Bill Memorial Library
240 Monument Street
Groton, CT 06340

Bill Memorial Library

Photo edited by Bill Pratt

Groton, CT

2025-2026 ANNUAL REPORT

The mission of the Bill Memorial Library is to meet the needs of the community in a welcoming and unique historic setting by stimulating imagination, providing the resources for lifelong learning, inspiring young patrons, and connecting to the online world.
Revised Oct. 2020, Board of Trustees

From the Director's Desk

Dear Friends of Bill Memorial Library,

Fall is here and with it big changes for the Bill Memorial Library. We have just finalized a land swap with the Town of Groton; the library will give a parcel of land (the "playground") to the Groton Heights School property, and in return we will get a parcel to the south of the library (part of the front lawn of the school property).

We're excited to incorporate this into our grounds and provide open space between the library and the Fort Griswold property and monument. We owe a big thanks to the Town for working with us to get this over the finish line. Frederic Bill, our founder, always envisioned this hilltop location as a park, so this is one step closer to bringing his vision to reality and open space to the community.

Sincerely,

Wendy Connal, Library Director



The "Playground," given to the Groton Heights School property



The front lawn, now part of BML



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Wendy Connal, Director and Ky Connal-Nicolaou, Staffer



Wendy and Ky took advantage of our holiday photo backdrop to take funny photos for their family card.

2025 - 2026 Donors

In fiscal year 2025-2026, the Bill Memorial Library received 23.7% of our annual operating budget from the Town of Groton. As a small private library that is free and open to the public, we rely on public contributions for a large portion of our annual budget. We are thankful for the financial support of so many in the community who value the programs and services that the Bill Memorial Library provides.

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2025 - 2026 SUMMER SPONSORS, COMMUNITY PARTNERS & GRANTORS

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Fitch High School
Friends of Fort Griswold
Girls Who Code
Groton Middle School
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Mystic and Noank Library
Riverfront Children's Center
Thames River Heritage Park
Thames River Magnet School
Trillium Garden Club
TVCCA Little Learners
UConn Agricultural Extension
UConn EFNAP + SNAP
Waterford Public Library









Clockwise from top left: amazing former volunteer Tim Jackson, R2-D2 and staffer Doreen, wooden dinosaur toys courtesy of Charlie Ebbinghaus, and a fierce but tiny owl from Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center's Raptors! program

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Grants Awarded	Funding For
Charter Oak Federal Credit Union	AWE Station
City of Groton	250th Programming
Community Foundation of Eastern CT	Chromebooks
Mystic Woman's Club	Summer Reading Program
Groton Education Foundation	Summer Reading Program

VOLUNTEERS

We are grateful for the knowledge, talent, and energy that our volunteers generously donated to the Library this past year. Many hours were spent on maintenance projects, fundraisers and programming that enriched the Library's services to our community. Thank you to everyone who helped!



Holiday Sing-Along Performers, L-R: Brian Bergman, Bill Pratt, Mary-Jane Carle (Staff), Bill Schmauder, and Jason Rusk (Trustee)



"Kids in Candyland" green screen confection created by Bill Pratt



Mascot Clancy protecting the library grounds



Lionel Train Museum Case Display courtesy of Donald Koehler

2025-2026 Library Budget

Income	
Endowment Draw	$230,000
Fundraising/Other	71,651
Town of Groton	65,000
	$366,651
Expenses	
Personnel	$213,411
Library Supplies	22,009
Technology, Supplies & Programming	19,007
Building & Grounds	35,110
Other Operating Expenses	77,114
	$366,651

Erica Benvenuti
Brian Bergman
Traci Boiselle
Steve Bonk
Lonnie Braxton
Julie Cagle
Scott Carle
Emily Casey
Ruth Connal
Paco de Onís
Ella Desnoyers
Jed Desnoyers
Dawson Desnoyers
Abby Desnoyers
Marsha Dietrich
Janet Downs
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Ron Steed
Dane Stevenson
John Steward
Elizabeth Swindell
Natalie Webb
Cindy Win
Alison Woods
Pamela Yates
Robert Zuliani



Clancy and Staffer Ky Connal-Nicolaou

TEEN PROGRAMS



Starting the New Year off healthily with an informative and delicious cooking program

Our Girls Who Code club was open to middle and high school students both in-person and virtually, and aimed to make technology a more inclusive career. Coders worked independently and in small teams to learn coding languages, explore new methods of storytelling, make crafts that combined STEM and art, do hands-on activities that promote an understanding of real-world troubleshooting, and problem-solve.



Teen Services Librarian Miss Alex has a "magical" way with books and teens

SCHOOL-YEAR FUN!

Over 200 teens attended a wide variety of fun, informative, and artistic programs after school, including:

- Book Bash Collages
- Werewolf (a year-round favorite, but especially spooky in October!)
- Spellbook Showdown
- Rock Painting
- Teen cooking program with Natalie Webb, consulting dietician for the Big Y Be Well Program
- Foam Board Printmaking
- Beaded Lizard Keychains
- *Jackbox* Games

Alex began visiting Fitch High School for Book Café, with 525 teens attending 13 gatherings.



Artistic teen volunteers repainting the concrete parking lot stops

Over 50 teens joined us during the summer of 2026 to play games, learn beginning sewing, explore origami, write creative book reviews and zines, complete reading challenges, and paint masterpieces on canvas.



Origami...dinosaurs? Plesiosaurs? Fun!

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

The Bill Memorial Library is a fun place for kids and their families! It was a banner year for the Library, with unprecedented program attendance and community participation. It has been a privilege to serve our patrons of all ages this year.



Blast from the past: Ky Connal-Nicolaou as T-Rex and David Rose in Revolutionary-period clothing

2026 SUMMER READING HIGHLIGHTS

Over 88 kids PreK-Gr 5 unearthed a story this past summer, actively reading and playing a fun dinosaur-themed version of our summer reading game. They read on a total of 2,042 days, an average of 23 days read per child.

We hosted several programs for children and their families, including the ever-popular Tripledale Farm Petting Zoo, Colonial Kids with Natalie and Mary Pat of the Avery-Copp House Museum, a Connecticut Rocks geology program, Ed Popielarczyks's Magic Show, a fun "Find the Dino" scavenger hunt, several painting adventures, and a 250th Birthday Celebration.

SCHOOL-YEAR PROGRAM TOTALS

Ages Birth to 5:	70 Programs
Attendance:	2,500+ Attendees
Ages 6 to 11:	29 Programs
Attendance:	1,100+ Attendees

2025-2026 SCHOOL-YEAR HIGHLIGHTS

- Storytime was well-attended weekly, including by several daycares and homeschool groups. Special guests included the Groton City Fire Department with a fire truck and talented musician Bill Pratt.
- Stories were brought to Riverfront Children's Center, TVCCA Head Start Preschool, and Catherine Kolnaski Magnet School.
- Music & Movement showcased local musicians including Brian Bergman, Marsha Dietrich, Tim Lambert, and John Lecce.
- World-famous axolotls made their swimmy debut at BML in April with Ashley Hunt of the ARC_Amphibian_Reptile_Center.
- Kids in grades 1-4 learned about cooking from Erica Benvenuti, Community Nutrition Educator, UCONN EFNAP + SNAP.



Wheel-y fitting picture of Storytime attendants at Fire Safety Day

ADULT & FAMILY PROGRAMS

The library is always a fun place for people of all ages to socialize and learn. Our Food for Thought Book Group meets monthly at Groton Townhouse. The Something Else Entirely (SEE) book club, which meets to discuss speculative fiction, has quite a few members and continues to grow. The Icelandic tradition of *Jolabokaflod* was celebrated again with wrapped books and chocolates. Various staff members shared their skills through the Skill Library, there were 20 plus Tech Help Sessions, and Notary Services remain popular.

FAMILY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Take Your Child to the Library Day
- Resource Fairs and Outreach at Groton City Day, several Groton schools, Children First Groton, the Thames River Heritage Park...
- Denison Pequotsepos Nature Center: Raptors!
- Holiday Family Portraits
- "Leprechauns on the Loose" Scavenger Hunt
- A special visit from R2-D2 courtesy of Steve Bonk
- Seed Giveaway courtesy of the UConn Extension Master Gardener's Program
- And more!



Some of the members of the book discussion group Food For Thought

PROGRAM TOTAL FOR ADULTS AND FAMILIES

30+ programs

700+ in attendance!



SEE Book Club

ADULT SUMMER FUN!

This summer was relaxing, informative, and fun! Four adult programs were offered this summer, as well as the chance to win gift certificates to local restaurants and shops. The adults who participated completed 103 book review forms, and 10 adults completed the crossword.

- "Revolution and Tragedy: The Life of Anne Ledyard, Colonel Ledyard's Wife" with John Steward
- "Flags of the Revolution" with Charles Ebbinghaus
- Paint and Sip with staffer Catherine (so popular that it was offered twice)
- "Yin Yoga" with Dana St. Pierre

ADULT PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Revolutionary Reads Book Discussions hosted by local authors and experts, including Lonnie Braxton and Julie Cagle
- "Trace Your CT Revolutionary War Ancestry" with Bryna O'Sullivan
- "25 Places to Go After You Retire" with Richard Benfield
- "The Dead Do Speak" with Traci Boiselle of The Atlantic Paranormal Society
- "Understanding Homelessness: Local Realities, Local Solutions" with Annah Perch
- Film screening of *Borderland* with director Paco de Onís and producer Pamela Yates
- "A Winter Meditation" with Ronald Steed
- "Tunes and Tales of the CT Revolution" with Kent Besocke
- Estate Planning with Alison Woods and Atty. Joseph St. Rock of Estate and Tax Planning Council of Eastern CT
- "The Archaeology of CT Battlefields" with Kevin McBride
- "The Web They Wove: Women and Their Wardrobes During the Revolution" with Rebecca Bayreuther Donohue and Amanda Flynn Rumney of the Dirty Blue Shirts



Adult Guided Paint Class #2