



WILTON LIBRARY

137 Old Ridgefield Road
Wilton, CT - 06897
www.wiltonlibrary.org
203.762.3950

NEWS

Contact: Suzanne Verrilli
Direct dial number: 203-762-6321
E-mail: sverrilli@wiltonlibrary.org
www.wiltonlibrary.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wilton Library thrived in a pivotal year

Wilton, CT – Michele Klink, president of the Board of Trustees for Wilton Library Association, opened the 126th Annual Meeting recently with a list of superlatives describing this year – “unprecedented, challenging, pivotal.” In her remarks, she underscored the numerous initiatives the library undertook during the fiscal year 2020-2021 and praised the dedicated staff for figuring out “how to serve their patrons and this community despite the pandemic.”

She highlighted providing robust virtual programming for all ages, expanding the digital collection and services, helping patrons remotely in navigating this new world of digital access and bringing the Brubeck Collection archives home to Wilton. “We did not just stand still, tread water, wait out the pandemic and survive. We paved a path for the future that will continue to serve this community for a hundred and more years to come. We thrived!”

Kim Healy, treasurer of Wilton Library Association, concurred with Klink’s remarks. Citing the uncertainty of heading into FY 20-21 with fears of the pandemic strengthening in the fall, Healy acknowledged that the town’s fiscal stability and providing approximately 75% of the funding helped the library maintain its strong financial position. She also praised the library’s financial manager, Susan Taylor, for her excellent management of the PPP process that resulted in getting the entire PPP loan forgiven. This unexpected funding resource allowed the town to lower the library’s town grant for FY 21-22, which in turn helps to lower the tax burden for Wilton taxpayers. The library also raises 25% of its remaining budget through fundraising. Healy acknowledged at the meeting that the library had almost met its annual appeal budget. As of this writing, the annual appeal campaign has reached its goal thanks to the large and small donations of patrons. The library also was able to hold a spring book sale “thanks to the amazing volunteers who made that happen” and brought in more funds than were expected.

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Elaine Tai-Lauria, executive director of Wilton Library, expressed high praise for “our dedicated Board of Trustees for their incredible support and guidance over this very challenging year.” She continued by acknowledging “our appreciation to First Selectwoman Lynne Vanderslice, and the Board of Selectmen for our Public-Private Partnership as well as their support of our library.” Her remarks also highlighted “the community partners and town departments, dedicated volunteers for their unwavering efforts to organize books sales, art exhibits and more, loyal Friends, sponsors and patrons who continue to validate the importance of our institution and enable us to be more than a traditional library, and colleagues for their commitment and steadfastness through these uncharted times.”

Facing the challenges that the pandemic brought, the library continued to provide services so that patrons could borrow more than 150,000 items; there were over 80,000 onsite and virtual visits; more than 9,000 patrons attended 400+ virtual programs and there were large increases in the usage of downloadable eBooks and eAudiobooks, streaming movies, TV shows and music. In short, the library and its patrons stayed connected throughout the year.

One of the highlights of this year was Wilton Reads 2021 with the reading of Natasha Trethewey’s *Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir*. The library collaborated with several local organizations including Wilton Public Schools, Wilton Historical Society and the Wilton Inter-Faith Clergy to address the timely topic of race relations in America. The program culminated with community panel discussions and an author talk.

During the pandemic upheaval, the library was able to proceed with its most enduring plan, providing a home for the Brubeck Collection archives. With a majority of the construction taking place under strict protocols while the building was unable to be open to the public, the final touches are being finished and the archives will soon be relocated to their newly reconfigured space. Tai-Lauria remarked, “We invite you to come in and see the redesigned areas and we look forward to hosting an official ribbon-cutting and opening of the Collection.”

Each year the library acknowledges a Staff Member of the Year. In her remarks, Tai-Lauria announced that Juan Carlos Olivares was selected as he “exemplifies the best qualities any manager or colleague could look for – trustworthy, competent, impeccable integrity, reliable, constant, efficient, skillful, and a quick learner. It’s no wonder he is so greatly admired by colleagues, trustees, and patrons. Indeed, there is no one more deserving of this recognition, so it is truly an honor for us to work with him.”

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Michele Klink introduced the two Volunteers of the Year. Board member Sandy Stein has chaired the Marketing Committee for several years and guided the team on the 125th logo branding. The colorful logo represents the four seasons of the year and evokes the architecture of the library with its wide-open windows and spaces that allows the outside in. This led to the evolution of the library's new logo, incorporating those same colors and rounding the edges of the "W" so that it is representative of an open book, open hands and a more modern view of open tablets. Rob Sanders, vice president of the Board, was also named Volunteer of the Year. Sanders is also one of the area's leading architects. He brought his skills to bear for the COVID-compliant barriers for the library's public service desks. He also was recognized as the mastermind behind the Brubeck Collection space. Klink stated, "Rob has designed an incredibly fitting space for the Brubeck Archives. His vision to bring the unique character and ambiance of the Brubeck family home and fireplace to our library was brilliant and a tribute to legendary Dave Brubeck and the entire family."

During the business meeting, attendees voted on the proposed slate of officers and elected Rob Sanders, president, Teresa DiLorenzo-Waldron, vice president, Carol Johnson, secretary and Mike Boswood, treasurer for FY 21-22.

Retiring trustees were honored with books that were purchased for the library's collection. The books will carry bookplates acknowledging their service as trustees. Those retiring were Fred Harley, Kimberley Healy, Michele Klink, Saraswathi Nair MD, Tierney O'Hearn, Andrea Sato, and Meghan Whitman. New trustees nominated to serve on the board are Marty Avallone, Michael Dugan and Betsy Huffman.

Newly-elected president Rob Sanders noted, "We can be sure that our staff will continue to provide highly accomplished services with a personal touch that makes Wilton Library the favorite place in town. Most of all, we thank our director Elaine for her tireless dedication and grace under pressure this year. Despite many changes, the library has managed to adapt and thrive, and remains the jewel of Wilton's intellectual and social life."

Wilton Library is located at 137 Old Ridgefield Road in the heart of Wilton Center and is now open to everyone Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Appointments are not needed. For more information, visit www.wiltonlibrary.org or call 203-762-6350.

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Caption: The Brubeck Collection archives, coming to Wilton Library were one of the many highlights mentioned during Wilton Library Association’s 126th Annual Meeting held via Zoom on Wednesday, June 16. The archives are now in Wilton and are being curated. A ribbon cutting for the new reference space is planned for later this year. Out-going president Michele Klink praised the dedicated staff for figuring out “how to serve their patrons and this community despite the pandemic.” The new officers for Fiscal Year 21-22 are Rob Sanders, president, Teresa DiLorenzo-Waldron, vice president, Carol Johnson, secretary and Mike Boswood, treasurer. Staff Member of the Year is Juan Carlos Olivares and Volunteers of the Year are trustees Rob Sanders and Sandy Stein. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT; www.wiltonlibrary.org; 203-762-3950. Photo credit: Peggy Garbus