offerings and to tell students how to obtain their own library cards. She has dedicated herself to strengthening current programs such as Pride in the Park and Summer Reading as other programs, such as Kindergarten Gear Up and 1,000 Books before Kindergarten gain traction.

Teen programming, under the direction of Teen librarian Lynn Dougan, continues to be driven by the interests of the teens who regularly visit Teen space and attend events. The department has also taken on a substantial role in the development of the vegetable garden on the hill near the YMCA. They have created a Garden Club which gathers on Mondays to observe and work in the garden as needed.

Tween librarian Ben Green has added another level to his Tween programming as he is now considered a Pokémon Professor and the Pokémon Club he has established has become extremely popular.

Julianna Risica, Kids librarian, continues to broaden the scope of kids and family programming as Family Park Walks have become very popular along with Kids Craft Times and continued Storytimes.

The Education Committee has shown themselves to be committed to support programs for all levels by offering ideas and suggestions, and especially by volunteering at the many events and activities offered. Members include Mary Goodman, Laurie Callaghan, Deb Harold, Robin Geise, Robin Springborn, Geri Theadore, and staff Mel Fricchione, Ben Green, Lynn Dougan, and Julianna Risica.

Respectfully submitted,
Lou Toscano, chair

Investment Committee

During Fiscal Year 2025, the Nominating Committee determined that the Investment Committee should be a separate entity. It had previously been a sub-committee of the Finance Committee. The Board of Trustees approved a change to the Bylaws at its June 17, 2025 meeting, which was then ratified by the Incorporators at the September 17, 2025 Annual Meeting. The two committees remain closely aligned, with the Chairs of each committee serving on the other. Several committee members serve on both, as well.

In July, the prior Chair of the Investment Sub-Committee, Garrett Babij, stepped down. He was recognized by the Board of Trustees for his significant contributions. Pete Robinson, the Finance Committee Chair, stepped in as interim Investment Committee Chair, and Ken Julian assumed the position before the Committee’s April meeting. The Committee meets quarterly.

In April, the Committee drafted and approved an Investment Policy Statement (IPS) for the new Strategic Capital Fund. This fund was conceived by the Finance Committee and approved by the Board of Trustees to segregate monies targeted for planned future capital expenditures. An IPS provides policies, procedures and guidelines for prudent management and oversight of a Fund’s assets. The Board of Directors approved the IPS at its May meeting.

Looking forward, the Committee intends to revise the existing Investment Policy Statement for the Memorial & Library Association’s assets that incorporate the Committee’s new independence and add more specific guidelines for third-party investment managers.

As the Association’s investment assets have continued to grow, the Committee intends to research the potential viability of alternative investments to publicly trade securities.

Respectfully submitted,
Kenneth Julian, Chair



Nominating/Governance Committee

The purpose of the Nominating/Governance Committee is to concern itself with matters pertaining to the qualification and identification of Incorporators and Trustees. The Committee shall also assist the Board in matters of Governance.

Strategic Incorporator and Board recruitment is the focus of the Nominating Committee’s work. We continuously monitor and assess the current and anticipated needs of the Library and Park in order to recruit individuals that meet those needs. As always, we strive to find highly qualified, community-minded individuals. Additionally, the Committee reviews recommendations for any proposed changes or updates to the bylaws of the Association and presents its recommendations to the full Board. Any changes approved by the Board are then presented to the Incorporators for approval at the Annual Meeting.

The following list of nominations was presented to and approved by the Board of Trustees at its July 22, 2026, meeting:

Incorporators for Election to an Additional 4-year Term:

Kristy Allardyce	Mary Goodman	William Miller
Jennifer Brinton	Julie Holland	Helen Mochetti
Laurie Callaghan	Adam Kaufman	Margaret Rocketto
Sandra Carmichael	Ann Lain	Michael Ryan
Mallory Constantine	Catherine Lathrop	Colleen Sullivan
Betty Jo Cugini	Stephen McAllister	Louise Thorson
Harvey DeMovick III	Marianne McAllister	

Incorporators for Election to an Initial 4-year Term:

Neil Anthes	Jane Hannon	Jena Piccolo
Robert (Buzz) Callaghan	Shelby Harold	Nina Quaratella
Andrea Chiaradio	Stu Marvin	Ben Tamsky

Trustee for Election to Complete Ann Lain’s Third Term:

Ian Newbury

Trustees for Election to Third Term:

Colleen Sullivan

Officers:

- Marie Bernier – President*
- Gara LaMarche – Vice President
- Mary Jo Girard – Secretary*
- Peter Robinson – Treasurer

*Incorporators vote to approve these officer roles at the Annual Meeting.

The VP and Treasurer are voted on by Trustees in the special meeting after the Annual Meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann Lain, Chair

Ocean Community Collaborative

Ocean Community Collaborative (OCC) thanks Westerly Library & Wilcox Park (WL&WP) for its valued relationship in continuing to strengthen OCC’s goals. We are appreciative of WL&WP’s role in its varied support: our meetings, speaking programs, and ideas.

Leaders of local nonprofit organizations convene monthly to share and discuss topics in common. This past year has seen involvement by new members, adding new perspectives. The networking and resulting partnerships are added benefits and are advantageous to our community.

It has been a motivating experience to present speaking programs, open to the public, on current topics. Jill Pfitzenmayer, consultant with Rhode Island Foundation, spoke on “Organizational Succession Planning.” David Culton of Invisible Consulting LLC presented “Making Sense of AI: A Practical Exploration for Work and Everyday Life.” OCC also facilitated a working session for members with Christine Pellegrini of Rhode Island Foundation on legacy giving programs. Members who hosted meetings were Westerly Education Center and Westerly Senior Center, providing insight into their operations. We appreciate these opportunities to connect beyond our regular business meetings.

Engaged participation has come from representatives of organizations including: Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park, Literacy Volunteers of Washington County, Ocean Community YMCA, Olean Center, Stand Up for Animals, Tarzan Brown Memorial Committee, The Chorus of Westerly, The Dante Society, The United Theatre, The Westerly College Club, Tri-County Community Action Agency, WARM Center, Inc., Weekapaug Green, Westerly ARC, Westerly Armory, Westerly Education Center, Westerly Land Trust, Westerly Library & Wilcox Park, Westerly Lions Club, Westerly Senior Center, Westerly Village, Wood River Health, and Young Global Leadership Foundation among others. The many members act as go-to resources and enhance knowledge sharing.

Our sincere thanks to Brigitte Hopkins and Bill Lancellotta for their ongoing contributions and dedication to the OCC.

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 Theater, Flock Theater, 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 small and large projects were also completed. Most notably, plantings were completed on the hillside across from the bandstand as well as the installation of blue stone pavers at the base of the new 300’ retaining/seat wall that was constructed last year. Hundreds of native perennial grass plugs were installed at the top of the slope along with new fencing. A professional landscape designer provided pro bono design services for a new rain garden to be built in the northeastern end of the park near the YMCA. Implementation of the design will begin in the fall and is scheduled to be completed in the spring of 2027.

Park staff kept the park walkways, staircases and access ramps open and free of slippery ice throughout a rather severe winter this year. Even the record-setting “Blizzard of 2026” couldn’t stop the crew from maintaining clear and safe walkways and access to the library and park.

Again, this year the Park has been fortunate to secure another very generous donation towards the purchase of park maintenance equipment, construction of an equipment carport and the renovation and reconstruction of the esplanade grand stairway into the park at the memorial fountain entrance. Work on the reconstruction of the grand stairway and esplanade will begin this fall.

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 Westerly Library & Wilcox Park as well as many community volunteers oversee the plentiful garden throughout the park. This year over 50 volunteers participated, a truly outstanding effort that reflects just how much the park is appreciated by patrons and friends.

The park achieved ArbNet accreditation as a Level 2 Arboretum last year. Maintenance of an extensive database is ongoing. The new tree inventory database has been kept current with new tree additions and removals as well as park dedications.

The next major challenge for the Park committee is the restoration of the pond. Over the years the pond has suffered from infestation of green algae and invasive vegetation. Treatments to the pond are ongoing with nutrient analysis indicating high concentrations of phosphorous. The pond study was completed this year with the assistance of park staff and GZA, a national geotechnical, water, ecology and environmental engineering firm. The URI Watershed Watch is also involved with monitoring pond data and providing helpful advice to the committee. A long-term plan is in development that will facilitate a total restoration of the pond.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert J. Gervasini, Chair

Technology Outreach Committee

The Technology Outreach committee provides ideas, feedback, advice, and connections to library staff for technology related services, programs, and initiatives, and helps community organizations and individuals make connections to the technology resources the library can provide to them.

A major project for the committee this year was the development of a brochure that highlights the existing resources of the Tech Department and Makerspace. The brochure was designed by the Marketing Department and distributed as a PDF to committee members at the May 2026 meeting. Members were encouraged to make copies as needed to share with their clients. A PDF of the Tech Department and Makerspace brochure is also available for the general public to use and distribute.

A series of three open houses was held in April to familiarize patrons with the Tech Department and the Makerspace; also in April, Digital Learning Hub was held to introduce patrons to the Tech Department. More of these types of workshops will be planned for the coming months. Ideas include cybersecurity for seniors, appropriate use of AI, and effective use of software such as Canva and social media apps.

There were a number of staffing changes in the Technology Department and Makerspace this year. Most significantly, Meara Foght started as our new Head of Public Services in May 2026, while in June, Skylar Kuvalanka, a former Public Services Associate at the library, was hired as full-time Technology & Innovation Coordinator.

As we move forward into the 2026-27 season, the committee will continue to explore opportunities and needs of the Westerly-Stonington community that are relevant to the Tech Department and Makerspace.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Carol Kendzia, Chair



Executive Director

Fiscal Year 2026 was a year of growth, innovation, stewardship, and community impact at Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. Guided by our Strategic Plan and supported by an exceptional staff, dedicated Board of Trustees, volunteers, donors, Friends organization, and community partners, we continued to strengthen our role as one of the region’s most valued civic and cultural institutions.

Throughout the year, the Library and Park served as welcoming destinations where people of all ages gathered to learn, create, connect, and find inspiration. Our work focused on enhancing services, investing in our facilities and technology, advancing environmental stewardship, strengthening community partnerships, supporting staff development, and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the organization. Among this year’s accomplishments were significant facility improvements, expanded programming and outreach, new initiatives addressing community needs, major investments in technology and innovation, and the advancement of important environmental projects within Wilcox Park. We also secured critical grant funding and expanded opportunities for community engagement, lifelong learning, and cultural enrichment.

While these achievements are important, the true measure of our success lies in the experiences of the people we serve. Throughout the year, patrons described Westerly Library & Wilcox Park as a home away from home, a place of belonging, discovery, and opportunity. Their stories reflect the enduring value of our mission and the impact we strive to make every day.

The accomplishments highlighted in this report are the result of a shared commitment to serving our community with excellence. Together, we continue to ensure that Westerly Library & Wilcox Park remains a trusted resource, treasured gathering place, and vibrant center for learning, culture, and connection for generations to come.

BY THE NUMBERS



266,862 COLLECTION USE
168,113 TOTAL TRANSACTIONS



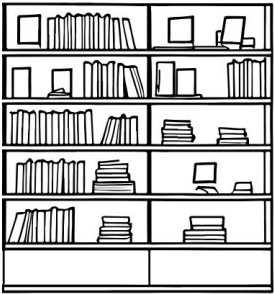
36 STAFF MEMBERS

294 DAYS OPEN
60 HOURS A WEEK
2,908 HOURS ANNUALLY
229,546 ANNUAL VISITORS

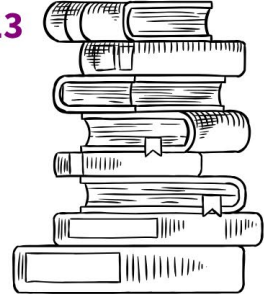




12,044 ACTIVE CARDHOLDERS
MUSEUM PASSES USED 400 TIMES



MATERIALS LENT: 31,413
MAKERSPACE EQUIPMENT USED 500 TIMES



E-CONTENT CIRCULATION
HOOPLA/KANOPY/COMICSPLUS/EZONE (LIBBY)
81,804 29 PUBLIC COMPUTERS



16,322 COMPUTER USERS
39,212 WIRELESS SESSIONS

1,797 STUDY ROOM USERS

29,332 LIBRARY USER QUESTIONS ANSWERED

185 VOLUNTEERS DONATED
5,208 TOTAL HOURS=\$192,800



ADVANCING OUR MISSION

FY26 marked the final year of our current Strategic Plan and demonstrated significant progress toward our long-term goals. Major organizational initiatives included:

- Completion of significant facility improvements, including new carpeting throughout major public areas
- Expansion of technology and makerspace offerings, including patron access to Cricut, laminator, and 3D printing equipment
- Launch of a Continuous Performance Management system to support staff development and organizational accountability
- Ongoing review and modernization of policies, procedures, and operational practices
- Enhanced collection management and development practices
- Planning for future capital projects to support both Library and Park infrastructure

During FY26, the organization completed 26 additional strategic plan tactics, reducing the number of tactics categorized as In Progress and Not Started by nine and seventeen respectively. Over the course of the Strategic Plan, 67 tactics have been completed, 25 remain in progress, and only 3 have yet to be initiated, demonstrating substantial advancement toward our strategic goals.

As we conclude this planning cycle, we are preparing to develop a new Strategic Plan that will guide Westerly Library & Wilcox Park into the future. With a vision extending decades ahead, this work will help ensure that the organization continues to evolve while preserving the unique legacy that has served our community for generations.

INVESTING IN OUR PEOPLE

The success of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park begins with our staff. Their expertise, creativity, and commitment drive the programs and services that make this organization such an important community resource. This year we invested in our workforce through:

- Leadership and management training for Department Heads
- Annual performance reflection and evaluation processes
- Cross-training initiatives across departments
- Recruitment and onboarding of new staff members
- Continued collaboration with human resources consultants
- Development of enhanced training and operational resources

Notable staffing achievements included:

- Hiring Meara Foght as Head of Public Services
- Promotion of Skylar Kuvalanka to Technology & Innovation Coordinator
- Expansion of Public Services staff
- Successful management of several staff transitions while maintaining exceptional service

These investments strengthen our ability to meet evolving community needs while fostering a positive and supportive workplace culture.

LIBRARY SERVICES, COLLECTIONS, & TECHNOLOGY

The Library continued to evolve in response to changing community expectations while maintaining its commitment to excellent public service.

Collection Development

Major accomplishments included:

- Formation of a Collection Management Team for streamlining collection development and management, including weeding practices, across departments
- Expansion of browsing collections
- Enhanced reader advisory displays and shelf talkers
- Continued growth of the Library of Things collections for adults, teens, and children

Technology & Innovation

Technology services remained a critical component of library operations. Accomplishments included:

- System-wide Windows 11 and Microsoft Office upgrades
- Expansion of makerspace resources
- Introduction of patron access to Cricut and laminator equipment
- Acquisition and planning for stop-motion animation equipment through grant funding
- Continued improvements to digital services, public computing, and technology instruction

One patron, after discovering our digital resources, remarked, “This is going to change my reading life!” Another celebrated remote access to Consumer Reports, saying, “Now I can relax on my couch and do some research!”

YOUTH SERVICES: BUILDING FUTURE READERS

Youth Services remains one of the organization’s most significant areas of impact.

Summer Reading Success

Staff conducted:

- 30 classroom visits
- Outreach to approximately 600 students
- Extensive promotion of Summer Reading throughout local schools

Summer Reading concluded with:

- 224 registered readers
- More than 80,850 minutes read

Throughout the year, programs such as Storytime, Seaside Storytime, Playdough Playtime, Family Games Galore, Brick Fest, Pokémon Club, Sensory Programming, and 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten continued to engage children and families.

One parent shared that her daughter achieved the highest preschool reading score available and credited both the library and the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program with fostering a love of reading.

Teen & Tween Services: Creating Belonging

FY26 was an exceptional year for teen engagement and youth leadership.

Demand for Dungeons & Dragons, gaming programs, social activities, and creative experiences continued to exceed capacity. Staff and volunteers worked collaboratively to recruit and train additional Dungeon Masters to help meet demand.

Teen volunteers played an increasingly important role by assisting with library operations, special projects, Summer Reading preparation, and support for younger patrons.

Most importantly, the Teen Space continued to foster meaningful connections and a sense of belonging. Patrons regularly described the space as a “second home,” while parents shared stories about the role the library played in helping their children build friendships, confidence, and community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & PARTNERSHIPS

The Library and Park welcomed thousands of visitors throughout the year and served as gathering places for learning, celebration, creativity, and civic engagement.

Programming flourished across all age groups, including:

- Storytimes and literacy programs
- Technology instruction
- Educational lectures and workshops
- Author talks and readings
- Concerts and cultural events
- Hoxie Gallery exhibitions
- The Pop-Up @ Coy
- Artist-in-Residence programming
- Community celebrations
- Wellness and outdoor activities

Major community initiatives included:

- Juneteenth Celebration
- Pride in the Park
- Lunar New Year Celebration
- National Library Week
- Garden Market Fair
- School Supply Drive

In recognition of our commitment to inclusion and community-building, Westerly Library & Wilcox Park was honored with the ARC Community Spirit Award.

Community Partnerships

Our impact is strengthened through collaboration. During FY26 we partnered with organizations including:

- Westerly Public Schools
- Stonington Middle School
- Westerly High School Culinary Arts Program
- Mystic Seaport Museum
- The Frank Olean Center, Inc.
- Ocean Community Collaborative
- URI Master Gardener Program
- URI Watershed Watch
- Ocean Community YMCA
- Literacy Volunteers of Washington County
- League of Women Voters of South County
- Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park
- The United Theatre
- United Music School
- WARM Center
- Project Weber/RENEW

- Mystic Museum of Art
- RI Wild Plant Society

These partnerships expanded educational opportunities, strengthened community services, and increased access to resources for residents throughout the region.

INNOVATION & COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

This year we expanded our role as a community resource through innovative initiatives that address emerging needs. Most notably, we launched the Food Recovery Fridge Program in partnership with the Westerly High School Culinary Program. Supported by a refrigerator donation from the Class of 1971, the program provides prepared meals to community members while reducing food waste. Since its launch in March, the refrigerator has distributed 181 meals.

Additional initiatives include:

- Expansion of the Seed Library
- Community Closet with the WARM Center
- School Supply Drives
- Gardening and sustainability education
- Growth of the Library of Things

These efforts demonstrate our commitment to supporting the well-being of our community beyond traditional library services.

WILCOX PARK: STEWARDSHIP & PRESERVATION

Wilcox Park remains a treasured historic landscape and one of the region’s most beloved community gathering spaces.

Environmental Stewardship

Major projects included:

- Comprehensive pond assessment and monitoring
- Partnership with URI Watershed Watch for additional monitoring
- Development of long-term pond remediation strategies
- Expansion of native plantings and pollinator gardens

Park Improvements

Accomplishments included:

- Installation of new entrance signage
- Pathway maintenance and repairs
- Tree preservation and removal projects
- Garden enhancements
- Improved event-use policies to protect park resources

One of the year’s most memorable moments was the reopening of the pond for skating following favorable winter conditions, creating a unique community experience enjoyed by visitors of all ages.

FACILITIES, PHILANTHROPY, & FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP

FY26 included significant investments in both Library and Park infrastructure.

Major projects included:

New carpeting throughout the building

- Technology and computer upgrades
- Signage and wayfinding improvements
- Cottage foundation repairs
- Acquisition of a new Kubota utility vehicle
- Expansion of makerspace equipment

The Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park contributed nearly \$12,000 toward priority projects and equipment, including:

- A Glowforge laser engraver
- 3D Printer Enclosure
- Two Chompsaws
- Nintendo Switches for Teens and Tweens
- Acoustic wall treatments
- Bulletin board improvements
- Event rental enhancements
- Kids programming tables

Grant funding included:

- \$25,000 Private Foundation Grant for stop-motion animation technology
- \$2,000 Cox Charities Northeast Fund Grant
- \$1,200 Ocean Community Chamber Foundation Grant
- \$1,000 Rhode Island Wild Plant Society Grant

We also benefited from the generosity of numerous donors, sponsors, volunteers, and community advocates whose support continues to expand opportunities for those we serve.

LOOKING AHEAD

As we enter FY27, we continue to focus on:

- Developing a new Strategic Plan
- Advancing facility and infrastructure improvements
- Expanding makerspace and technology programming
- Strengthening fundraising and grant development efforts
- Supporting staff growth and leadership development
- Continuing environmental stewardship initiatives in Wilcox Park
- Expanding community partnerships and outreach
- Maintaining welcoming, inclusive spaces for all

The accomplishments of this year reflect the collective efforts of dedicated staff, volunteers, trustees, donors, partners, and patrons. Together, we are preserving a cherished community institution while preparing for an exciting future.

CLOSING REFLECTION

The impact of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park is ultimately measured through the experiences of the people we serve.

This past year, children logged more than 80,000 minutes of reading. Families built routines around library programs. Teens found a safe and welcoming place to belong. Volunteers dedicated countless hours of service. Community members gathered to celebrate culture, literacy, history, nature, and one another.

Perhaps the most fitting summary came from a patron who simply said: “Westerly Library is the best library around.”

On behalf of the staff of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Board of Trustees, Friends organization, volunteers, donors, community partners, and patrons. Your support makes this work possible and ensures that Westerly Library & Wilcox Park continues to be a place where people learn, connect, create, belong, and thrive.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brigitte Hopkins
Executive Director, Westerly Library & Wilcox Park



Administration

Brigitte Hopkins, Executive Director
Bill Lancellotta, Assistant Director
Sara Ross Clark, Business Office Manager

Marketing

Amanda Wagner, Director of Marketing
Hannah Williams, Program & Outreach Associate

Development

Stacey Jackson, Director of Development
Anna Jones Gorman, Data Entry Specialist

Public Services

Robin Bell, Public Services Associate
Keara Bergey, Public Services Associate
Pat Cleary, Public Services Associate
Meara Foght, Head of Public Services
Keith Kimberlin, Technology Associate
Skylar Kuvalanka, Public Services Associate
Michaela LaParle, Public Services Associate
Micha Medenci, Public Services Associate
Brienne Phillips, Public Services Associate

Youth Services

Lynn Dougan, Teen Librarian
Melanie Fricchione, Head of Youth Services
Ben Green, Tween Librarian
Casey Howley-Brigham, Tween/Teen Associate
Karen LaMotte, Youth Services Associate

Julianna Risica DiPanni, Kids Librarian
Franklin Timmons, Youth Services Associate

Adult Services

Caroline Badowski, Head of Adult Services
Anaïs Cunningham, Adult Services Associate
Kim Ihne, Collection Management
Claire Morgan, Adult Services Associate
Cassie Skobrak, Adult Services Librarian
Colleen Walsh-Jervis, Collection Management
Nina Wright, Local History Librarian

Facilities

Rob Gizzarelli, Facilities Manager
Teresa Peck, Custodian

Park

Brian McGregor, Groundskeeper
Martin Neiberg, Groundskeeper
Alan Peck, Park Superintendent
Lee Sadosky, Groundskeeper
Trevor Tetlow, Groundskeeper

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Rebecca J. Woodward

*Deceased
**Completed their final term this
Fiscal Year



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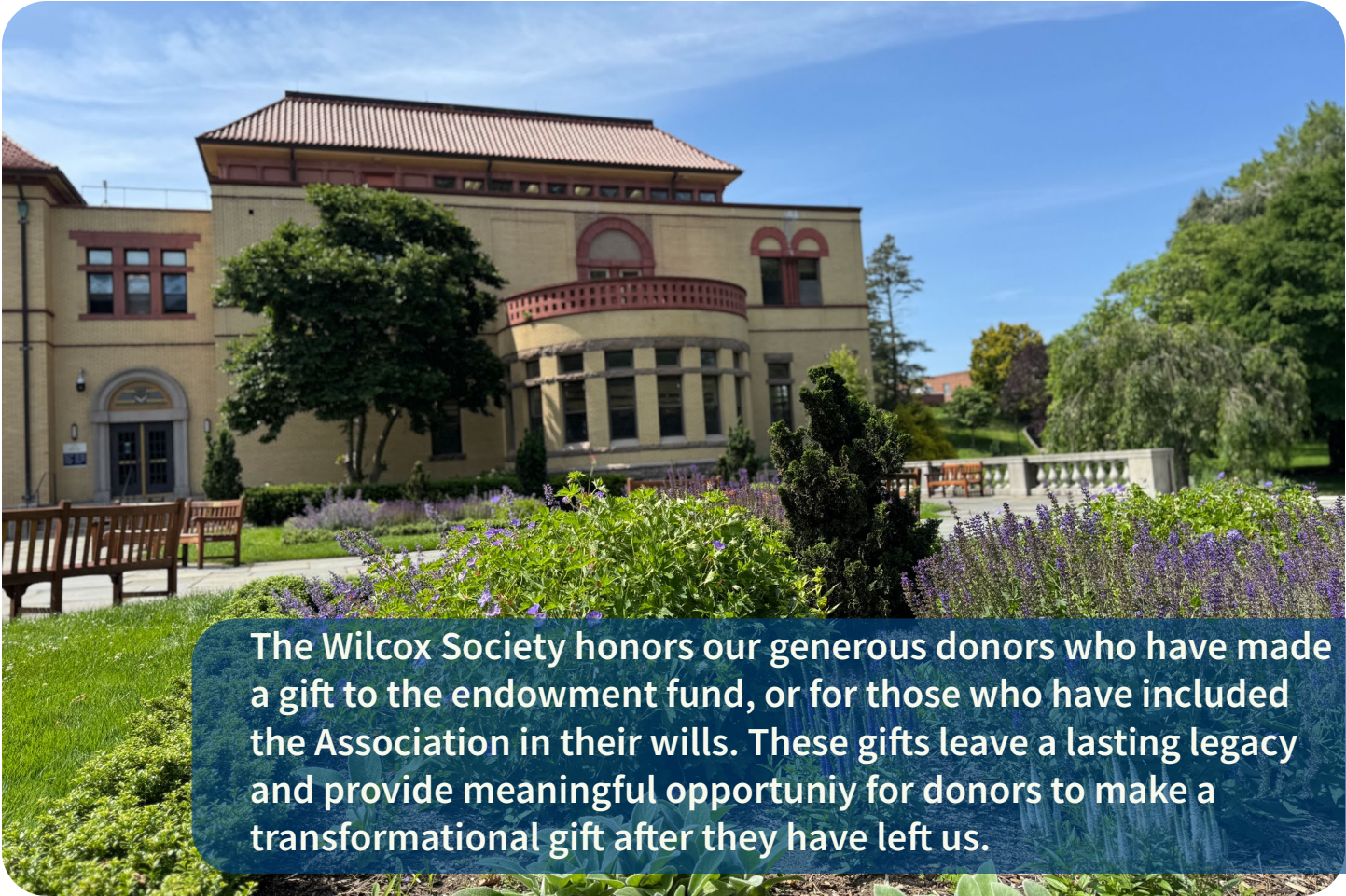
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Carl Carvell | February 2026

Carl was a firm believer in the power of volunteerism and importance of education. He served as a volunteer and as an Incorporator between 2017 and 2023. He and his wife, Amy, attended many fundraisers for the library and park over the years and supported the Annual Fund.

Andrea Chesky | April 2026

An avid gardener, Andrea volunteered for decades in Wilcox Park. She shared her enthusiasm for botany at the annual Garden Market Fair, where she enjoyed helping children create their own potted fairy gardens. Andrea served as an Incorporator from 2014 to 2020 and as a Wilcox Park Committee Member from 2017 to 2023.

Arlene Morton | July 2025

Arlene worked for the organization for 47 years as a Librarian. She started working at the library as a Page while still attending school and ended up having one of the longest careers here. She trained staff in Collection Management and enjoyed sharing her extensive knowledge of the history of the library. She forged lifelong friendships with fellow staff members as well as volunteers here, all of whom remember her fondly.

Theresa Routhier | August 2025

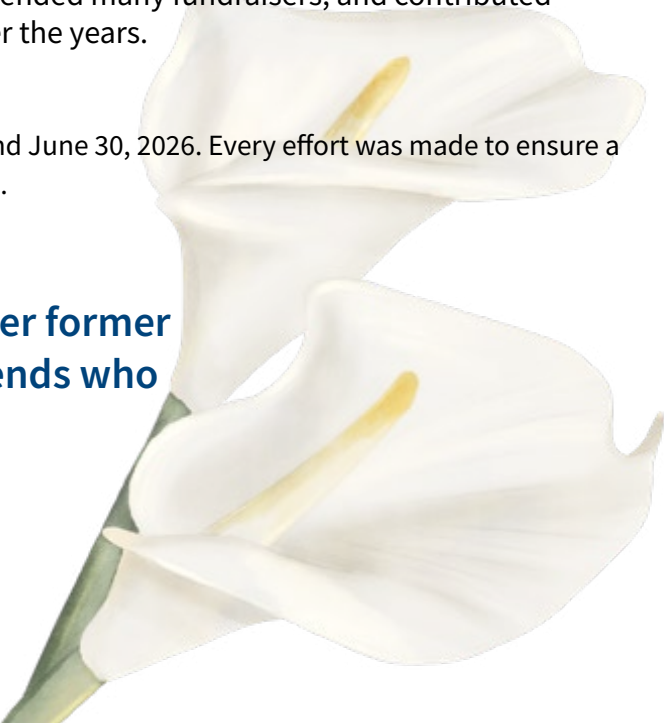
Theresa loved to read and play games. She was a member of the Friends of Westerly Library & Wilcox Park. As a member of the Friends, she relished having early access to book sales and enjoyed being a part of a community of fellow readers.

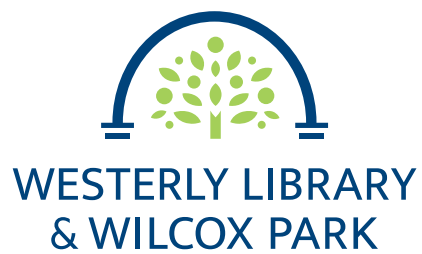
Olive Tamm | August 2025

Olive was a voracious reader and an author. Two of her books were published: There and Then, a memoir of her childhood in Vermont, and My Garden and I, which recounts her horticultural endeavors. She served as an Incorporator, a Sorting Room volunteer, and on our Board of Trustees from 2010 to 2014. Olive was exceptionally generous. She supported the Annual Fund, attended many fundraisers, and contributed significant funds to the Association’s Capital Campaigns over the years.

The individuals listed above passed away between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. Every effort was made to ensure a complete list, but please notify us of any corrections or omissions.

We would like to take a moment to remember former Incorporators, Trustees, Volunteers and Friends who have passed away this fiscal year.





2025/2026

