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ALA American Library Association

Office for Intellectual Freedom

February 20, 2018

Jared Weber, President
Orange City Public Library Board of Trustees
112 Albany Ave SE
Orange City, IA 51041

To the members of the Orange City Public Library Board of Trustees;
Director Amanda Vazquez, Board President Jared Weber, Vice-President Elizabeth Kensak,
Aaron Haverdink, Mabel Mantel, Gail Marincovich, and Todd McDonald

We are writing on behalf of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom and the Iowa Library Association to express our concern about the recent challenges to "non-heterosexual normative" books for youth in the Orange City Public Library, including a moratorium on the purchase of future items with non-heterosexual normative content, labeling of already purchased items that clearly identifies it as containing non-heterosexual normative content, and the restriction of youth to access any non-heterosexual normative content. We urge the library board to uphold the freedom to read and the principles of intellectual freedom by supporting the inclusion of all books in the public library collection without discrimination or prejudice.

The [ALA Code of Ethics](#), first established in 1939, outlines the ethical principles that guide the work of librarians, other professionals providing information services, library trustees, and library staff members. It emphasizes the library profession's commitment to intellectual freedom and the freedom of access to information. It states, in part, "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."

The books in question, like many books, may not be right for every family of Orange City. But it is also true that many LGBT books for youth are very popular, award winning, and well-reviewed and are sought out by library users. In 1993, ALA Council adopted an interpretation to the Library Bill of Rights titled, "[Access to Library Resources and Services Regardless of Sex, Gender Identity, Gender Expression, or Sexual Orientation](#)."

"The American Library Association stringently and unequivocally maintains that libraries and librarians have an obligation to resist efforts that systematically exclude materials dealing with any subject matter, including sex, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation."

In particular, the library has a responsibility to represent a broad range of materials in its collection and to meet the needs of everyone in the community it serves – not just the most vocal, the most powerful, or even the majority. Individual library users have the right to voice their concerns and select different materials for themselves and their own families, but those objecting to particular books should not be given the power to restrict other users' rights of access to the material. For this reason, we encourage you, as members of the Orange City Public Library Board of Trustees, to uphold the library's strong policies in support of collection diversity and individual choice.

Under the best professional standards, policies that address challenging an item in the collection ask those charged with reviewing challenged materials to set aside their personal beliefs and evaluate the work in light of the objective standards outlined in the [library's collection development policy](#).

We extend our full support to the director and librarians of the Orange City Public Library, who work to select a diverse range of materials for the collection without shying away from potentially controversial subjects. We encourage their continued excellent service to all the members of their community, whether straight or gay, who have made a home in Orange City and pay taxes in Orange City.

We strongly urge the board of trustees to reaffirm the importance and value of the freedom to read by retaining LGBT materials in the library collection without prejudicial labels, purchasing future titles that are inclusive of all people and viewpoints, and not restricting the access of minors to a diverse selection of materials. By doing so, the board will send a strong message to the community – that, in this country, everyone has a place at the library.

Sincerely,



James LaRue
Director
American Library Association
Office for Intellectual Freedom



Michael Wright
President
Iowa Library Association