



Meeting Minutes: Library Advisory Committee

Date: 07/13/2023

Minutes prepared by Kathy Peterson

Location: Heritage Library

Attendance

- Peter Mendez
- Kevin Hendricks
- Lynette Cargill
- Kari Cahn
- Charlie Schubert
- Pat Schoenecker
- MaryJanice Alongi
- Robin Cerio
- Rien Harms
- Margaret Stone, Library Director
- Jennifer Reichert Simpson, Deputy Director
- Russ Cogar, Collections Manager
- Stephanie Opstad, Manager Heritage Library
- Kathy Peterson, Admin support
- Alvin Yeo, Admin support
- Approximately 150 members of the Public

Agenda

- Kevin called the meeting to order at 5:30. Robin moved and Peter seconded that the consent agenda be approved. Kevin welcomed the members of the public and provided guidelines that would be in place to facilitate public comments. He also referenced the Library Bill of Rights, Freedom to Read and ALA policies that deal retention/removal of materials.

Comments were taken until 7 pm. 37 people spoke during the public comment period and the majority were supportive of retaining the materials.

After a short break, most of the people left and the meeting continued.

The meeting discussed the four titles that had been requested for a Reconsideration of Material. After much deliberation:

- *The GayBC's* by ML Webb: committee unanimously recommends no changes title is retained.
- *Every Body Book* by Rachel Simon: committee unanimously recommends no changes title is retained.
- *Animal Crossing Deserted Island Getaway 3*: committee unanimously recommends no changes title is retained.

The discussion of *You Know, Sex* by Cory Silverberg, was tabled until the next meeting by a unanimous vote. The request to review this title had come in on July 10th and initially the Committee Chair felt it was fine to consider it that evening. However, other members felt there hadn't been time to give a proper read as they are charged to do as members of the committee.

- Margaret gave a brief Director's report highlighting the continued progress of the new South Saint Paul Library-named Kaposia, after Mdewakanton Dakota people and village that was in the St. Paul and S. St. Paul area. The County Board is reviewing a proposal to expand self service hours the other 8 library locations
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Next Meeting

Date: September 14, 5:30 pm; Inver Glen Library

Written Comments Submitted for the Library Advisory Committee Meeting of July 13, 2023

July 17, 2023

Dear Director Stone,

I was unable to make the most recent Library Advisory Committee meeting, where I understand there was a group who challenged certain books offered for borrowing housed within the library's collection. It's late and I

have a 1-year old baby, so please forgive a bit of the mushy-brained babble that invades my writing (I don't have the time to edit this and make it pretty).

I write in opposition to removing any of the books that are in our system. I write in support of inclusivity within our libraries, in support of making our libraries open, welcoming places where people of all types can find resources pertinent to their beliefs and wants -- unless their want is to curtail the edification of others or solely promote the views of one party throughout the library system.

I have used a library since I got my first library card at the age of one, 42 years ago. I am about to get my daughter a library card to carry on the tradition of using a valuable public resource to learn, to enrich one's mind, and to see and meet people you might not meet in your particular neighborhood. I value the library system, and we currently go to the Wentworth library (honestly we go to many, but it's the closest so we frequent it most often) at least once a week for storytime with Miss Donnell (sp). I heard that certain groups defiled books at Wentworth that they thought didn't meet their religious standards - these people have the right to not check out those books, but defiling them and asking for them to be removed is nonsense - it is a move to restrict, and that is not what a library is for, in my opinion.

I could go on and on, and feel like I already have babbled plenty. I hope you are having a wonderful weekend, and know that contentious issues can cause stress. I just wanted to be at least one more data point for you to note as you go forth making the decisions you must make regarding the library system and what it stands for, what utility it brings to the community, and why we have libraries.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Resident (West St. Paul)

July 15, 2023

Hello Margaret-

I have gotten on facebook over the last few days and noticed a couple friends say that there might be an issue with books and signage in the library that support LGBTQIA+ people. I wanted to write because it's very important to me and my family that the library continue to support LGBTQIA+ and BIOPIC people in the books and displays that are at the library. We are not supportive of censorship and want to see all people supported in our public spaces, particularly the library which is a safe haven for so many people. I hope you will consider this when choosing the books and displays that are in the library.

Thank you, Resident

July 14, 2023

Hi Margaret

Thank you for holding the meeting Thursday night.

Unfortunately I understand that someone at the Lakeville Library leaked out this information to the Pride correlation, which made it a disadvantage to the other attendees. This could mean that some of the Pride group may not have been from Dakota County even though they claimed they were.

I also felt this meeting got out of hand by not having a time restraint on the amount of people speaking. This was a free for all with no ending time for public comments.

There was also bias from the board member sitting to your left. Also the board members needed to speak up when the one speaker turned to the attendees and spoke directly to us. I was the one that said "You need to speak to the board members" This was the responsibility of the board members to address her. Plus the member sitting to your Left shut me down ASAP. Then when the next woman spoke she was looking directly at me which she should, again, have been told to speak to the board directly. It was wrong for her to speak to the group, which was a control method on her part. This was not right so I spoke up. I was stating the rules set forth from the beginning, since no one from the board did.

Another Bias was not telling the Pride group to stop their "noises" during opposing comments. This started happening as we were 3/4 of the way through speakers. The one example was the older gentleman that spoke after his wife. He received chatter from the Pride group during his time and no board member shut their chatter down.

I finally needed to leave because of time plus the line just kept getting longer. I was tired of being bullied by the Pride group.

Sincerely,

Resident (Lakeville)

July 14, 2023

Margaret Stone,

I read that there is a hate-group trying to remove certain books from the county library collection. I wanted to let you know that my family uses the library every week, and we appreciate the wide diversity of children's books. We've used them to have discussions with our kids about race, gender, voting, and many other important topics.

Please do not let hate-groups decide what my kids can and cannot read.

Thank you,
Resident

July 14, 2023

Good afternoon, Margaret!

I live in Lakeville. Since a young age, I have always loved the Dakota County Libraries. The anticipation of diving into a new book and the endless possibilities available have kept me coming back to the library month after month. I feel like a part of my community when I walk into the library. I have passed my love of the library on to my children as well. They devour books as fast as I do and I hope their passion for reading and their local library never changes. One of my favorite features are the book recommendation tables. I enjoy a theme, whether it be Spring Reading, Christmas, Black History Month, Minnesota Authors, and Pride. I saw the Pride displays while picking up a hold last month, smiled, and gave a silent cheer. Thank you for making the library a welcoming place for all. Please continue the community support highlighting all residents in Dakota County and Lakeville. Please continue your rotating theme tables. Please keep being awesome.

Thank you for all that you do!

Best regards,

Resident (Lakeville)

July 14, 2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

In light of last night's meeting, I want to express my gratitude for the welcome extended to our family by the Dakota County library system. I wish I could find the words to describe what it means to be able to walk into an official institution and let go of my child's hand to point out a book that's about us. The Pride displays make real what libraries are to me: living in pursuit of truth, honesty, and community. In that spirit: this moment is a difficult one. Please accept my thanks for facing it bravely. Please stay safe. Your patriotic support of American freedom deserves so much more than a short email can express.

Sincerely,

Resident

7-14-2023

Good morning Director Stone,

I live in Dakota County and I am writing to express my gratitude for the continued support of diversity in our community by the Dakota County Library. Your efforts to promote inclusivity and representation are greatly appreciated.

I also want to take this opportunity to voice my opinion on the topic of banning books. I firmly believe that banning books should never be a valid option in our society. The freedom to read and access information is a fundamental right, and it is crucial that we continue to uphold this value.

Furthermore, I believe it is crucial for loved ones and their families to be positively reflected in our literature and celebrated in our community. Representation matters, and it is important that we continue to work toward creating a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all.

Thank you for your dedication to serving our community and for your commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion.

Sincerely,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-13-2023

Hello Margaret and Board Members,

I am sure you have received plenty of emails regarding tonight's (July 13th) meeting. I was in attendance tonight and wanted to send y'all a note to say thank you.

Thank you for serving on the board. I have served on plenty of boards and know that even though most meetings are uneventful, it still takes up time and energy to do it well, so thank you for serving.

Thank you for conducting tonight's meeting with respect and a sense of calmness. Facing a room of that many people can set anyone's nerves on edge but your presence and the way you all carried yourselves this evening created a calm and welcoming environment.

Thank you for allowing all voices to be heard. It would have been easy to simply cut off comments after the pre-registered folks spoke but you graciously let those 30-40 people who needed to be heard have their time. To me, that really felt like you were putting into action one more way the library values everyone's perspective and opinion.

Keep up the amazing work you are doing. Listening to everyone's stories, the library has made a big impact in a lot of lives. Thank you for continuing to create safe and welcoming spaces.

(Margaret - please forward this on to the other board members as their emails are not public - thank you.)

Resident

7/13/2023

I wanted to take a short moment to share my support for the pride displays and information in Dakota county libraries.

As a cis white female having lived in Dakota county starting in 1996 and with a child currently in ISD194 our house fully supports inclusion and information in our public libraries. We most commonly check out books online. We have specifically chosen books that explore the world beyond only what we know.

The vocal minority attempting to ban or remove books from public spaces is not OK. Know that we support the library and your open information.

Resident (Dakota County)

7/13/2023

These are the complete comments from a speaker who was unable to say all he wished due to the time limit.

Issues

The issue I am bringing up today is the presence of “pride books” and “pride month” displays specifically in the children’s area of the library. This is an egregious action that has no value to the community. It is clearly there for indoctrinating children to “pride” topics, or what is generally known as GROOMING.

The reason I call this indoctrination rather than informing or educating or entertaining is that young children’s brains are not fully developed and they have little or no ability for discretionary thinking.

Medical research has established that the prefrontal cortex and the cerebellum reach maturity late. These are the areas of the brain that provide for evaluation of information and discretionary decision making. As shown in many studies like Brown and Minns 1999 report “...process of neurodevelopment starts soon after conception and continues into the second decade of life” that is approaching twenty years old

And again; “the most complex cognitive operations such as accurately representing transformations, flexibly manipulating information held in mind, and simultaneously taking into account multiple facets of a problem show developmental improvements into adolescence. (Child Development, January /February 2000, Volume 71, Number 1, Pages 44-56)”

Evidence from these and numerous additional sources demonstrates that neural development extends from the embryonic period through adolescence.

This prevents these children from understanding any significant difference between “A is for apple, B is for banana, C is for carrot...” as you would find in a child’s ABCs book and “A is for ally, B is for bi, C is for coming out...” from the book “Gay B C’s”. It is not the issue of homosexual terms since even an ABCs book that uses heterosexual terms for the letters would be inappropriate for young children. The issue is that it is grooming the children to think about sex at a very young age, long before they would become aware of it on their own.

During pride month we have daily checked out every book that we could from the pride month displays reaching nearly two hundred books that we held on to for the entire pride month. And we did this for the protection of the children. I was shocked that there were two hundred children’s books even in print much less in the Lakeville library! How many children’s books are in the library relating sports or animals or the dozens of other topics that would be suitable and interesting for children?

In addition to grooming, which is truly evil, these books are destroying their childhood by pushing very adult topics on them long before they are ready. They turn innocent children into angst ridden mini adults far too soon. In the book, “The Every Body Book” the author tells pre-teen children, “...sex can involve the penis and the vagina, the mouth and the penis, the mouth and the vulva, and the penis and the anus.”

How do those words inform, educate or entertain a child? While the meaning of those words is very clear to an adult or a teenager, what will a six or seven year old child be thinking? What is the purpose of the library in promoting these books to children?

Books about or for children with gender dysphoria are an even greater disgrace to our library. A young child may not differentiate between a fantasy story and a factual story. Several countries that were among the first to make this legal have since found out how negative the results of these processes are and have banned them. As of April of this year England, France, Finland, Norway and Sweden have reversed their position on these treatments. Pride activists were predicting that there would be an increase in suicides after the treatments were banned but that has not occurred. Rather, there are indications that the frequency of suicide may be increased among the people who do receive the full treatment. A story in Forbes of June 2023 said, "longitudinal data collected and analyzed by [public health authorities](#) in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and England have concluded that the risk-benefit ratio of youth gender transition ranges from unknown to unfavorable." Yet the library is providing misleading books about this topic to young children.

This is not a criticism of LGBTQ+ people, rather, it is a criticism of the amorphous pride movement in their efforts to spread their material to young children. The pride organization or group or movement has grown from people wanting to improve the social acceptance of homosexuals to an unstructured conglomeration of people who want to make anything that is in any way related to sex or gender, acceptable and deserving of respect. Pride month has become a month long orgy of bizarre sex related public activities like naked men marching in the New York pride parade. I saw that some people who are calling themselves MAPs and saying they are pride members are saying that adults having sex with children is normal and acceptable. I have not seen anything about bestiality but that could be next or maybe necrophilia or....

June has numerous dedications besides pride month like "PTSD awareness month" and "Audiobook appreciation month" (a great topic for the library) and "Great Outdoors month" and several more. Why does the library celebrate pride month and ignore all of the others? And why are there hundreds of books on pride topics being promoted by the library but there were none to be found relating to heterosexual relationships? Can one only be proud of non-heterosexual relationships? But as I said before, neither topic is suitable for children.

And why is there a pride month anywhere? Recognition of all the people who fought and died for our country gets one day, all of our veterans - one day, Thanksgiving -one day, our national Independence – one day. Is the sexual activity of a minority of people or even of all people more important than all of these things? Most importantly, is it more important than the emotional and mental health of our children?

I am not saying any books should be banned but please, stop promoting the celebration of pride month to children in our libraries!

Resident

July 13, 2023

Hi Margaret,

I wanted to drop you a quick note to voice my support for including marginalized communities in our libraries. Libraries are safe spaces to cultivate community, creativity and learning. LGBTQ+ people are members of this community and deserve to take up space in the real world and on our book shelves.

In a personal example, I recently read *Black Flamingo* by Dean Atta. It helped me better understand the nuances and challenges of finding your own space. If I hated the book, I could have stopped reading it. I have no right to stop someone else from enjoying it.

Please keep book bans out of our library system.

Thank you for the work you do.

Resident (West St Paul)

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret,

I'm from Lakeville, and I was at the meeting today. I've been going to the Lakeville library for as long as I can remember. Thank you and the council for listening and keeping everything orderly. My first exposure to anything LGBTQ+ was a book from a library. "Drama" by Raina Telgemeier taught me that men can love men and vice versa. It was the healthiest and safest way I could've learned these concepts. Being the LGBTQ+ person I am now, I'm heartbroken to see that many people believe queer stories are grooming children. If it helps at all to know, I knew about gay people before I knew what sex was. Once again, thank you for listening. I hope future generations of kids will be able to have similar learning experiences to me.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Good afternoon Margaret! I am unable to attend the meeting this evening, but I want to let you know how much I sincerely appreciate the library being a safe and inclusive place for ALL kids and families. Keep up the great work and stay strong, you have lots of support in this community!

Sincerely,

Resident

7-13-2023

I'm writing as a Dakota resident to encourage you to continue the good work in increasing the diversity in displays and available books. I just moved from st paul to apple valley this year and was very concerned about having to switch library systems and whether I would see books that reflect my identity, community and whether I would be able to teach my step kids more about cultures that aren't theirs. Please keep up the good work!

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-13-2023

Hi,

I am sitting outside the library advisory meeting tonight 7-13-23 because the room is full to capacity. I hope it is because so many people are against the recent efforts to censor certain books from public libraries. This goes

directly against our American values. I support our librarians 100% and their ability to do their jobs without interference from morality police from various organizations, usually religious, that seek to limit what the public has access to. I hope your library stands strong against any censorship or control efforts.

Thank you,
Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Ms. Stone—

I just learned that there may be an anti-LGBTQ+ group attending your board meeting this evening to advocate a ban of the library's Pride display. I would have liked to attend your meeting, but alas, I can't get there in time. Instead, I am writing you this note to voice my opinion.

I moved to Minnesota in 1980 to attend the University of Minnesota Law School from which I graduated and then obtained my law license. I am a member of Minnesota's bar and the bar of the United State Supreme Court I moved to Wisconsin 3 years ago when I retired from Medtronic after practicing law in Minnesota for 26 years. I decided to attend law school at the University of Minnesota because Minnesota and its public law school had a well known reputation for protecting and promoting our right to free speech under the Constitution's First Amendment. Indeed, one of the University of Minnesota's professors was known to be a Marxist. Though I'm not, and never have been, a Marxist, the fact that this public law school had a Marxist on its staff impressed me and clinched my decision to attend the school though I was also admitted to Georgetown Law School in Washington, D.C. which most legal scholars thought was a better law school than Minnesota's. Nevertheless, I chose to attend Minnesota because, a professor at Georgetown said to me when I visited that school that the curriculum and faculty at Minnesota was more "broad minded" than Georgetown's which is situated in our nation's capitol. He thought I would get a better and more broad-minded education in Minnesota, even though Minnesota had a Marxist on its staff. How ironic, eh?

It is my view that termination of the library's Pride display at the behest of an anti-LGBTQ+ social/political group would constitute a form of bigotry, if not an outright abridgement of the right to free speech. At the very least, removing this display would be hateful toward LGBTQ+ members of our society similar to the way in which Hitler and his Nazi party demonstrated and practiced hate for Jews. For these reasons, I respectfully urge Dakota County to hear what the anti-LGBTQ group has to say but then to leave the Pride display in place so that people of all political persuasions can feel comfortable attending your library, whether they are for or against the LGBTQ+ way of life or any other lawful segment of our society. That's the Minnesota way. Indeed, that's the way the founders of country forged bravely for us. It is my hope that, in this way, Dakota County will continue to do its part to protect our democracy. Libraries are a critical component of that important value. Thanks for listening.

Sincerely,
Resident

7-13-2023

Good evening Margaret.

It has been brought to my attention that a group is attending the library advisory council meeting in opposition of LGBTQ+ materials in our public libraries.

I wish I could be in attendance tonight- there is little more frightening than the plight of a loud minority taking away the public's access of information and therefore, freedom. Restricting information and free thinking is not about protection, it is about discrimination.

The views of some do not get to determine what texts are available to the public. Simply put: if you do not like a book at the library, do not read it or check it out. As a last resort, feel free to not use this public offering if life outside of your bubble offends you.

Thank you for your consideration of my opinion.

Sincerely,

Resident
Dakota County Public Library user since 1990

7-13-2023

Good evening Margaret,

I understand there is a Dakota County Library Advisory Committee meeting taking place tonight regarding the library's Pride display & the banning of certain books. I am a Dakota County resident for the majority of my life, a mother of 3 kids in the high school and middle schools of Apple Valley and also a frequent user of the Dakota County libraries. I am writing to you to share my support of all Pride displays & LGBTQ+ programming that all/any libraries in Dakota County have. I believe it is in the best interest of the community that the library is a place that all feel welcome, most importantly those members of minority groups in the county. I commend the libraries on their forward thinking programming and inclusion of all in our communities. I hope you will continue to be a leader in forward thinking programming and inclusion of all.

I do not know what books are in question of being banned, but I am a firm believer that it is not the libraries job to dictate what books the public should or should not read. It is the library's job to provide resources & literature for all to use and banning books would go against that, in my opinion.

Thank you for your time. Sincerely,
Resident

7-13-2023

I didn't get notice of this meeting until it was too late to attend your advisory meeting.

I would like to say that I am proud of the values expressed by the Dakota County Library system.

There is no place for censorship or discrimination in our community. I support the right if individuals to express themselves however, those opposed to specific books are not required to read them and should not be allowed to dictate their personal values on the community at large.

I encourage you to stand your ground.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Thanks Margaret, for your quick response. If it is possible to add this comment to the meeting records, I would truly appreciate it:

As a teacher for over 30 years and a parent for 14, this is all I know-Kids thrive when they feel loved, validated and safe. The pages of a well written book can do just that. Artwork and music can do that. Students who see themselves in books and art know they are not alone, that their lived experience has value. Books do not have the power to make a child into something they are not. The words and pictures in a book will not teach or tempt your child to be gay. What they might do is give your child a sense of empathy and acceptance around people and ideas they may have feared in the past. If we are brave, these books may help all of us start a conversation that brings respect and safety to all of our children.

Sincerely,
Resident

7-13-2023

Hello MS Stone,

Each time that I visited the library during the month of June I was filled with a sense of great pride as I passed the amazing display of books from the LGBTQ genre. This was especially comforting when there is so much hostility in our country toward members of the LBGTQ community often making their lives less safe.

It is wonderful to see that the library offers books for EVERYONE.

In the past there have been book displays of Mysteries, Fiction, Holidays, Cookbooks, Sports, Biographies, etc. Our librarians work hard to keep our library looking inviting, attractive and easy to find our next great read. I probably will never check out a book about sports or science fiction but I am happy that they are available for other readers. As far as I know, none of our collection is 'required reading'.

Here is my advise to those who are not of the same opinion, those who want to erase and continue to marginalize people who have so much to contribute. It's simple, don't check those books out or any others that you may find not to your liking.

I would like to see an end to the pursuit of censorship. I feel it is important that we remain a well informed, educated society where all can thrive, rather than one that is TOLD by a few what we are to think and who we are to hate. I hope the Dakota County Library System is of the same belief.

Respectfully,

Resident, Friend of the Heritage Library and an avid reader

7-13-2023

Hello Margaret,

I wanted to send my thoughts regarding the Library Advisory Committee meeting tonight:

My family has spent over 25 years living in Lakeville. I went to preschool, elementary school, middle school, and graduated from high school within the Lakeville Public School system. I am a bisexual woman and I am a product of Lakeville public services. Growing up, I have fond memories of my parents taking me and my siblings to the Heritage Library where we would spend hours scanning and searching the children's book shelves for books to add to our pile to check out.

Libraries should be a place for inclusive education, for free thought. They should not be a place sponsored by politically-curated, hate filled ideas. They should be a space that children feel seen and welcomed and encouraged to learn about themselves and others.

The divisive motivations that these groups have are tearing communities apart. They are fueling violence. I do not want to see my community fall victim to these fear-mongering hate groups. Lakeville is a strong and resilient community, and we need to focus on building up our community and seeing our neighbors as our lifelines, not people to be shunned and silenced.

I don't want these hateful groups to be the only voices in the room. There are so many accepting voices here that I don't want the loudest ones to be mistaken for the majority. The Lakeville I know is welcoming to all and allows for opportunities for everyone. Almost everyone I know in this community does not even think twice about pride displays, nor have a problem with them. Please do not be swayed by hate, by bigotry. Please stay strong and know that LGBTQ resources, all inclusive resources, are the best a community can have. I support Pride and I support the LGBTQ community.

Thank you,
Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Dear Margaret,

I just wanted to reach out and voice my support of the library and everyone who works in this institution. I have heard there have been individuals who have been less than pleased about the current pride display at the library and are currently attempting to challenge it at the Advisory Meeting tonight. I can not attend tonight, but I wanted to send my support of the library's decision to continually offer access to materials that recognize and honor a variety of perspectives. The library should be a place free from bias and politics and instead offer resources and material that educate and illuminate a spectrum of ideals. Individuals do not have to like or agree with all the material being offered, but we should not let these same individuals pick and choose what they deem worthy of being available to everyone. I stand with the library's drive to be inclusive and truly be a place for everyone.

I stand with you.

Sincerely,

Resident

7-13-2023

July 13, 2023

Dakota County Library Advisory Committee
Dakota County Administration
1590 Highway 55
Hastings, MN 55033

Subject: Appreciation for an Inclusive and Supportive Library Environment

Dear Library Advisory Committee,

I am writing on behalf of the entire leadership team at Dakota Child and Family Clinic. I wanted to take a moment to express our unwavering support for the remarkable work carried out by our local library and acknowledge its outstanding commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all individuals. Our clinic has worked with the library on a number of initiatives to support community members and we are thankful for the library's robust engagement with community organizations. The partnerships forged between the library and local nonprofits, schools, and other community stakeholders have fostered an environment of collaboration and unity. By hosting diverse programs, workshops, and events, the library amplifies the impact of these organizations and helps create a vibrant tapestry of support within our community.

Libraries, by their very nature, possess the power to transcend societal barriers, welcoming individuals regardless of age, race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status, or background. By cultivating an atmosphere of acceptance and respect, our library has become a sanctuary where all community members can gather, explore, and exchange ideas freely. The library's commitment to ensuring equal access to information and educational materials serves as a powerful catalyst for empowering the entire community with the tools needed to thrive in an ever-evolving world.

As part of fostering a safe space for everyone, libraries have a responsibility to provide a diverse range of perspectives and ideas to their patrons. Censoring books based on subjective judgments or personal biases contradicts this core principle. It restricts individuals from exploring a wide spectrum of thoughts, opinions, and experiences, ultimately stifling intellectual growth and critical thinking. Libraries must resist censorship and allow individuals to explore a broad range of ideas. Everyone should be able to see themselves reflected in the library's collection of books and resources.

We eagerly look forward to continuing our partnership and witnessing the library's continued success in fostering an inclusive and supportive community.

Warm regards,
Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Margaret,

We cannot be at the meeting tonight, so we are sending pictures of the signs we would carry to let our LGBTQ neighbors know that they are loved and should be able to read about themselves in books. We decry any form of censorship that would seek to limit what can be displayed in our library and remove books that can enlarge our imaginations.

Thank you for your leadership. Diversity is a gift.

Sincerely,
Residents

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret, I wanted you to know that I support the library displaying various cultures and beliefs. I know recently there was controversy over the pride display but know that many appreciate the global perspective of all that live here. We do live in a country where we are free to speak our beliefs but I hope that as adults, we can always do so in a kind and respectful manner. Thank you for all that you do.

Thank you,
Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Dakota County Library Advisory Committee and Dakota County Commissioners,

I'm disappointed to hear that our Dakota County Library is facing challenges to books and book displays. Please keep in mind that a few angry citizens do not represent all, and keep your focus on the [American Library Association's Code of Ethics](#). Here are a few quotes from the code:

- "In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations."
- "We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources."
- "We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces."

As an avid reader and a high school and college literature teacher, I want to stress a few things about literature that I'm sure you know but that nonreaders may not understand.

1. Books have conflicts. They have to. If there's no conflict, there is no story. And those conflicts need to reflect our real world, and, unfortunately, our world includes war, addiction, abuse, discrimination, rape, racism, poverty, divorce, suicide, etc. Books need to reflect the real world because readers of all ages will see through trivial material and refuse to read. We also need to remember that some of our readers are living these traumas, and books can be mirrors that help them feel less isolated.
2. Reading is a safe way to explore some of the world's toughest issues. Reading about the world's problems helps us become critical problem solvers and empathetic community and family members. In fact, studies show that students who are heavy readers have better social skills than non-readers because they've practiced handling conflict through reading. (If you haven't read *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human* by Jonathan Gottschall, I highly recommend it. It explains why our brains crave stories with conflict and how our brains practice life's conflicts via story).
3. Most of the folks trying to ban books across the U.S. today criticize books by pointing to one page or pulling out a few quotes. They provide zero context, and often I doubt that they have even read the book. This is exactly the wrong way to experience a book, and it is why we end up with folks yelling, "Inappropriate! Obscene! Porn!" A book must be read in its entirety. What happens *after* the line that was pulled out of the book? What does the character learn? How do they persevere and grow? How do their mistakes and challenges help the reader make sense of the world and their place in it? For example, one of the most challenged books in America is *Gender Queer* by Maia Kobabe. Folks point to one page of the book and call it porn. The page in question needs to be read as one page in an entire memoir. I have read *Gender Queer*, and the memoir is not erotic; it is not pornographic; it is not sexy. In fact, the narrator is asexual, someone who experiences little or no sexual attraction to others. The book is the heart-wrenching journey that the author goes on to develop self-worth and an understanding of what it means to be non-binary and asexual.

If libraries remove a book because a few people are uncomfortable or offended, we will have no more libraries, and that would be a tragedy. Thank you for all that you do, and please continue to protect our intellectual freedom!

Respectfully,

Resident

Dakota County Library member

Parent

Teacher

Community member

Book lover

7-13-2023

Hi Director Stone,

It's come to my attention that there are some anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiments that will likely be presented at tonight's Dakota County Library Advisory Committee meeting, and I wanted to reach out to oppose them.

Minnesota has a longstanding tradition of supporting queer individuals and the Dakota County Library system itself holds open and free access to information as one of its values. With books about and written by queer authors on shelves, lives are saved, people learn who they are, and countless more expand their knowledge and respect of those around them. Censorship as a response to a vocal, hateful minority that wants to challenge books simply for having queer content would be the wrong choice, and do untold harm to the queer folk in Dakota County.

As a queer person myself who didn't have access to queer books or get to experience the awesome Pride displays popping up at libraries nowadays, I really wish I would've had the opportunity and want to do as much as I can to preserve that for everyone who is growing up (even past adolescence and well into adulthood).

Though I won't be able to make it to the meeting tonight, I have a friend who will be there! Please take this email and her presence as some added support for the work y'all are currently doing to keep queer books in the library, both on the shelves and in the beautiful queer book displays you put up.

Thank you again for you and your staff's continuing efforts toward representation, inclusion, and knowledge.

In partnership,

Resident

7-13-2023

Good Afternoon!

There is talk that there will be residents speaking at the meeting tonight against The PRIDE display at the county libraries and their concerns over a few LGBTQ+ books.

I am not able to attend, but wanted to share my thoughts.

Libraries have long been seen as a safe haven for those looking to expand their knowledge, imagination, cultural understanding, or simply learning something new. As a resident of Dakota County, I support our Libraries and their efforts to bring awareness and understanding to our marginalized communities. They give loving displays and book suggestions to learn and talk about the topic at hand. Representation matters and having these displays reinforces they are a welcome space to all.

Tonight's main concern is about the LGBTQ+ community. Having books available about this community supports education and awareness, fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

While the individuals bringing concern against this have every right to, they also do not have to read these books. There is no requirement for them to read any book they don't want to read. As a PUBLIC library, you

serve everyone in the community not just the ones we agree with or that think the same way we do. There are plenty of books that I don't want my children reading. Whether it's due to the age content of the book or I see it as problematic (i.e. Mein Kampf by Adolf Hitler being one), I would not nor should I stop someone else from reading it that wants to. I'm allowed to control what comes into my house but not at the expense of hindering availability to some else. With that I will end with a few quotes:

"If all printers were determined not to print anything till they were sure it would offend nobody, there would be very little printed." — Benjamin Franklin

"If a public school were to remove every book because it contains one word deemed objectionable to some parent, then there would be no books at all in our public libraries." Peter Scheer

"Banning books give us silence when we need speech. It closes our ears when we need to listen. It makes us blind when we need sight." Stephen Chbosky

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Resident

7-13-2023

Director Stone,

I understand that there is an anti-LGBTQ+ group planning to attend the Library Advisory Committee Meeting this evening to speak against the library's Pride displays.

While I am unable to attend the meeting, I want to express my support for the Dakota County Library and their mission, vision, and values.

I have been a regular library user for 20+ years and spent much time at various libraries with my children when they were young. As a parent, I reviewed the books my children asked to check out, and at times decided that a book they were interested in wasn't appropriate for them (usually because it was well beyond their reading level). It was easy to simply return the book to be re-shelved and no one ever forced me to check out a book for myself or my children. Parents should have the right to make those decisions for their own children, but not for anyone else.

I appreciate the efforts of the librarians to put together displays on various topics, cultures, ideas, and groups. This allows me to easily review titles about topics in which I'm interested. It's also easy to walk on by those displays about topics that don't interest me.

Libraries are an important part of a community and should be welcoming to all. I am thankful to live in a county where the libraries are inclusive and value and respect differences. I support the library's Pride displays and hope they will continue to be a part of all of the libraries within the Dakota Library system.

Thank you for your time.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Hello, Margaret! I just want to thank you and the Dakota County librarians and staff for supporting the LGBTQ+ community by featuring Pride displays. I will be attending tonight's meeting at the Heritage Library to also show my support. Libraries should be a safe space for all communities.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

I'm seeing on social media that there may be an effort underway to remove books from the Dakota County Library.

I want to voice my support for the library continuing to provide unfettered access to books of all types. No one person should ever get to have a say in whether myself or my child or anyone can check out a certain book.

Libraries are for everyone. Young. Old. Religious. Atheist. Questioning. Straight. LGBTQIA+. Male. Female. Trans. White. Black. All. The. Variations. Of. Life.

I grew up in a small town, Christian family. I went to Catholic school. Our school library was small, but it opened up my eyes to sooo many stories. And then when I went to the public library? So much information!! I loved reading and learning. And I realized my life and experiences were so sheltered. There were people who weren't Christian, white, straight. There were stories to be told from people who weren't Christian, white, straight.

Libraries are more important than ever. It's too easy for us to create echo chambers on social media. We insulate ourselves from other views. Libraries ensure we don't forget to listen to other stories and people. They ensure we can know our history, however difficult it may be to hear. They ensure we can celebrate the diverse world we live in.

Please. Please. Please. Do not let a small group of passionate people take away the world from others.

If I could be at the meeting tonight to lend my voice of support, I would absolutely be there. I hope my written words do justice to the equal passion I and many others have for the work of the library and librarians. You are welcome and appreciated by us.

Thank you for all you do!

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret.

My partner and I want to express our gratitude and support for the important work our community library is doing to foster diversity and inclusivity by including a Pride display as part of the Dakota County Library's public programming.

We know how important it is for all children (and grown-ups!) to see themselves, their loved ones and their families positively reflected in literature and celebrated in our community. We also believe that people should not be allowed to put hateful inserts in books that other people may unknowingly be forced to read. We hope that practice will not be allowed to continue.

We regret that we are unable to attend tonight's meeting, but we wanted to voice our appreciation for the work the DCL is doing to make every person in our community feel welcomed and included.

Sincerely, Residents

7-13-2023

Dear Ms. Stone, Members of the Library Board, and Dakota County Commissioners:

I'm writing to express my support for the Dakota County Library as an inclusive and important public space within Dakota County. I've been a resident of Dakota County for almost 18 years and have always found our libraries to be incredibly welcoming and inclusive of all residents. I'm continually impressed with the variety of books, displays, activities, and events, not to mention the resourcefulness and knowledge of the library staff members. The amount of thoughtfulness and awareness that goes into ensuring that the library is a space where everyone can feel welcomed and safe is extraordinary. I loved bringing my sons to the library when they were young, because they could explore any topic they were interested in from athletics, to gaming, to anime, to maps and different cultures around the world. And we've always felt welcomed. Because of this, the library supports a love of learning, and I am so grateful for that.

It has come to my attention that Dakota County Library is currently under pressure from community members who feel that the library should explore censorship and book banning. I know that this is a very uncomfortable and stressful position to be in, and I can sympathize with that. However, libraries are an essential part of life. They give access to all residents, regardless of income, status, age, or even location. Equal access to books broadens our horizons and lets us live outside of the confines of our current situation, giving rise to curiosity, creativity, and inspiration that is imperative to our humanity.

Religion and politics don't belong in decision making when it comes to government and public access. Religion and politics are rich topics that can be fully explored at the library, alongside books about history, identity, culture, humanity, fiction, or fantasy...the possibilities for learning are endless. I applaud the work of Dakota County and Dakota County Library in creating safe spaces that support learning for all Dakota County citizens. I urge you to continue to support an open and inclusive library in Dakota County.

Sincerely,

Resident (Hastings)

7-13-2023

Just a note to let you know that I plan to attend tonight's meeting, regarding the topic of Pride and books offered in the public library. I appreciate the library's support for LGBTQ books and awareness. I am not in favor of banning such books. People are free to choose what they want to read.

Thank you.

Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I am a Farmington, MN resident, and mother of 4. I am writing to let you know that I am outraged and appalled at the attempts of some groups to ban or limit access to some books and reading materials, even going so far as to insert notes into books seeking to scare or shame people trying to check these books out.

I believe that libraries should represent a catalogue of materials as diverse as the communities they serve, representing a wide range of views, ideas, and stories. Children should be able to enter any public library and find books written for them, whoever they are, or written by authors like them. Works by and for all races, gender identities, sexual orientations, religions, and cultures of people should be dependably accessible in public libraries.

As a parent, it's my job to guide my children's selections in accordance with my beliefs. It is NOT my job to censor or restrict materials from other families whose belief system is different than my own. To do so violates the freedoms of other families to make those same choices.

As the parent of a transgender child, I implore you to keep libraries a safe place for all children of all backgrounds, and to not contribute to the current culture of attack and dehumanizing words and actions against the LGBTQTIA+ community. Attacking books is just one of many tactics certain groups are using to attack this group of people by proxy. The library should never be a battleground. It should be a neutral safe space that welcomes all views and all people.

I appreciate the hard work you do, and for taking the time to read my message.

Thank you, and kindest regards,

Resident (Farmington)

7-13-2023

Good afternoon-

Rumor is that small group of small minded parents is planning to attend the Dakota County Library Advisory Committee meeting tonight to demand the removal of books they have deemed unacceptable for children. I hope they don't show up, but shaming them doesn't seem to work anymore, so here we are.

I would like to express my support for keeping all books in the library because I am capable of not checking out books that I don't support. My guess is that if I searched the shelves of the libraries in our county I would find plenty of books I find terrible or even just terribly written. You know what I don't have to do, read them. That's working out well for everyone.

Anyway, I know you can't, but please feel free to tell them to take their ridiculous parental warning notes to the shredder where they belong. And maybe shout gay randomly between speakers, just for fun.

Thank you for your time.

Resident (Eagan)

7-13-2023

Hello Margaret-

I have been made aware of a meeting happening tonight, where a group of anti-LGBTQ+ members are coming to condemn the Library's Pride displays. I regretfully can not attend.

I am so sorry you are having to deal with this. As a resident of Dakota county, Kindergarten teacher, and a parent, I wholeheartedly support the inclusion of PRIDE and LGBTQ+ books in our local library. The library is a place to find a wide variety of resources that may not align with your beliefs. That is the beauty of it. A place to learn and grow. The library is a place that should be committed to inclusivity, diversity, and education for ALL.

Please don't let the small group of "Conservative Christians" become the only voice you hear. Stand for what is right and just for ALL!!!

Thank you!

Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

We applaud and support your efforts to protect the basic right of ALL people to use the library, and to celebrate the diversity that brings a richness to society.

Banning books becomes a very slippery slope that we believe should be avoided, and infringes on the rights of people to read those same books others would ban.

Banning books is a hallmark of fascist, autocratic societies, not free ones like ours.

Thank you for all you do to share the joy of reading, and the worlds it opens up for us all.

Residents (Eagan)

7-13-2023

Hello Margaret,

I am not able to attend tonight's Dakota County Library Advisory Committee meeting. I am a Dakota County resident in Lakeville and have been for several years. I am fully in support of the diversity and inclusion that all of the Dakota County libraries promote.

LGBTQ displays are welcome and necessary. Inclusion matters and seeing our community show that support and inclusion to members of our community is necessary. Also increasing education to the entire community is wholly needed.

Beyond those displays, the libraries feature such fantastic rotating displays that also represent other groups of people. Maintaining this diversity and highlights of so many in our community and history is what I love and value about our community. I don't think any group should be silenced or hidden from the larger public.

Also, please do not remove books from the library. People who don't agree with certain content are more than welcome to not check it out or review it. Keeping the content available to the community is valuable.

Thank you for your time,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Good morning and thank you for your work on behalf of countless families like ours.

We have called Dakota County home for 20 years and consider the system of libraries here one of our greatest, most engaging and inclusive resources.

As the parent of adult children who identify as LGBTQIA+, I am proud to call Farmington, Dakota County and Minnesota home.

I'm writing in hopes of adding our collective voices to a meeting we are unable to attend, one that may get caught up in the static and noise of a misguided nationwide effort to belittle and silence that which offends.

Our public schools and libraries are exactly that - public and by design welcoming and representative of all views and perspectives.

I don't need to tell you, given your role as Library Director. There's so much light in what you do, in and around stacks of impactful stories and colorful narratives that help define us as humans.

The forces at work to shame and deny the overarching good that comes from a diverse, well-rounded and educated community will not deter us on the paths we walk through life and through neighborhoods we share with folks who harbor a wide range of beliefs and values.

We so appreciate your time and energy, and look forward to our next visit to Dakota County libraries.

Residents (Farmington)

7-13-2023

I want to write to commend the librarians for their displays and recommendations this year, particularly the displays for June's Pride month.

I am a heterosexual, married homeowner in Dakota County as well as a professional writer. I check out dozens of books from the Dakota County Library every month for personal and professional use. The displays the librarians have thoughtfully curated this year have been, in both my personal and my professional opinion, next-level. I use them every month to help find books that I would not otherwise find, from points of view other than my own. I believe this makes me a better writer as well as a better neighbor, and I appreciate the hard work the librarians do in this matter.

I talk to other avid readers around the country and in other parts of the world, and I believe the work the librarians are doing here in Dakota County is among the best. I believe it serves our community very well. I often see people of all ages, colors, and creeds (I can tell from visible religious symbols--wearing a cross like myself or a hijab like my neighbors down the block) selecting books and supplemental materials from the displays.

I could not attend the meeting this evening due to family responsibilities (my 91yo grandmother has cancer), but I wanted to make sure you know that I support the librarians fully, as I have heard that a small group may be voicing other opinions, and the librarians have been doing really next-level work this year.

Best,

Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I'm emailing you in support of the Library's Pride Display. This country has a foundation of freedom of speech and inclusiveness. I abhor people trying to condemn people just because of who they love. There have been too many suicides, especially of young people, because of these condemnations. I fully support the Library's Pride Display, and do not want it taken down. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Resident (Rosemount)

7-13-2023

Margaret,

I am aware that you are likely receiving numerous communications at the moment, so I wanted to offer my thanks for all that the Dakota County libraries do for the community in terms of access and awareness.

As a Burnsville resident, I have often visited Burnhaven and Heritage libraries for resources for my son's school projects, activities to keep him busy during the summer, and access to physical and ebooks.

I have been heartened by the library system's work in the areas of awareness and inclusivity for BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other communities.

I grew up in a very small town pre-internet, so my primary access to travel, new ideas, and the lives of others outside of my small sphere came through books. My parents didn't limit my reading, even in cases where they didn't necessarily understand or appreciate the subject matter, because they knew that I was engaging my mind and increasing my awareness of the world around me. I would bring home stacks of books on a weekly basis and they served as my summer travel.

Libraries and librarians are important resources in our communities. They provide important services to all members of the public regardless of religion, race, economic circumstances, and gender identity because our

communities are diverse. Book displays centered on underrepresented segments of our community help us to better understand our neighbors and highlight authors of whom we may not already be aware.

Thank you for your work and the access to information and inspiration you provide to all members of Dakota County and beyond. Please continue to lift all voices, but especially those of BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ authors who not only have to contend with less representation, but also having outside forces attempt to silence them entirely.

Sincerely, Resident (Burnsville)

7-13-2023

Good afternoon,

I just wanted to say that I appreciate all the inclusive steps that are taken by all the librarians across the Dakota County Library System. The purpose of the library is to provide source material for learning and expanding the mind through stories. We cannot learn about other people without being exposed to their stories, whether autobiographical or in fictional worlds. The books that I have found at our libraries have always made me proud of the system!

I am sorry that a small, vocal group has chosen to target the import task of curating an entire library system's book offerings. The inclusivity that I've found at our library is heartening. Last year my daughter took advantage of the date with a banned book outreach. The book she chose was the story about a transgender child's experience in school. This definitely helped her relate to my friend's child who is transgender and made her more sympathetic to why this child is not more open about being transgender.

We all need to live our own lives and not try to impose our moral standards on public institutions. The publishing industry is not producing and marketing child pornography to libraries and I know the librarians without the Dakota county system are not trying to sneak it into the stacks. You and your librarians are trying to open minds.

Thank you for all you do!
In solidarity,
Resident (Farmington)
Library card holder since 2010

7-13-2023

Hey there Margaret,

I recently heard that there is a planned group of people coming to a Library Advisory Committee meeting tonight, that want to publicly condemn the library's Pride displays.

I am unable to be at the meeting in person tonight, but I wanted to send you an email and say I love, support, and fully want the Pride displays to continue. You and your team are doing great, great things by showing the community that it's okay who you love, and that their library and civic system supports them.

Please don't let this group of people cause dismay, and I truly hope they do not disrupt any of the exemplary efforts that our library system is doing. I've lived in Apple Valley my whole life, and some of my fondest memories growing up was spending time in the libraries.

Please continue. Please know that you have support. And please let me know if there is anything I can do personally going forward (time wise, effort, monetary...) to continue to support our library systems, and the people that run them!

Thank you again, have a lovely day!

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-13-2023

Dear Library Director,

Thank you for sharing your Pride display in June and making LGBTQ+ books accessible to all people. Although I do not live in Dakota County, I'm in Washington County, I want to thank your library for supporting free speech and offering life-affirming books for queer and trans people...and everyone. Keep up the good work.

In solidarity,

Resident (Washington County)

7-13-2023

Good morning!

I write this e-mail to in support of Dakota County Libraries, librarians, staff and Friends of the Library.

On June 1, we visited the Heritage library. We were delighted to see the Pride display in the front vestibule. We were more delighted to see the librarians wearing rainbow-themed outfits. My LGBTQ+ teens were so excited. They felt seen, included, and loved.

We have visited Dakota County libraries almost weekly since my children were little. We have participated in story hours, classes, sales, and endless hours of reading in a cozy space. The librarians have always been so kind, thoughtful, and a great resource to us when we started homeschooling 9 years ago.

Thank you for fostering a space that is inclusive, intelligent, and creative. We are so thankful for all you do.

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello.

I have been informed that a hate group will be attending the library advisory committee meeting this evening and I wanted to send you an email showing my support in keeping LGBTQ books available to the public.

My husband and children frequently visit your library and as parents, we are happy to see books about all people and families available for adults and children.

I wish I could attend this meeting and show my support in person but an email will have to do. My husband and I are huge supporters of the LBGTO community. We teach our children to be kind and respectful to all people and we are able to incorporate public library books to show others' perspective to our children.

Thank you for your time. Please keep diversity in our public library.

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello Ms. Stone,

I learned about the planned intimidation by the far-right group coming to your meeting tonight at the library, and I wanted to send an encouraging message of support for the library's inclusive and positive initiative supporting our LGBTQ friends, family and neighbors with your Pride displays and access to books & other resources discussing all groups of people and cultures. And although I currently live in Mpls, I grew up in Dakota county and have family there. When one library is targeted; all libraries are attacked. Please know that there are FAR more Minnesotans *supporting* the library's inclusive educational mission than there are trying to tear down others by banning books.

Best of luck tonight.

Resident (Minneapolis)

7-13-2023

Hello,

Thank you for your service as a librarian in Dakota County. Our region has an excellent library system, and my family and I are grateful to you and your colleagues for that.

It has come to my attention that some person or persons may be attending tonight's advisory committee meeting with the intent of speaking against the public display of Pride-related topics, and they may also speak against certain books. It is a free country, and I support their right to speak their minds.

That said, I would like to voice my support for the continued availability and visibility of Pride and LGBTQIA+ materials. I also support LGBTQIA+ affirming programming should that ever be considered. Things like drag story hour are highly enjoyable to little kids who routinely play "dress up," and they accept grown-ups playing dress up as a fun way to hear a story. Anything that teaches kids to love books is a good thing.

Our libraries are for the public, and the public is interested in these topics. LGBTQIA+ people exist, both in the world and in Dakota County. Hiding them or pretending otherwise is a disservice to the wider community and potentially harmful to our LGBTQIA+ neighbors and friends.

I do not know to what books the speakers this evening may object. I don't need to know that. Categorically, I do not support "banning" books of any type from our public libraries. While a valid case may be made for ensuring some materials are not easily accessible to minors, an outright ban is antithetical to free speech at the public level.

In summary, I believe everyone is entitled to their beliefs and is entitled to voice them. They are not entitled to force the rest of us to live by them. Making LGBTQIA+ materials and programs available is not forcing anybody to do or think anything. However, keeping these materials and programs from the public restricts freedom of thought and places undue hardship on Dakota County library patrons who seek the materials.

I urge the Advisory Committee to reject any policy that restricts LGBTQIA+ materials and programming in any manner that is not applied to the entire library collection and that would not be supported by the First Amendment.

Sincerely,

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-13-2023

Good morning,

I am a Dakota county resident and I'm writing in regard to recent efforts by parents and other concerned citizens to ban books and otherwise malign any book referencing the existence of LGBTQIA+ people as "groomer" material.

I am outraged by these thinly veiled attempts to hurt our communities and push beliefs rooted in specific religious and moral ideologies onto others. I implore you to hear these demands as what they are - efforts to control others and harm our community members.

I ask that these requests for removal are denied. Please feel free to reach out to me via email or phone if you have any questions or would like to discuss this further.

Resident (Dakota County)

7-13-2023

To the Dakota County Library Advisory Committee,

I am a former Friends of the Pleasant Hill Library Board officer as well as the parent of a transgender child. I wanted to write to you today to express my thoughts regarding the Dakota County Library's support of Pride titles and express what their pride events have meant to our family over the last few years.

My child came out as transgender six years ago at the age of four. We were told that we were no longer safe to attend our playgroup in Hastings (our only social network in a new community), we lost family, and we felt very alone and scared. And yet, we had the library. For us, the library was the only place that we felt safe in the community. Seeing their displays of books containing diverse characters, including their pride displays in June, let us see that this was a space in which all people were not only welcome but celebrated. Although we did not discuss my child's transgender identity publicly, we always knew that the library would be a safe place for us. This was confirmed in 2021 when my child was publicly outed.

At that time, we were terrified. Anti-LGBTQ+ and particularly anti-transgender laws began sweeping the nation. We were hearing hateful rhetoric everywhere we went... online, in the news, on the school board, even when we went to playgrounds. Still, the library felt safe. I

know that the fear we felt (and continue to feel) is not unique to our family. LGBTQ+ families throughout Dakota County and the country are feeling the same fear as they try to determine where they are safe to exist as their authentic selves.

I have PTSD from our experiences in Hastings. For almost a year, I was terrified of visiting anywhere in community, afraid of the anti-LGBTQ+ harassment that my family and I would face from community members. But I was never afraid to visit the library. Not only was the staff always supportive of our family, but their Pride displays created a welcoming atmosphere that help make it clear to all, including patrons, that the library welcomes all identities in their space.

Some individuals do not support LGBTQ+ identities. I understand this and I understand that they are uncomfortable with the pride displays that are sometimes present at the library. For this, I would like to say that feeling uncomfortable or disliking the display of particular books is different than feeling unsafe. Right now, the LGBTQ+ community is facing harassment and discrimination all around the country and recent Supreme Court decisions have even found that discriminating against the LGBTQ+ community can be allowed in some circumstances.

Members of the community do not know where they are safe.

LGBTQ+ youth are the most at risk demographic for suicide. This statistic continues for LGBTQ+ adults, and transgender youth and adults have a much higher risk than other members of the LGB community.

Research has found that LGBTQ+ individuals are not inherently prone to suicidal thoughts and behaviors but at a greater risk because of how they are mistreated and

stigmatized by society¹. Recent LGBTQ+ policies and political rhetoric has been found to be having an increasingly negative effect on the mental health of LGBTQ+ children². However, research also shows that having LGBTQ+ inclusive policies decreases suicidal thoughts and behaviors of these youth, lessens their emotional distress, and decreases the amount of

harassment they face³. Pride displays help with this. When I walk into a store and see a Pride display or even a sign that says "All are Welcome", my anxiety decreases. I can let some of my guard down and, while I may still feel unsafe with some patrons in the stores, I also know that they are less likely to harass me or my family when they can easily recognize we are in a location supportive of LGBTQ+ identities. Furthermore, the Pride displays helps us know that we can feel safe with the staff and feel relatively certain that our family will be supported there.

I understand that there are individuals who take personal issue with LGBTQ+ themed books and that there is also a push to ban them from the public libraries. I believe that the American Library Association's Code of Ethics addresses this well when it states:

In a political system grounded in an informed citizenry, we are members of a profession explicitly committed to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. We have a special obligation to ensure the free flow of information and ideas to present and future generations... We uphold the principles of intellectual freedom and resist all efforts to censor library resources... We distinguish between our personal convictions and professional duties and do not allow our personal beliefs to interfere with fair representation of the aims of our institutions or the provision of access to their information resources... We affirm the inherent dignity and rights of every person. We work to recognize and dismantle systemic and individual biases; to confront inequity and oppression; to enhance diversity and inclusion; and to advance racial and social justice in our

*libraries, communities, profession, and associations through awareness, advocacy, education, collaboration, services, and allocation of resources and spaces.*⁴

There will always be individuals that are uncomfortable with certain books. Whether those books are LGBTQ+ themed, religiously themed, or based on accounts of historical racism. Libraries have a duty to support the free access of information, not just the information that everyone feels comfortable with. Individuals who take issues with books are free to choose not to borrow those titles from the library. They will not be harmed in anyway by doing so; meanwhile, that book may be exactly what is needed to save someone's life, someone who desperately needs to see themselves reflected in literature and welcomed in their public library.

Please continue to show support for the LGBTQ+ community and let them know that the library is safe place for them to attend as their authentic selves and please "resist all efforts to censor library resources." If you ever have any questions or would like additional resources, please let me know. I am always happy to connect and educate in any way that I can.

Sincerely,

Resident

¹ <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/resources/article/facts-about-lgbtq-youth-suicide/>

² <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/new-poll-illustrates-the-impacts-of-social-political-issues-on-lgbtq-youth/>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/safe-supportive-environments/LGBTQ-policies-practices.htm>Pride

⁴ <https://www.ala.org/tools/ethics>

7-13-2023

Margaret,

This email is written to support the work of the Dakota County Libraries to welcome **ALL** individuals in our service area. Thank you for one of your efforts to do this with the Pride book displays and LGBTQ+ materials in the library's collection.

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello - I have heard it through the neighborhood grapevine that the library is expected to receive some opposition at tonight's meeting regarding certain LGBTQ+ books available for readers. I just wanted to send you a quick note in appreciation and gratitude for making the library an inclusive place where all people's stories are represented. I have no doubt that you and your staff are more than capable of fielding opposition concerns and prepared to do so given the current trends in book boycotts but if the library ever needs to have visible community in support of inclusivity, please know you can count on me. I am very concerned that people who don't like something and then voice their opposition, end up getting their way as a form of compromise or pacifying a bigger, percolating issue. Removing even a few books from the shelves enables this kind of harmful thinking.

Raising readers is something I have been so compassionate about as a mother. My kids have all had experiences where something they read in a book was challenging for them but I wouldn't have taken that experience away from them. One experience happened just the other week. My son was reading a book, age and level appropriate, and I noticed he was crying. The mother in the book had attempted suicide. This was extremely upsetting for my son but, we talked about it. We talked about people. We talked about challenges. We talked

about how to ask for help. It was a hard experience for the both of us and one I didn't expect to encounter but it was a very meaningful experience. Reading, at its best, makes us think and learn. It makes us understand life. It makes us connect.

Anyway, libraries are my favorite places and we feel so blessed to have access to ones that find a place on the shelf for everyone's stories.

Thank you so very much,

Resident

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret,

Thank you for having books that represent all children. Having LGBTQTA+ books allows kids to read about themselves. I am a proud member of the Dakota County Library.

Please keep the LGBTQTA+ books on the shelves and have them multiply.

Resident

7-13-2023

Dear Margaret

I am a mother of three, a grandmother of 11. Please keep your library innocent for children. Do not cave to the minority of Pride supporters. Though many will show up in large numbers, as did Antifa during the burning of cities. Wonder who pays them?

This is a form of evil forcing this on all kids. This is robbing parents and grandparents of their parental rights to raise their children as they see best. There is a hidden agenda here, to destroy our nation by destroying the family.

Please keep your library rated G. My memories as a child going to my school library were so wonderful. The librarians were so kind and helpful and all the books were free from the propaganda and sexualization of children. I really value that. Especially now as I see what my grandchildren have to be exposed to.

PLEASE. Do the right thing!

Thank you

Sincerely

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello Margaret,

I have heard there will be residents speaking against the library display of PRIDE books at tonight's Advisory Meeting. I am not able to attend, but wanted to send my thoughts along.

As a proud resident of the wonderful city of Lakeville, I wholeheartedly support the inclusion of PRIDE and LGBTQ+ books in our local library. The library plays a crucial role in promoting literacy, education, and cultural diversity, and offering a wide range of books that represent the LGBTQ+ community is a fantastic step towards creating an inclusive and welcoming space for all residents.

- **Representation and Inclusivity:** Including PRIDE and LGBTQ+ books in our library collection is a way to ensure that everyone in our community, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, can find stories and voices that resonate with their experiences. Representation matters, and these books provide an opportunity for LGBTQ+ individuals, especially young readers, to see themselves reflected positively in literature.
- **Education and Awareness:** PRIDE books offer valuable insights into the LGBTQ+ community, their history, struggles, and achievements. By making these books available, our library supports education and awareness, fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance among residents. They provide an opportunity for individuals to learn about diverse experiences, challenge stereotypes, and promote inclusivity.
- **Support for LGBTQ+ Youth:** Access to PRIDE books in our library is particularly important for LGBTQ+ youth who may be seeking guidance, validation, or a sense of belonging. By offering them a safe space to explore their identities through literature, we can foster self-acceptance, confidence, and resilience. These books can also be a resource for families and friends to better understand and support their LGBTQ+ loved ones.
- **Celebrating Diversity:** Our city thrives on its diversity, and supporting the inclusion of PRIDE books in our library reinforces our commitment to celebrating and embracing all residents. It sends a strong message that our community values equality and respects the rights and experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals. By embracing these books, we demonstrate our openness to different perspectives and encourage dialogue among residents.
- **Freedom of Expression:** Libraries are spaces that promote intellectual freedom and the exchange of ideas. Including PRIDE books in our collection upholds the principles of free speech and provides a platform for authors, artists, and thinkers from the LGBTQ+ community to share their stories and contribute to the cultural richness of our city.

In conclusion, supporting the inclusion of PRIDE books in our library is not just a matter of promoting LGBTQ+ rights; it is a statement of our city's commitment to inclusivity, diversity, education, and the well-being of all residents. Let us embrace these books as a means of fostering empathy, understanding, and a sense of community within our city.

Thank you,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Good afternoon Margaret,

As a resident of Dakota County who has loved and used the libraries for over 30 years, I am horrified at the thought that an anti-LGBTQ hate group will be speaking at tonight's advisory meeting.

The library is a place to enrich one's life and broaden one's world by learning and respecting all people and their way of life.

Do not give in to the minority by removing Pride displays and books. To do so would be an open invitation to these kinds of groups to complain about other marginalized peoples and request removal of other books that they deem inappropriate.

I hope to make it to the meeting today but wanted to send this note just in case I am unable.

Thank-you,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-13-2023

I am so sad that some group is objecting to your Pride display and certain books about gender issues. I am glad that your library makes an effort to include all members of our community in selecting exhibit topics and books. You are a PUBLIC library. Keep up the good work.

7-13-2023

Ms. Stone,

As a resident of Dakota county I am writing to express my concern over what I understand is the potential for banning or removing books from public library.

I have always believed that knowledge is power and we as citizens seek knowledge in many ways. Arming ourself with information is part of our right and responsibility. Upholding the constitutional right to free speech is our duty. By removing books we are in essence dimming the flame of free speech.

Book banning has taken many forms throughout the ages and from the rear view it is often those books that provide enlightenment, teach life lessons and explore humanity that are challenged. Ultimately the books that were banned in the past have often become cherished and revered as masterpieces.

It is our role as citizens to allow access to books, information, freedom of speech for those that seek knowledge. The library is a public facility that represents our entire community inclusively. Those that visit have the free will to seek knowledge or to pass by the book and remain silent. It is that simple.

If this possible request for removal or banning of literature is from concerned parents. The responsibility lies in their hands as they engage and guide their child's life experiences. It's simple don't pick up the book, talk to your children and move on. They do not have the right to deny or eliminate the information for other citizens in the community.

The Dakota County Library has a value statement that speaks to embracing and respecting all members of the community. It is well written and in simple terms how we should conduct our lives overall.

I leave you with that value statement and the request that decisions are made based on the entire community rather than a small number of individuals who are acting for their own self interest.

We provide positive and welcoming experiences.

We act inclusively, valuing and respecting differences.

We are knowledgeable, engaged and culturally aware.

We value free and open access to information, community talent and technology.

Thank you for your time and I have faith that the right decision will be made for all citizens of Dakota County

7-13-2023

I am the parent of two kids who have enjoyed public libraries often. One of my kids is part of the LGBTQ+ community. I appreciate you highlighting Pride month so not only my child but all other visitors can see how that community has value. I am planning on attending tonight's meeting to show support of the library as learning never ends and I appreciate all you do.

7-13-2023

Good morning!

I am a long-time Lakeville resident and concerned citizen. I just wanted to voice my support of the Dakota County Library system and their inclusivity of all. It is vital for our community to be welcoming, open-minded, and a safe place for all people to live, work, and (of course) read. Please continue to stand against hate and ignorance and to celebrate and honor the diverse voices and stories of those in our city, state, country, and world!

We appreciate you and we stand with you.

Many thanks,
Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Margaret,

I applaud the Dakota county library system's inclusivity of our LGBTQ community and sincerely hope that those not in favor can be educated about the choices that all persons HAVE A CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT to make.

The library is the soul of the community. It's diverse and open to everyone.

If naysayers don't like it they should walk past it ---their "morals" have no standing in this.

The area is rapidly growing. The face of the library should embrace the growth of its citizens.

Please don't bow to those who feel they have a right to police others!

Resident (Lakeville)

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret,

I have been told there is an Anti-LGBTQ+ group coming to speak against the libraries pride displays and challenge three specific books. I would like to show my appreciation for the library supporting the LGBTQ+ community. I have family members who are apart of the community and I am fearful of groups trying to drive censorship.

By complying with requests to censor or erase exposure to the LGBTQ+ community it not only creates trauma for those a part of it, but delays the ability for a new generation to choose their own ideals based on the information provided to them.

I would like to thank you for showing your Pride displays and bringing inclusivity and inspiration to the community.

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello and thank you for your time,

I am hoping to speak at the 7/13/23 meeting but I understand there may be no time for me. Here is my "speech"

I just wanted to take the time today to thank you for showing love and support to our LGBTQ+ community.

I support you in showing love and acceptance over hate and rejection.

I support you being inclusive and welcoming instead of divisive and disagreeable

I'd like to state some facts from The Trevor Project:

Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 10 to 24 (Hedegaard, Curtin, & Warner, 2018) — and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at significantly increased risk.

LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers - and our LGBTQ youth of Color are at an EVEN higher risk.

(Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).

Having at least one accepting adult can reduce the risk of a suicide attempt among LGBTQ young people by 40 percent.

LGBTQ youth who live in a community that is accepting of LGBTQ people reported much lower rates of attempting suicide than those who do not.

I have people near and dear to me within this community. Some young, some old. It's important to me and to them, that they see themselves represented throughout their own community. it's important that we don't allow this draconian group of people to intimidate you to remove literature from our libraries. Especially literature that could make someone feel more "normal", accepted, & maybe even loved. These books could prevent a suicide. These books are informative and necessary in our modern and changing times.

Again, thank you for standing up to hate & intolerance of change. What you do matters and we not only notice it, but appreciate it.

Resident

7-13-2023

Hello,

I live in Dakota county. I unfortunately will not be able to make it to the Advisory meeting, however I would like to share my thoughts on banning books specifically, and would appreciate if this could be shared with the advisory board, or at the meeting.

In 1789 our founding fathers began writing the Bill of Rights, starting with the First Amendment: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." While this protects the rights for people to verbally and publicly request for books to be banned from a government entity; **it more importantly protects books** from being banned as banning any book violates the first amendment rights of Americans to receive publications and information as a corollary to the right to speak freely.

If you choose to ban ANY books from the Dakota county library you will be in direct violation of my, and every other American citizen (regardless of county's) first amendment rights.

Thank you,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-13-2023

Hi Margaret ,

I am a friend of the Library. At the moment, I am in Europe and received Ann's email regarding today's meeting. I hope the library does not give in to group of intolerant people with a political agenda. I am so proud that our library has room for everyone.

Resident

7-12-2023

Good Evening,

As a Dakota County resident that has participated in local Pride events hosted by our libraries as a partnership, I wanted to reach out to see if time was available for community speakers for the advisory meeting Thursday.

I lead a local queer organization and am a board member for another organization, both located in Dakota county. Having our libraries be inclusive, safe, and accepting places for all is vital to our community and I would love to have the chance to share my experience and support for our libraries.

Thank you,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-12-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

As a Dakota County resident, former teacher, and former professor of education, I am writing to support keeping our libraries filled with the amazing variety of books and materials that are available. I believe that we can trust individuals with the freedom to make their own decisions about what they read and believe. As many others, I believe that banning any books from public libraries may lead to the erosion of our country's commitment to freedom of expression.

I understand that there are disagreements over certain content by some people. However, library reading materials are not required books. It is unfair to remove access for all members of the community who may seek reading materials that help them understand complex issues, gain knowledge about people with different backgrounds and beliefs, or discover materials to help them expand their thinking and awareness about the world. Parents, of course, have the right to guide their children's reading, but a group of people should not be making decisions for other readers or other people's children.

Please reject any efforts to ban books and allow individuals the freedom to make decisions about what they can read.

Sincerely,

Resident (Eagan)

7-12-2023

I've heard that there is a movement afoot to censor books at the public library. I am strongly against any form of censorship and I feel even stronger when that censorship is happening in a Public library or Public School.

I know from my own and my children's experiences that knowledge is power. One cannot even begin to understand concepts they have never been exposed to. In my own experience I had no concept of homosexuality and embarrassed myself with my ignorance. I wish I had had access to books that talked about difference forms of sexuality when I was young. I was in my thirties when this happened.

Last weekend I was talking with an individual who only knew he must be a freak because he knew he was male yet his body was female and others expected him to act like a girl which was totally uncomfortable for him. He was an adult when he learned about transsexuality.

Please continue to offer a broad variety of literature for all ages.

And, different forms of sexuality is not choice. And reading about it will not turn someone into an LGBT individual. God knows my daughter read enough literature featuring straight sexuality - and it didn't turn her straight. Knowledge is power.

Thank you for having an open mind. A closed mind is an excellent thing to lose!

Sincerely,

Resident

7-12-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I am writing to express my appreciation for the welcoming, inclusive environment cultivated throughout the Dakota County Library system. With the rise of anti-LGBTQ legislation and misinformation, it is more important than ever that our libraries strive to provide accurate, easily accessible information to those who can benefit from it. The resources you provided are essential. Everyone should be able to see themselves represented in the materials available and on display at our public libraries. Thank you for your continued efforts to make our libraries welcoming for all the residents of Dakota County.

With gratitude,

Resident (Eagan)

7-12-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I'm writing because I have heard that there will be an anti-LGBTQ+ group attending the next Dakota County Library Advisory Board meeting, on Thursday, July 13, 2023 at the Heritage Library in Lakeville. I've heard their purpose will be to make a public comment condemning the library's Pride displays. They will also be challenging three specific books.

While I'm not exactly sure what will be said by this group, I'm sure it will be along the lines of wrongly accusing the library of pushing a gay and trans "lifestyle" or "agenda" on kids. They are basically saying that a portion of the population that the library serves doesn't deserve to exist in an environment that affords them basic human rights and dignity. Librarians' only interest is helping all kids reach their full potential; live a happy, authentic, fulfilling lives; and treat others with kindness.

The Trevor Project's 2022 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that 45 percent of LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in the past year, including more than half of trans and nonbinary youth. Only one-third of LGBTQ youth experience parental acceptance, with an additional one-third experiencing parental rejection, and the final one-third not disclosing their LGBTQ identity until they are adults.

The presence of accepting, affirming adults in a queer or trans youth's life significantly reduces their risk of suicide; just one adult in a youth's life who accepts them for who they are reduces their risk of suicide by 40 percent. Pride displays are a way for library workers to communicate to every queer and trans person who walks in the door that they are welcome, valued, respected, and celebrated. They open up conversations with community members from all walks of life about how to best support the queer and trans youth in their lives.

Librarians', Pride displays, and books won't turn straight kids gay, or cis kids trans. Rather, they will help make sure queer and trans kids have a chance to become adults.

Thank you,

Resident (Eagan)

7-12-2023

Hi Ms. Stone, I just heard about the plan of some anti-LGBTQ+ folks coming to speak at this Thursday's advisory board meeting. While I'm not able to attend, I did want to write in support of our wonderful library system and all the staff you have. Our Pleasant Hill Library always does a great job with all of their displays as I'm sure the other libraries do as well.

Please know that the majority of the community supports keeping all books available to all. With all the issues they could put their energy behind and make a true difference, I will never understand why these people want to attack one of our most precious resources—books.

Thank you for all you do. Stay strong.

Resident

7-12-2023

I want to express my support and appreciation for the LGBTQ display and materials at the Heritage Library. No matter our orientation, we can all learn about others' experiences and lives as a way to acceptance and understanding of people different from ourselves. We want to be a welcoming community and as well as welcoming individuals.

As the aunt of a gay man, I would hope that others, through exposure to books and displays, could be as accepting of him as we are in our family.

Thank you.

Resident

7-12-2023

Hi Margaret,

Just a quick note to let you know that I support Pride displays at the library and the collection of LGBTQ+ books in the Dakota County Library System. I believe both are critical to increasing knowledge, understanding, empathy, tolerance and acceptance and that accessibility to these resources makes our community stronger and more inclusive.

Thanks for all you do —

Resident

7-12-2023

Hello Ms.Stone,

I am writing you due to recent knowledge of your library possibly discriminating against the LGBTQ+ community with banning certain books. I am a married, straight, American and a Middle Eastern woman who owns a hair salon who welcomes all into our space. I am a mom, an aunt, a cousin, and a friend to many in the LGBTQ+ community. I am speaking out for the rights of all people. I cannot attend your July 13th event to discuss this

issue, but would like to say we all need to stand together as a HUMAN RACE so certain rights aren't taken away or for granted. Why is it our right to say to another that they do not matter?! How dare we take that right away. How can anyone, Christian or not, say it says it in their teachings that we need to teach them only a little and not teach kindness, not teach compassion, not teach love? That is not the Christian community I was raised in. I am Catholic, I am a human with a heart to treat everyone with respect and kindness and love. If we stop caring for our neighbor, we stop caring for ourselves. Our children are raised by the LGBTQ+ and they see that community everywhere. Why not teach our children about everyone? We need to teach acceptance and love. This in turn will lessen mental health issues and isolation. I believe it says it in every religion in every form, "Love thy neighbor as yourself." Matthew 22:37-39. When we start that slippery slope, all rights will be threatened. Let's stop it in our community.

Thank you for allowing your community to voice their concerns.

Resident

7-12-2023

Hello

I am writing regarding the concerns about PRIDE related material being displayed at the Library. I signed up to speak, but the list was full.

I not only support the displays and books the library has had, but strongly appreciate them.

I take my granddaughters to the Wentworth library. The one who is 10 years old ran back to the teen section to see what was there this year. Last year she'd gotten a PRIDE pin. This year there were pins and books on display. She chose one of those books which I checked to make sure it was appropriate for her age. I wouldn't have even known about the displays but she found it last year when she was exploring the whole library. So, I asked her about this. She had a lot to say but here are a couple of her comments: "I think it's great to represent a community that sometimes gets terrorized for being different from how society wants them to be." "It's great to have a space that helps them to feel important and like they won't get hurt." I explained that some parents don't want their kids exposed to the ideas of non-binary genders or gay relationships, too young. When the school district was considering what books, on these topics, to pull off their shelves, I bought 8 of the ones being pulled, to read and evaluate them myself. I also gave them to my daughter and her husband to review. Today I asked my 10 year old granddaughter if she thought those types of books should be in the libraries. "Of course! You should be able to read them to your kids *without having to go buy them.*" I asked if she could understand that these displays might make some parents feel that PRIDE is being pushed onto people. She said no, "it's not pushing, it's just supporting PRIDE."

My 5 year old granddaughter has friends who have two parents of the same gender and because she's always been aware of this, it is not very interesting to her. She's so comfortable with not knowing if someone is "a he or a she, it doesn't matter to me". Both girls easily refer to some individuals as "they" or "them". I'm glad that they are absorbing this knowledge and language at young ages. I think it's critical that they, other kids, and parents have resources to understand these issues deeper, to feel it's normal to talk about this, to be curious, to understand. Displays on top of the shelves help make these topics normal, encourage awareness, and most

importantly, are evidence to any child, teen or adult who is nonbinary or gay, to feel acknowledged with respect.

Parents who don't want to have their kids read those books can opt out, just like they may not let their kids read any book they think is not right for their child. I don't think that should limit the options for other parents. I think it's important for anyone who is interested to have free, easy access to the material.

I can understand the time limit on comments and really appreciate that you'll include all emailed comments in the meeting notes.

Thank you for all your work and for taking the time to consider my thoughts.

Resident

7-12-2023

Dear Director Stone,

I live in West Saint Paul. My 3-year-old son and I frequently spend time at Wentworth library. I heard recently that some individuals may be seeking to challenge the library's pride month displays and certain books they deem offensive. I sincerely hope you don't give these bigots one single inch. Thank you for everything you do to make our libraries welcoming, inclusive spaces where anyone can learn about anything.

Regards,

Resident (West St. Paul)

7-12-2023

Hi Ms. Stone,

I read on Facebook that an anti-LGBTQ group is planning to speak at the meeting on Thursday at Heritage Library. I would like to express my support of the library and the freedom to read books. LGBTQ patrons are respected members of our community, and books serve to dismiss misconceptions and stereotypes that often surround the LGBTQ community. Pride displays are much like other displays that recognize other cultures, holidays or causes so that we can recognize the experiences of others and have a more inclusive and equitable society. Eliminating books and content is disrespectful to all of us, and a minority of residents should not determine what the majority want to read, or eliminate our choices for us.

I would be happy to state this in person at the meeting on Thursday.

Sincerely,

Resident

7-12-2023

Dear Director Margaret Stone,

I am a resident of Dakota County and I am writing in support of the availability of LGBTQ+-related materials in Dakota County Public libraries. It is important for all communities to be represented. I am aware that there is

some opposition to these materials and I feel the need to offer my gratitude and support to you as Library Director to continue providing these materials. I believe that the more voices you and the library committee hear in support, the less power those in opposition will garner. Please continue to provide materials that uplift, represent, and normalize those in the LGBTQ+ community.

Thank you,

Resident (Dakota County)

DCL Advisory Meeting

July 13, 2023

I am a life-long Lakeville resident and I am not only speaking out tonight in support of myself as a member of the LGBTQ+ community, but in solidarity with all Minnesotans who identify with the fundamental values of free-thinking, respect and kindness.

The library is not a seminary for fanatics or a cemetery for oppressions of the past.

It is a sanctuary. For the freedom and growth of community knowledge.

The prohibitions on materials of certain content – here and around the country – reflect the grotesque failure of those folks proposing them to truly understand how the power of love will overcome not only their psalms of hate...but the ignorance and fear underlying such arcane propaganda.

If you would only come to the library with an open heart, neighbors, you would receive the peace of mind you so desperately seek. Without the terrible weight of prejudice or panic. Infantile name-calling, hyperbolic catastrophizing, neo-fascist fantasies, regurgitated accusations and ugly banners of unreality, all lead to the pitiful conclusion that this is the first time you have set foot in a library in quite a long time.

Rather than prolong your petty whirlwind of proselytizing, I will choose to meet this ignorance with firm grace. And I hope others join me. It is our great responsibility as librarians and educators to uplift *every* member of our community, through unbiased choices in education and the practice of empathy – even when unrequited.

As every person in this room knows by the queerness of their own history, swiping books off these shelves will *never* have the power to take from our hearts and minds the ideas and values therein – but it is time now to teach that lesson through our actions.

We will meet baseless hate with a revival of our own faith – faith in the power of love and learning, an immutable faith that has kept libraries enriched, safe, and open to the public as sanctuaries of humanity on this earth far longer than *any* book has done.

Fellow librarians, do not surrender to these tantrums at your door; rather, choose to stand by the community who has always stood with you, with patience and pride...and who, with our hearts and bones as human as the next, respects your shelves and your service, stocked with every wonder, mystery, and joy that embodies *all of us*.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-12-2023

Dear Margaret,

As a bisexual Dakota county resident, I do not support the group coming to protest at the library. I do not believe, at all, in the banning of books. I just wish the anti LGBTQ+ people would go away. God knew what he was doing!

Resident (West St Paul)

7-12-2023

Hi Margaret,

First of all, I am sorry that you are most likely dealing with a slew of emails and drama regarding the meeting in Lakeville this coming Thursday and all the crazy that comes with it. These issues are so super charged and I always feel bad for the people caught in the middle.

I do feel the need to share my voice here though as a parent in the community. I have emailed the library before regarding children's literature. I am not sure what group is raising concern this time or what they are going to say, but from the point of view of a parent I am slightly concerned with the content of books presented at the libraries recently. I understand the desire to normalize all sorts of situations children are being raised in these days. My issue is that some of these situations are heartbreaking and honestly shouldn't be normalized. My beef has less to do with the LGBTQ stuff and more to do with the bigger picture. So many of the new children's books have some element of trauma and loss in them. Again, I understand the idea of trying to get books out there for kids that are dealing with these circumstances but I don't want these situations to become "normal" or ok. In an ideal world, every child would be raised in a loving home where they have equal access to their loving and safe biological mother and father. Obviously this is not happening, but are we really going to flood kids mind with literature that says this is totally ok and celebrate it. What about the kids who wants to know their father, wants to know their biological history etc, etc? Part of the issues with normalizing the LGBTQ literature is that it normalizes parental loss. It says that it's perfectly ok for a child to be raised by two moms or two dads and that they shouldn't mourn the loss of 50% of their biological, cultural, ethnic etc etc history. That's my major issues with the whole thing.

There are other situations than the LGBTQ books that this applies to and I take equal issue with having a plethora of those books around too.

My other issues with SOME (not all) of the LGBTQ children's books is the normalization of certain risky behavior such as Pedophilia or bondage. This is not all books by any means, and often it's subtle (in the background pictures etc), but it's there for sure. This should just not be in children's books. Similar things are found in general YA literature too so again it's not just an LGBTQ issues, it's a wider issue, but I haven't seen any other children's books specifically where couples are featured handcuffed to each other while kissing except in pride books. Maybe others are fine with showing their kids that but I'm not.

This brings me to my last point...is it possible to just make a specific section in the library, even in the children's section, for Pride books? That would give me as a parent the freedom to expose my kids to that when I think they are ready for it. We need to respect kids and families of all different backgrounds and my kids need to learn about the various circumstances of others, but I feel very strongly that that doesn't need to happen before a certain age if I don't want it to. That parental right need to be respected. Also wouldn't that also help those

looking for pride books to be able to access them easier so that they can help their children the way they want to?

Just a thought.

Anyway, sorry to add to your woes with more words, but I wanted to just share my thoughts as a parent in the community.

Best of luck with all this. I would like to think everyone on both sides of this argument just has kids best interests in mind. Unsure that's really the case but let's hope.

All the best,
Resident

7-12-2023

Margaret,

I fully support the Pride display at the Heritage Library in Lakeville. We have one at the Wentworth Library in West St. Paul too.

Books supporting Pride do not turn people into homosexuals. That is how they are born. People cannot be groomed to become homosexuals.

Rather than condemn them for what they are, homosexuals need our support so they don't commit suicide because of so much condemnation against them.

Keep up the good work with your books and displays.

Resident

7-12-2023

Hi Margaret,

I'm writing to advocate for the continuation of Pride displays and support at Dakota County Libraries. It's important that everyone in our community feels welcomed and included.

As a resident of Dakota County, this is a very important issue to me. While I don't know exactly what the anti-LGBTQ group is objecting to, libraries are an important resource for everyone. It's not a place to restrict knowledge and inclusivity, unless the materials include hate speech or bigotry. The public libraries should not cater to individuals' religious beliefs.

Thank you for all the work you do to ensure our community is representative of everybody, not just those with the loudest voices.

Resident (Dakota County)

7-12-2023

Hi Margaret -

I'm writing in support of Dakota County Library's Pride displays, and all displays that foster that feeling of representation for everyone's identity. I wish I could be there at Thursday's Library Advisory Committee's meeting for public comment, but I'm headed out of town for a pre-planned family vacation.

I wear a few different hats that I think are all relevant to supporting the library and their support of the LGBTQ community. I'm a parent, a West St. Paul City Councilmember, the co-founder of WSP Pride, the Director of HR at Rainbow Health, and someone that identifies as part of the LGBTQ community. You and I met very briefly at West St. Paul's State of the City address earlier this year.

In West St. Paul specifically, our small community pride celebration has continued to grow each year not only in attendance, but in support from community businesses and organizations wanting to be there to show their support of the LGBTQ community. It means the world to people to see that kind of support. It's affirming and validating, and it shouldn't be the only day of the year people receive that.

We posted a picture of the Pride display at the Wentworth Library on WSP Pride's social media this year and the feedback was all positive. It was beautiful to know anyone could walk by that display and see themselves represented. I've seen the same during Black History Month, AAPI Heritage Month, and so many more.

As a parent, I need my two sons, ages 8 and 5, to be able to easily find a book in a library where they can see their family represented. I need their friends to be able to do the same so they can see that our family is just like theirs with a mom and a dad might be.

This is so much bigger than just three books that might ruffle the feathers of a few adults that don't understand them. This is potentially stripping away the feeling of being represented in a book, whether it's all illustrations or just text.

I see the work Dakota County Library does and I'm proud of it. I hope you are, too. Dakota County Library's mission and vision are very deeply personal to me and they're exactly what benefits our communities.

Please know that I'm here to support keeping any and all books the library chooses to carry, and that support can be in whatever capacity is needed.

Thank you so much for all you do for each and every person in Dakota County.

Resident (West St. Paul)

7-12-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

It has come to my attention that a group of individuals has been checking out books from the Pride displays in the Lakeville and Farmington libraries and have been leaving notes in the books and complaining to the staff about "grooming." I also understand that this group plans to attend the upcoming meeting on Thursday to complain about the display and challenge specific books in the library.

I am unable to attend the meeting, but I wanted to express my unwavering support for diversity and inclusion of all walks of life. I also feel it is incredibly important that books are not banned. If families do not want their children to check out a specific book, they can prevent their children from doing so.

Libraries are such an amazing resource not only of knowledge, but of support and community for folks in our area. They provide so much more than books for our communities—from free children’s programming, job resources, tech support, even free seeds for gardening! In a conservative area such as this, the Pride display at the library might be one of the first safe signs a person might see that tells them you are loved, you are accepted, you are okay. To take that away because a hateful group of individuals happens to be offended by it would send a damaging message to the LGBTQIA+ community, and goes against the values listed on your website.

Please continue to provide a safe and inclusive space for LGBTQIA+ individuals and keep the Pride display and all books available to our community. Thanks for all you do!

Sincerely,

Resident (Farmington)

7-12-2023

Dear Ms. Stone.

I am unable to attend the meeting at the library tomorrow evening. I want to briefly share my thoughts that are open to be used in any way you see would be appropriate.

Here is a quick back story of me. I am a retired ELCA pastor of 45 years, male, Caucasian, 71 years old. I have lived in Dakota for about 55 of years of my life. My mother taught English at Lakeville High School for 20 years. She and many of her colleagues were not considered liberal but would rise up in rebellion to any form of "banning books." Obviously, Viet Nam and Civil Rights were huge during her professional years. She wanted everyone to be able to read everything on all topics. Books on controversial topics must have all sides of that issue given the freedom to be expressed. Freedoms are vital and she was a spouse of a World War II Veteran. She had both personal and professional motivation for Freedom.

I will stop here and say Freedom goes against any limiting of information.

Sincerely,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-12-2023

Dear Librarian,

I am unable to attend the Thursday meeting, and I just learned that there may be some people in attendance who will urge the local public library to ban certain books they find inappropriate.

I am very opposed to banning books period. A public library should be just that--public in its representation. That means that not every person who uses the library would appreciate every single book in the collection. Personally, I do not like horror fiction. That doesn't mean that I have the right to restrict others' access to such materials. A public library should contain materials that appeal to our diverse population.

Please resist all efforts to ban books at our local public libraries.

Thank you!

Resident

7-11-2023

Hello Margaret,

My understanding is that a group or an individual is seeking to have three books withdrawn from the Dakota County Library's collection. The [agenda](#) for the July 13 Library Advisory Committee meeting says that the committee will consider a "Request for Reconsideration of Material" but it is unclear what material the request pertains to. Could you please enlighten me as to what material is being reviewed? I will attend the meeting and if the request is based on objections to LGBTQ themes/characters/etc., I would like to address the committee during the time allotted for public comment.

Respectfully,

Resident

7-11-2023

Hello Director Stone,

I'm out of town this week, but have heard rumors that a group might show up at this Thursday's library advisory committee meeting to protest the library's PRIDE month display and perhaps to speak out against certain books being available.

I have been a resident of Egan since 2012, and want to express my support and gratitude that the library is having displays for PRIDE month, and that I support the library carrying all books. I oppose any kind of ban on books—freedom of speech, freedom of ideas, and freedom for parents to decide what their own children read is important to me. I do not think it is lawful or appropriate for a small group of people with very strong feelings trying to limit what types of reading materials are available for every other family to choose to read. This is such a non-problem—no one is making anyone read material they do not approve of—it is simple to choose not to check out a book you do not agree with or approve of. But that should not allow that person to limit someone else's access to those books.

This is especially concerning when it is directed at the LGBTQ communities or at communities of color or traditionally marginalized communities. It is essential that literature of and about these communities be available. These are important stories and important perspectives. We have made substantial gains in acceptance and respect of diversity—it is essential we not go back. But regardless of one's views on diversity, this is a simple freedom of speech, First Amendment issue.

Know that I strongly support the library system continuing to provide books on all topics, and oppose any efforts to limit access to books or censure representation of LGBTQ communities or communities of color, as well as any religion or of women.

I'd attend the meeting this week if I were in town, to show my support. But since I cannot be there, I wanted to share my support for the library system and all of you who work to make literature accessible to us all. Thank you for all you and your staff do!

Please feel free to include my email message in any files that show Dakota County resident opinion on this matter.

Warm regards,

Resident (Eagan)

7-13-2023

Hi Ms. Stone,

I am a long time resident of Eagan. I grew up here and then moved back here after attending college and graduate school in different parts of the country. I just wanted to say that my family and I fully support all you are doing to help make our libraries an inclusive space for all, no matter someone's race, religion, or sexual orientation etc.. I heard about the recent push back you and the libraries are getting in regards to your work in support of the LGBTQ+ community. That is incredibly disheartening. Keep up the good fight, and please let me know what else I can be doing to support you and our library spaces to ensure everyone feels welcome. No matter what.

Warmly,

Resident (Eagan)

7-11-2023

I really appreciated seeing the Pride Month book display in the lobby in June at my Heritage Library. Two of my 3 kids are gay and I was excited to see so many books! I loved all the different genre also. I picked one out for myself to read and enjoyed it. My son's favorites are the Heartstopper series. I fully support the work you are doing putting books in the spotlight that affirm the wide range of library patrons there are in our community! I realize that parents worry about the content in books. Parents always have the option of reading the book first to see if they think it is a good one for their kids. I did that a bit when my kids were little. Parents do not have the right, however, to limit the books that are available to other readers. I love the Dakota Country Library System and my first job was at the Burnhaven Library summer of 1980 reshelving books at a whopping \$2.10 an hour! I fully support the work you all are doing!

Resident

7-11-2023

I'm writing to you to let you know that I intend to come to the advisory committee meeting on Thursday to speak up on behalf of the Pride display and against the banning of books.

In case I am unable to make it, I would like to say in the clear possible terms that Pride displays are in the interest of the public and are a continuation of the proud tradition of libraries as a place where ideas are free to spread and people are free to think them. Pride is a signal to some the people currently under the greatest

threat in our society that there is a safe place for them, and libraries should always be a safe haven for anyone who needs one. As for the banning of books, no book should be banned without clear evidence of specific and measurable harm. Libraries are a place of safety, enlightenment, and learning. If we are not safe learning about ourselves and each other we have no true freedom left to us.

7-11-2023

Hi, Margaret- I saw on social media that an anti-LGBTQ group will come to a Lakeville Library meeting on Thursday to denounce their Pride display and some materials. I just wanted to write a quick note to speak in support of displays such as this - Pride month, AAPI month, Black History month, Dakota tribe resources representing the land we are on, etc. Historically excluded groups of all types need and deserve representation in materials, displays, activities, and more. Thank you for all that the Dakota Libraries do, and I hope you will continue to expand representation each year to reflect all of the people that live in our county. Also, it's a bit late but Happy Pride! Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,
Resident (Eagan)

7-11-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I am a resident of Dakota County Eagan, MN 55122. I would like to voice my opinion that the library system of Dakota County NOT ban any books regardless of subject matter, including those pertaining to LGBTQIA+ status. All people deserve representation and marginalized people especially deserve to see themselves in literature. Please preserve books that identify with all especially these marginalized classes.

Best,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-11-2023

Dear Library Administrator,

We want to voice our concern over an anti-LGBTQ group coming to speak to you at your next meeting asking you to ban Pride Books. We believe libraries should be committed to meeting the information needs of ALL the diverse individuals and families in our community. We, as members of the Lakeville community, are grateful that we are able to access a wide variety of books at the Heritage Library, and we strongly believe it's important that there is something of interest available to EVERYONE of every background, belief, and identity. We also believe libraries should support each person's freedom to choose what they want to read without anyone - including the library staff or the library board - censoring books or restricting the user's right to select the books they want to read. Hiding Pride books is a form of censorship that imposes one group's viewpoint on the entire community and a campaign designed to deny other library users' right to choose what they want to read. Hiding pride books discriminates against those library users, residents, and families that are part of the LGBTQIA+ community, who have an equal right to find the books they want and need on the public library's shelves and highlighted in the public library's displays. Please keep celebrating the beauty of our differences in our

community and don't hide our differences by censoring Pride books and marginalizing members of our community.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-11-2023

Dear Commissioner Hamann-Roland and Library Director Stone,

I'm a resident of Apple Valley and am writing because I learned that a group of citizens are planning to make a public comment at the Library Advisory Committee Meeting this Thursday complaining about the library systems' Pride displays. I want you both to know that I fully support the Pride displays, materials on LGBTQ+ topics, and am appalled that other residents of Apple Valley are trying to limit access to these materials. As the mother of a 9 year old child in District 196, I visit the Eagan or Apple Valley library a couple of times a month, on average, and we probably have 20 books checked out right now for my daughter. I want my daughter exposed to diverse topics and we have always sought out books with LGBTQ themes. In addition, all children and adults deserve to see their lives reflected in their public library materials. I am outraged that a group of residents thinks that just because they find material objectionable, that means it should be unavailable to everyone else. I support the freedom to read and stand against book banning and removal of any kind. I hope that Dakota County stands firm against these efforts and ensures that our county continues to be a welcoming place for all people.

Thank you,

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-11-2023

Margaret,

We want to thank you for being inclusive and including books for all children/ adults. I am sorry that there are some people that need more love in their lives than hatred. These kids and adults deserve to have themselves represented at our libraries. I hope you will continue to have books for all communities.

However, when adults are trying to stop kids from reading, placing notes in books which is bullying and harassing employees for doing their jobs then it is time to take a stand. Our family will stand as allies with the LBGTQIA community any day. I don't believe in war so I don't demand all war books to be removed. We live in the USA and all people are to be treated equal.

Thank you for all you do to keep books in our libraries for the everyone.

Resident

7-11-2023

Hello Margaret-

I am an avid reader, a proud Lakeville resident, and a strong LGBTQ ally.

The library should continue to be inclusive and offer reading materials that represent all members of the Dakota county community. The idea that removing books that members of the community don't agree with is ridiculous. How about this for an option? Don't read it. Don't let your kids check it out. Walk past it. I personally am not a fan of romance novels or westerns but when I go to the library, I simply choose to not check those books out.

I've read multiple books about the LGBTQ community since my youth and for some reason, I am still straight at the age of 48. Family members have been exposed to heteronormative books, movies, and other materials checked out of the library and are still queer. It's amazing that these materials do not seem to have the all-mighty power to change who people are at their core, yet give ideas about society and let you know people might be different than you.

For those that are afraid of books, you can simply choose to not engage with materials that offend your sensibilities. To try and impose draconian rules for everyone outside of your household to live by is simply un-American.

Regards,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-11-2023

Hello Ms. Stone,

I wanted to express my sincere thanks to your inclusivity efforts at the Heritage Library in Lakeville. As newer residents we were pleasantly pleased to see your pride display and other cultural displays throughout the year. We are a biracial family and we have appreciated being able to find wonderful children's books that have great representation. Our daughter loves spending time in the children's area, attending classes, and looking at the amazing shelves of books!

Thank you for the great work your team and you are doing in making all residents feel welcome.

Many Thanks,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-11-2023

Greetings!

I have lived my entire life in Dakota County with the Public Library always being a place of peace and knowledge for me. I want to express my SUPPORT for the Lakeville Library as you deal with the close minded people condemning your Pride displays and challenging three books. This is a sad and shameful group of individuals. I cannot be there in person to support the Lakeville library; but, please know you are in my thoughts and good wishes during this difficult time.

Resident

7-11-2023

Hi Ms Stone-

Just wanted to send a deep thank you for keeping the library an inclusive space that celebrates each member of our community. We have loved the various displays of different cultures, families, genders, history, topics, and so much more over the years. I am a mom to a 11 year old child. The library has always been a safe space for her to learn and grow and has taught her so many life lessons that she will need to bring forward into her adult life. As she says "mom, books are my best friends. They will always be here for me when I need them."

My plea is to please keep our library exactly how it is. This means casting aside pressures from hateful members of our community to erase stories of marginalized groups.

Thank you for being authenticity beautiful. We look forward to loving our library system for many years to come.

Residents

7-11-2023

Hi Ms. Stone,

I understand there is a group planning to attend the July 13th meeting to voice their concerns regarding LGBTQ+ signage and resources at the library. I want to voice my support of the library's signage and resources. I don't know which books they are against, but banning books is a slippery slope. I am not a Lakeville resident but have worked here for a couple years at a church in town as a pastoral intern. I think offering support for the LGBTQ community, one that often feels the threat and hate of others, is a kind and loving approach for the whole community to undertake.

I hope you will consider the voices of support as you hear dissent, realizing that taking the high road is often a difficult path.

Respectfully,

Resident

7-11-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I have enjoyed using the Dakota County libraries for many years. I was there a couple weeks ago with my grandchildren and they loved it!

It is disappointing that a local group has decided to target the display of PRIDE books. If the PRIDE book choices are not of their liking, they can just walk past it and browse other books.

Our libraries are supposed to be open to ALL who wish to use them. Books are meant to open up and enrich our minds, to expose us to new things, educate, and entertain us. Thank you for recognizing and celebrating our LGBTQ+ readers during PRIDE month. I'm proud to be from a state that stopped the hateful constitutional ban on gay marriage and later enacted the freedom to marry act. We are now a trans refugee state and that too makes me proud.

No one should feel threatened over the books displayed. No one is being forced to read them.

Thank you for continuing to serve ALL residents. We must all stand up for our freedoms, lest they come for us next.

Resident (Lakeville)

7-11-2023

Dear Director Stone,

As a librarian living in Dakota County's West St. Paul (public librarian for 16 years, now corporate librarian), I have heard there is some anti-LGBTQ+ sentiment rising and there are efforts to block LGBTQ+ books, displays, and programming across Dakota County's library system. I would like to offer my voice in opposition of these efforts.

I was hoping to show my support of keeping (and boosting) LGBTQ+ books, displays, and programming in person at this Thursday's advisory committee meeting, but I have a previous engagement. On this issue, I'm not able to remain complacent or quiet. I don't like that this is happening around the country, and I especially don't like it happening in my neighborhood. I feel strongly that the library should remain a place where people of all ages can find books from many perspectives and cultures.

As a former Head of Reference at a public library in Illinois, I understand the fight that is at your doorstep and I know it isn't easy. I appreciate all the hard work that you're taking on and ask that you continue the fight and advocate for the rights of all library patrons. You're doing great – I know library directors don't get to hear that very often – and you have the support of so many librarians and patrons around the Twin Cities and the state. Keep fighting the fight and I appreciate all that you do!

Sincerely,

Resident (West St Paul)

7-11-2023

Dear Margaret,

This email is to show support for your pride materials at the library. It is wonderful that Lakeville is inclusive of all groups, especially groups that are in need of community support.

Thank you to the Lakeville public library for showing support for the LBGTQ community.

Our family also supports our LGBTQ community in many ways, including marches, flags, and pride stickers. Please continue your good work.

Thank you,
Resident

7-11-2023

Good morning,

It is my understanding that some citizens are having a hard time with certain books and are looking to ban Pride displays at the library.

I'm so sorry it has come to this.

I don't know what books are in question, however, I am not a fan of banning books, even the Bible, which is full of horrible things like men wanting to rape angels, I mean, it's sick.

As a mother to five children, one that is trans, two that are non binary of which one identifies as queer, I can say that representation matters and I do see a need for Pride displays to stay.

I am a recovering evangelical, had I stayed in my rigid ways of thinking regarding sexuality and gender, I'd be missing out on a great and welcoming community, and would be putting my children in danger.

Queer culture IS consent culture and myself being cis and straight, I have felt more welcome in queer spaces than anywhere else my entire life.

Thank you for all you do and please don't let the b@stards get you down.

Sincerely,

Resident (West St Paul)

7-11-2023

Hello,

I am a resident of Dakota County and avid supporter of public libraries. I was recently told there is an anti-LGBTQ+ group that plans on attending the coming Library committee meeting on July 13th. Unfortunately, I have work that overlaps with this so I can not attend but as a Dakota County resident, I wanted to voice my opinion.

Although I do not know what books the group plans on submitting for reconsideration or which specific pride displays they refer to, that does not matter. When it comes to the books I would like to know have they read these books? What is wrong with these books that is so bad to the point of taking them out of a collection entirety? This is a public library where many different people of many different opinions can get books and use resources and why should these books be taken away so no one can easily access them through the Dakota County Library system? No one is forcing anyone to read a book, so if someone does not like a book, they do not have to read it. Why should the voice of a few have an impact on the resources of the many?

For the book display, I can only assume they are referring to Pride Month displays for the month of June. And to this, I ask, why is a Pride Month display any worse than a book display for the 4th of July? Or a display for starting school? If a display is not something you are interested in, there is not anyone requiring you to look at the display. I do not currently have kids, but I have no problem with a display geared toward kids starting their first day of school.

This is a public library that is used by the public. Books of many different types are available and no one will agree with all of them, but that does not make the book any less important or valid. The LGBTQ+ community

deserves to have a space and resources and books that portray themselves and discuss experiences relating to the LGBTQ+ community.

I am very sad I cannot attend this meeting but I appreciate everything the library does and thank you for letting me reach out to voice my opinion as a Dakota County Resident. I hope you have a great day and I hope these books are able to stay in the collection.

Sincerely,

Resident (Dakota County)

7-11-2023

I wanted to send a message of gratitude for your support of PRIDE. I really appreciate the effort to create a display to honor our LGBTQ+ community members and show diversity to our children! I was saddened to hear you've been having complaints from some people. Please know they are the minority and the majority of our community appreciates your support!!

Thank you!!

Resident

7-11-2023

Margaret Stone,

I wanted to pass on my thanks for the Dakota County Library recognizing and honoring LGBTQIA+ community members and celebrating Pride Month. I have loved libraries since I was a young child. Knowing that libraries are an accepting and inclusive environment for those who identify as LGBTQIA+ is important and wonderful. Please continue your pride month celebrations in the future.

Thank you,

Resident (Farmington)

7-11-2023

Dear Margaret-

I want to thank you for instilling inclusionary practices in our library system in Dakota County. As a parent and educator, I rely heavily on our library for finding resources to teach my children academics but also empathy, understanding and love. I especially want to thank you for embracing LGBTQ pride. My daughter (age 5) loved the "protect trans kids" button we got at our last visit and it opened further conversation about loving trans people.

I know you're getting push back from some residents, and I thank you for holding firm in the beliefs surrounding equity.

In gratitude,
Resident (Eagan)

7-11-2023

Dear Director,

I am a parent of an LGBTQ+ transgender youth and a resident of Dakota County. I want to say thank you for the library's participation at the Burnsville Pride event. Also thank you for your displays of support within the libraries. To my child, seeing a Pride display means safety, a refuge, a place they might not be physically harmed or excluded. To me, a cisgendered heterosexual parent, I see Pride displays as one more protective layer between my child and suicide.

- LGBTQ youth are more than four times as likely to attempt suicide than their peers (Johns et al., 2019; Johns et al., 2020).

You are a godsend in a world that has decided to be unwelcoming to my caring, sensitive child just because of who they are.

Public libraries should be places where all children see their identities and families represented. Families today can have two mothers or two fathers, and transgender family members. Libraries should be safe spaces for all people, all families, not just the straight ones, who have plenty of representation. Our kids who identify as LGBTQ+ need you. They need public spaces to be welcoming and affirming, to encourage more acceptance and education, not hate and exclusion. Displays of Pride are literally lifesaving.

Sincerely,

Anonymous Parent

7-11-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I'm a former resident of Dakota County. South St. Paul was my home library and I served on the Board of Directors there. I am writing in support of the Pride Display and against any book banning.

Everyone should be afforded the dignity to read what they like for any reason. It is my experience that those trying to ban books have not read the materials they seek to limit. But ultimately that doesn't matter. I have read books that are personally distasteful to me, though that does not mean I have the right to prevent others from accessing those materials.

I rely on you and your staff's professionalism. You know your community, you know their needs. I trust you to create meaningful displays, to ensure your materials reflect your community.

Sending strength and support to you in this difficult time.

Resident

7-11-2023

Please note that there are many community members who value diversity and are proud of the fact that our Dakota County libraries represent all people. Your Pride displays mean a lot and I am hopeful that the community will support rights for all. Libraries are so valuable to have an equal availability of information to represent the true diversity in our population. To see Pride represented means something for me as an ally and I can only imagine what children and adults think who may see themselves represented in your displays.

Banning books has never been on the right side of history. Let's not start now. Thank you for all you are doing to support Pride month in our libraries. I hope a few intolerant loud voices don't change the priorities of the Dakota County Libraries support for Pride month.

Resident

7-11-2023

Hi Margaret,

I live in West St Paul (and teach in Richfield). I just wanted to send a heartfelt thank you and message of support for your pride display at Heritage Library. We know that people deserve to feel safe and seen in all spaces and libraries like yours make all the difference for our LGBTQIA+ community members. I've spent the last 16 years teaching 5th-12th grade both in Texas and Minnesota and served as an advisor for GSAs and also been able to listen to young people share countless times just how impactful it is to have a safe place to be themselves and be celebrated for who they are. Please continue your important work and know that, while a few loud voices push back, many people sit in quiet gratitude in seeing themselves represented in spaces in their/our community.

Thank you for providing a safe space and a space that celebrates people for being who they are.

Thank you,

Resident (West St. Paul)

she/her/hers

7-11-2023

Hi Ms. Stone,

I'm writing to you in regards to the upcoming meeting at the Lakeville library. I unfortunately cannot be there in person, as much as I would love to be, so I wanted to send a note along in support of your Pride displays (among other topics) in the libraries.

First, I want to thank you and all the Dakota County library staff for consistently doing an excellent job with our libraries. I grew up using Dakota County libraries and they were such a gateway for me to the larger world and access to books we could not regularly afford at home. I owe a lot of my reading prowess to access to the Wentworth Library. And now I take my children there, too--they love to go, and we love to read together at home, especially before bed.

I want to reiterate my support of all the work you all do in the libraries--all the community supports you provide, access to mind-broadening topics, education, and more. I believe that our community is generally inclusive and progressive and embodies the spirit of a public library. But I know not everyone shares those opinions--people whose minds need opening the most. The libraries are a place for ALL--ideally, even ones where people get exposed to ideas, learn about them, and are willing to open their minds a little further.

I hope you will not take direction or criticism from groups who want to restrict access to speech, ideas, education, and inclusion. It flies in the face of everything our First Amendment and the idea of a public library stands for. But I know standing up can be difficult in the face of bullying opposition. I hope when you are faced with any sort of dilemma on this front you know that there are a LOT of people in the community standing behind you and with you and for you. I am one of them, and I have four other people in my household who agree. Even my six-year-old grasps the concepts of inclusion and standing up for, or educating others on, outdated ideas and concepts.

Please keep doing the great work you are doing. Keep providing displays of books that shine a light on our whole society. That teach us and move us and entertain us and reflect the community we live in.

Thank you so much for your time.

Best,

Resident

7-11-2023

Thank you so much for having Pride displays in your libraries. I am the mother of a gay son. He has struggled with substance use disorder since the age of 13. He is now 28 and 3 years in recovery. He recently gave his testimony at my support group. He said one of the biggest factors in his drug use was the shame and guilt he felt in being gay. We raised him in an Evangelical Church where he was told being gay was wrong and gay people were going to hell. He prayed day and night to not be gay. Obviously it didn't work. That conflict caused him to turn to drugs. If your display can help one young person feel good about themselves, then it is worth it. Reading books about being gay does not turn you gay. My son has read hundreds of heterosexual books and he's still gay! The people who are against this need to know the facts on homosexual suicide rates. The persecution has to stop. Just let them be! Love is love. Don't back down. You could be saving a life!

Resident (Lakeville) and Kindergarten Teacher

7-11-2023

Ms. Stone

I understand that a group opposed to Pride displays and specific books related to the LGBTQ+ community will be attending Thursday's meeting.

I am a decades-long resident of Dakota County and a frequent user of the library. I am currently serving as a West St. Paul City Councilmember and appreciate everything the Dakota County Library does for our community. The Library participates in our Explore West St. Paul Days, WSP Pride, and hosts many community events helping ALL of residents including children, LGBTQ+, renters, residents of color, and homeless folks.

Thank you for everything you do for all of us. I hope you will continue to support Pride events and provide books that support the LGBTQ+ community.

Resident (West St. Paul)

7-11-2023

Hi Margaret,

I hope this message finds you well. I am an Eagan resident and visit the Wescott library with my 4 and 6 year old boys.

First, I want to mention that the Wescott library (as well as Galaxie and Heritage) has offered me a wealth of resources to support my kids learning to read, provided audio content the whole family has enjoyed, and allowed me to let my kids chase their fleeting interests with joy. My kids are biracial and I have appreciated the diversity of children's books, and have found it easy to find books where they are represented. I have also appreciated the ability to find books that support our family values.

I thought the selection of pride books and the pride display in the children's section was very beautiful and there were lots of cute and accessible books that led to great conversations at my house.

I have heard that there will be an anti-LGBT group speaking at the library advisory committee in Lakeville Thursday. I unfortunately work evenings and am unable attend to support the library and these values. But, I hope this kind of hate won't stop the Dakota County Library from continuing this excellent work. I appreciate all that the Dakota County Library does to make the library inclusive for everyone. The more accessible content the better, and my family will decide what, *if anything*, should be censored from our own home. That's freedom to me.

Thank you again for your work.

Sincerely,
Resident (Eagan)

7-10-2023

Hello Margaret,

I heard through my network that the Heritage Library in Lakeville has been getting pushback due to a LGBTQ+ Pride display, and that Dakota County Library broadly has received backlash for LGBTQ+ friendly books and programming. I've also been told that there are plans for an anti-LGBTQ+ group to attend Thursday's Library Advisory Committee meeting in protest. I cannot attend the meeting due to a prior commitment but I did want to send a comment of support for the library continuing to provide LGBTQ+ friendly programming and books, particularly for youth.

I grew up in Lakeville and volunteered over my summers in middle school signing kids up for the summer reading program. I still have and use the library card I got as a child there. Now as an adult I live in West Saint

Paul and Wentworth Library is a staple of my life. I love the library as a place to find books, movies, and music, but more importantly, as a cornerstone of each community I have lived in. I think everyone on the committee and those in attendance can agree that libraries make our communities better, and that they provide us opportunities to learn about how big, rich and full of variety the world truly is.

That's why this anti-LGBTQ+ backlash towards our libraries is so troubling. Libraries show us, and particularly our youth, what is possible. We get to see ourselves reflected back at us in the stories they hold. We get to see ourselves as important and worthy of love. And perhaps more importantly, we see those not like us in stories that tell us there are infinite ways to be important, and infinite ways to be worthy of love. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Pansexual, and many many more identities of people ARE here. They DO exist, they are important, and they are worthy of love. Children need to know this, and so do teens, and so do adults. Challenging books that acknowledge this truth or programs that celebrate these identities are attempts to erase these people who are under attack, figuratively and literally, every day, all across this country and in our very county. What anti-LGBTQ+ groups who protest LGBTQ+ content or celebration claim is that it is confusing to youth, that queer or trans people are sexualizing children, or are trying to indoctrinate them or make them queer or trans. This is not true and it has never been true, even though this claim has been made countless times over the last 50 years. The truth is that some kids are queer, some kids are trans, and even the ones that aren't need to know that their peers might be and that they deserve love and respect. No one is trying to make kids trans or gay. We don't want to convert kids. We want the trans and gay and queer kids that do exist to survive and even love themselves in a world that tells them they shouldn't.

Libraries have an important role to play in the celebration of LGBTQ+ identities, as cornerstones of our communities that teach kids, teens, and adults what is possible. To suggest that the library is not the right place for this kind of content is to ignore that libraries have always had the important role of expanding minds. I hope that Dakota County Library remains strong in its commitment to highlighting LGBTQ+ identities, providing LGBTQ+-friendly materials especially for youth, and creating a space of safety and celebration for the LGBTQ+ people in our community.

Thank you,

Resident (West. St. Paul

7-10-2023

Dear Ms. Stone,

I wanted to express my joy and thankfulness that the Dakota County Libraries, and the Lakeville branch in particular, have an inclusive collection that celebrates diverse authors and voices. This includes my joy in the Pride collection, and the display during the month of June. I know I've picked up many books I would never have heard of from those displays, helping me to expand my understanding of my community.

Please don't let detractors ruin these awesome displays. If people do not wish to read books with diverse characters they do not have to. There are many books with view points I disagree with base on my religion, but I would never dream of saying they shouldn't be in our public library collection.

Finally we have a diverse community and they deserve to see themselves in the library collection of their town. My child is transgender and should have transgender authors and characters in the books at our library. Others should see themselves too - different races, religions, nationalities, gender, etc.

Thank you for your amazing library staff and resources. I'm a frequent borrower and visitor to the library, and am a 9 year resident of Lakeville.

Sincerely,

Resident (Lakeville)

7-10-2023

Hi Margaret, I heard about an upcoming protest that may be happening outside of your Library. I want to voice my support for the library and the freedom and rights for all. I want to thank you for showing support and acceptance for all. I appreciate all you and all your co workers do for our communities.

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-10-2023

I am a lifelong library user. I've checked out books I loved, liked, didn't finish and detested.

If people don't like a book or don't agree with a book, they shouldn't read. They should take care of themselves and leave everyone else alone.

Book bans, in my opinion, lead to no good end.

Please stand up to these individuals. The minority should not rule the majority.

Resident

Wentworth Library User.

7-10-2023

Hello,

I am a resident of Dakota County. I had been told by a friend that there are some planned public comments against the LGBT book collection at the Lakeville public library. I am not sure if I will be able to attend the meeting but if not I want to get my comment expressed.

I am very grateful that the library has such a collection. I came out as gay as an adult and grew up in the 80s and 90s where homophobia was the norm. If I had seen such things growing up it would have been a tremendous boost to my morale instead of hating myself for decades and coming very close to taking my own life when I realized I was gay.

That collection will improve countless lives of children and adults and even save their lives as being rejected for simply existing is a horrible, soul-crushing thing that straight people do not understand. Just as we do not tolerate racism, homophobia and transphobia should not be either. The state of Minnesota and Dakota County

should value all their residents and not cave in to a small group of loudmouthed bigots disguising their hatred as religious conduct. Everyone is entitled to dignity under the law.

Thank you for your time.

Resident (Apple Valley)

7-10-2023

Hello,

I just wanted to take a moment and say thank you for the PRIDE displays you have had in the library recently. I understand some patrons are not big fans of diversity or books on subject matters that represent that diversity. Please know you have my support and that of my family despite how different we may be from others. I encourage others who oppose books on LGBTQS+ to not read them if it goes against their beliefs. If your decorating does not suit them, I am sure they can come back for months and months and feel welcomed and supported. For those in the LGBTQS+ community, the gesture of support matters! Thank you for that.

7-10-2023

Hi

I wanted to let you know that the Pride displays at the Dakota co libraries are so wonderful to see each year! My kiddo is non binary and it helps to make the library a safe space for them.

I'm sorry you are having to deal w push back and hatred! Know there are those in the district that

Support you all 100 %

Resident