

## The Blackstone Library Receives Prestigious Grant Award

The Blackstone Public Library was recently awarded a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant for \$7,500 from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners (MBLC). "These libraries are to be congratulated. It's clear from the high quality of their proposals that a lot of hard work and careful analysis of local needs went into the preparation of the grants," said Ruth Urell, Head of Library Advisory and Development at the MBLC. "The ideas and creativity expressed in these exciting and innovative projects will lead to outstanding results that benefit local communities throughout Massachusetts."

The Blackstone Library's grant, *Embracing Diversity Through Words*, was an innovative grant created by the Library Director to fulfill a community need. Town residents often require a neutral place to read about controversial and current topics. The library should serve as the center of information for these topics as libraries do not censor, nor do they have a political agenda. Libraries are neutral. The library director and library staff would like to engage community members from teens to adults in a Community Read that addresses topics such as survival, women's rights, citizenship, bullying, sexuality and gender. Six different book titles and discussion groups will be available for community participation. The library director will hold writing groups for adult and young adults to reflect on the readings and topics of interest. Although this grant was written with adults and teens in mind, accompanying programs for children will be taking place as well under the supervision of the children's librarian.

The library staff will host book discussions concerning the following book titles:

- *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*
- *When the Emperor Was Divine*
- *The Book Thief*
- *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*
- *The Perfect Comeback of Carolyn Jacobs* (This book was written by Blackstone native Matthew Dicks and the setting of the book is Blackstone)
- *Americanah*

Programs and events will coincide with this grant, including but not limited to:

- Celebrating Diversity Through Drumming  
Monday, January 22 from 7 – 9 p.m.
- Finding Your Roots: Embracing Diversity Through Words Genealogy Workshop Series  
Thursdays: February 1, February 8, February 15 and February 22 at 6:30 p.m.
- Writing Group: Engaging Your Thoughts  
Thursdays: January 18, January 25, February 8, February 15 at 6:30 p.m.
- Matthew Dicks, author and Blackstone native - Bullying Discussion  
Saturday, April 21 at 1 p.m.

- Healing Through Art with Greg Maichack  
To be scheduled
- Understanding Gender Diversity with instructor Lani Blechman  
April 5 at 6:30 p.m.

Libraries use LSTA grants from the MBLC in a variety of ways, including implementing literacy programs that benefit all ages, increasing library access to underserved populations, providing advanced automation services, training staff, and preserving valuable historical documents.

In addition to the direct library grant program, the MBLC uses LSTA funds to support statewide programs and services, including summer reading programs, databases, the Commonwealth eBook program, the Commonwealth Catalog, and [mass.gov/libraries](https://mass.gov/libraries), which provides information and resources for residents.

LSTA is administered on the federal level by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and in the Commonwealth by the MBLC. More information about LSTA can be found at <https://mbc.state.ma.us/>.