IN THE TRENCHES

COMBATING CONTROVERSY AND CENSORSHIP

Presented by Jennifer Stickles and Michelle La Voie
CONTROVERSIAL

CONTROVERSY: A discussion marked especially by the expression of opposing views; dispute; quarrel; strife

SUBJECTIVE!
EXAMPLES OF CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAMS

- Refugees
- Homeless
- LGBTQ+
- Paranormal
- Ethnic and Religious Diversity
- Political
- Environmental
Highland Park Public Library, NJ: Palestinian Children’s Book Program
COMMUNICATION!
• PARANORMAL PROGRAMMING
PUSHBACK
AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• PUBLIC
• STAFF
• TRUSTEES
• **ANTI-VALENTINE’S DAY**
• **TEEN FASHION SHOW**
• ANTI-FRACKING PANEL PRESENTATION (NOT A LIBRARY SPONSORED PROGRAM)
PUSHBACK
AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

• DONOR
• BOARD
• LGBTQ+ PROGRAMS
• DRAG QUEEN KIDS’ PARTY
A great library has something in it to offend everyone.

#vandylibraries
From: Elaine Cherry DeCiglio
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2018 3:52 PM
To: Info Olean <info@oleanlibrary.org>
Subject: Outraged

Just when you think your local library is a safe place for your children, you read that they are offering a drag queen party for kids. I wouldn't expose my child to that kind of crap - are you people out of your minds? Children?

I'm not letting my child anywhere near this library.

Whatever floats your loafers but don't shove it down the public rear just because you might like it there 😐 🛑♀
• FIELDING COMPLAINTS (IN-PERSON, PHONE, EMAIL, ONLINE)

• THE SIMPLER MISUNDERSTANDINGS
• FIELDING COMPLAINTS (IN-PERSON, PHONE, EMAIL, ONLINE)
  • HOMOPHOBIA

When I was growing up Men didn’t dress like women. They would’ve been tied to the back of a pickup truck and dragged or beaten without mercy. People kept their mouth shut if they were different, that’s how we tolerated them. Let’s send our children to the public library to watch a bunch of so called adults play dress up!, as if they don’t see enough crap on the internet or TV.
DON'T FIGHT CENSORSHIP WITH CENSORSHIP!
• FIELDING COMPLAINTS (IN-PERSON, PHONE, EMAIL, ONLINE)
  • RELIGIOUS DOGMA
    • CHURCH GROUPS

Drag queen: A demon dressed up like a clown to entertain children to corrupt their minds and souls for the Devil. Wake up!

Leave our children alone! Parents, protect your babies from this trash! I hope and pray believe me that this will fail! Anything not from God will fail.
• IS THIS OUR COMMUNITY??
I am not asking that you all hold a drag queen storytime (but got ahead, do it) or change your personal beliefs, but I am asking that as colleagues you support Olean Public Library, which has faced some pretty ugly stuff since advertising the Drag Queen Kids Party. Community members are of course free to attend or not attend the event, but some community members are posting things online (and calling the library, and coming into the library...) that are intentionally incorrect, ignorant, and intellectually irresponsible (the "5 I's" ©). I believe in intellectual freedom, but I am not a fan of intellectual irresponsibility when it is hurtful to those who have the least power and privilege. That’s just bullying and it causes real harm.

Rightly the library is not censoring negative comments, but I would love to see positive support drowning out the negative junk. Consider posting a supporting message on their facebook page, or better yet, attend the event with a child in your life!
Public Statement Regarding Drag Queen Kids' Party

We have received some feedback regarding the Drag Queen Kids' Party, a program that will be held at the Olean Public Library on Wednesday, June 20.

We believe everyone in our community shares an appreciation for openness, acceptance, and the opportunity to educate their children about people who are different from them. We also know that values differ, and we are grateful to have received a variety of comments from multiple perspectives. Hearing both sides ensures we are reflective of all of our constituents.

As always, members of the community are encouraged to reach out directly to Library Director Michelle La Voie or Programs Director Jennifer Stickles to share those perspectives. Our direct line is 716-372-0200, or you may email Michelle at mlavoie@oleanlibrary.org or Jennifer at jsstickles@oleanlibrary.org.

The Drag Queen Kids Party is not a new concept. Other public libraries around the country, including the New York Public Library and the Binghamton Public Library, have hosted programs like this with great popularity. We chose to host one as part of our continuing celebration of our community's diversity.

We understand that not everyone likes the programs that we host. That is one of the reasons we print brochures and advertise our programs—so that people can gather information and make the best decision for themselves and their families. This program is no different.

In our program, Flo Leeta will read a couple of positive, age-appropriate children's books, Jacob's New Dress and Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress (a finalist for several children's book awards), and sing age-appropriate songs. Children are encouraged to dress up however they are comfortable, as this will be an accepting and loving environment for all. Flo Leeta will dress more moderately than on stage—appropriate for the age group that will be attending.
FIND YOUR ALLIES!

- Facebook groups

[User's comment]

It's events like yours that make me proud to be a librarian! Libraries are for everyone, not just those that share the same gender expression, sexuality, religion, race, etc., we have to move with the times, we have to embrace our communities, we have to be on the forefront of serving ALL people. If your event makes one person feel like they've been seen, makes one child realize that they're not alone or opens the mind of one individual, it's been a success. Don't let the haters get you down and know that this librarian from rural Oregon has your back! Keep fighting the good fight!
FIND YOUR ALLIES!

• Your allies will start to find you!

Good Afternoon Michelle and Jennifer;

I am writing on behalf of the American Library Association’s Office for Intellectual Freedom (OIF) to offer any assistance that may be useful with the responses to the Olean Public Library Drag Queen Kids Party and to say thank you for standing strong in your commitment to intellectual freedom.

OIF regularly consults with librarians and administrators on controversies over materials and programs in libraries. I understand from this news article, that some people are objecting to the suitability of this program for children.

We want to wholeheartedly express our gratitude for your continued celebration of your community’s diversity. We fully support the program and the community’s access to all ideas and viewpoints. With guidance from Library Bill of Rights Interpretations: Library-Initiated Programs and Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation, libraries are leading the way for creating communities of pride and positivity.
• YOUR BOARD!
  • TRANSPARENCY AND IMMEDIACY
NAZIS!

Daniel Burnside
Agreed, this needs to be recognized for what it really is CHILD ABUSE. I as the Region 2 Director for the NSM will be in attendance to protest this crap, all who feel the same feel free to message me and we will not welcome this in our area.
NAZIS!

- POLICIES?
  - STICK TO YOUR CODE OF CONDUCT
• ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS
  • POLICE
  • COMMUNITY ALLIES
  • LOCAL POLITICIANS
  • COUNTER-PROTESTORS

Some People I'm a pretty large, straight, white male with some other large, straight, white male and female friends. I recognize I have quite a bit of privilege for a number of reasons...I also happen to be a certified EMT. If anyone wants to attend this event and is afraid for any reason, PM me. My friends and I would be honored to escort you, your family, your friends, and anyone else you care about. Love is love, and these events are how we stand up for the love we need to normalize and celebrate in this world. LGBTQ Allies, who's with me? Who wants to start an honor guard?
• OTHER ADVICE:

• COMMUNICATE WITH PRESENTER – DO THEY FEEL SAFE? WILLING TO PRESENT? ALSO, KNOW THEIR CONTENT! (TRUE FOR EVEN THE MOST SEEMINGLY INNOCENT OF PROGRAMS)

• STAFF OPTIONS IF VIOLENCE THREATENED

• BUILD UP STAFF FOR POSITIVE INVOLVEMENT. PUBLIC LIBRARIES! (RIGHT JOB FOR YOU?]

• MAKE SURE TO COMMUNICATE PROTOCOLS TO FOLLOW WITH STAFF

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Charles Wright II Jen Stickles the organizers of this drag queen storyline should be shot. Why would anybody willingly take their kids to see mentally ill people. This makes me sick to my stomach.
MEDIA
SUCCESS!

- Turnout of Supporters vs. Protestors
- Police Presence
- Staff Excitement
- A Great Time!
CANCELING?
WHO REALLY WINS?

Pittsburgh Current (blog)
Pittsburgh Carnegie Library cancels Drag Queen Story Hour ...
A few days after threats were made against a reading program conducted by Drag Queens, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh opted to cancel ...
Jun 29, 2019

Washington Post
A library canceled an LGBT prom after backlash. Then a church stepped in.
Johnson’s Facebook page frequently criticizes drag queens and LGBT people, and she has encouraged her followers to call libraries that host ...
Jul 1, 2019

JVP chapter condemns NJ Library censorship of children’s book “P is for Palestine”
May 30, 2019, 6:53 pm | in

Statement by Jewish Voice for Peace – Central New Jersey
Censorship of Children’s Book Event at Highland Park Library
After a slanderous intimidation campaign, Highland Park Public Library canceled a planned reading of children’s book P is for Palestine. But Highland Park should know better: Censorship is never a good look for a library.
• TAKEAWAYS

• KEEP THE ENTHUSIASM GOING AFTER SUCCESSFULLY RUNNING A CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAM

• CONTINUE TO OFFER CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAMS

• FIND OTHER MARGINALIZED SEGMENTS OF THE POPULATION OR SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS IN THE COMMUNITY THAT WOULD BENEFIT FROM PROGRAMS OFFERED AT THE LIBRARY,

• DEVELOP SOCIAL MEDIA POSTING POLICIES FOR YOUR ADMINS, AND A SOCIAL MEDIA CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE PUBLIC
Western New York Library Resources Council
Outstanding Library Program of the Year Award 2018
American Libraries
@amlibraries

Latest Library Links: Drag Queen party brings waves of support to Olean library

Drag Queen party brings waves of support to Olean... americanlibrariesmagazine...

LGBTQ Kids' Books
@books_gay

Olean library drag queen event for kids met with some backlash, much support
oleantimesherald.com/news/olean-lib... via @othnews

6/21/18, 1:08 PM

Albert Whitman & Company

shared a post.
27 mins ·

Thank you Flo Leeta for sharing JACOB'S NEW DRESS with readers during Olean Public Library's Drag Queen Kids Party.

We love the pastel wig and unicorn horn!
CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAMS: IN THE TRENCHES

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?