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Buffalo & Erie County Public Library Recognizes Freedom to Read 2024, Advocates for Literary Freedom and against mounting book bans

As book bans escalate across the country, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System stands in solidarity with the right to read, September 22-28

BUFFALO, N.Y. – [September 13, 2024] – The [Buffalo & Erie County Public Library](#) is proud to recognize [Freedom to Read 2024](#), a critical, annual movement to highlight the importance of intellectual freedom – and draw attention to the growing threat of book bans and censorship. This year's *Freedom to Read* initiative runs from September 22-28, and we invite the community to join in activities and discussions that underscore the critical importance of free and open access to information.

"Books are the windows into diverse worlds, and everyone should have the right to choose which worlds to explore," said **John Spears, director of the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library System**.

Recent data from the American Library Association (ALA) shows an alarming rise in book challenges and bans across the United States. In 2023 alone, there were over 1,300 reported attempts to remove or restrict access to various books, marking a significant increase from previous years. Many of these challenges targeted books that explore themes of race, gender, and LGBTQ+ identities, among others.

"Trusting readers—young or old—to make informed decisions about what's right for them and their families is the cornerstone of a free and open society," **Spears** said.

He continued: "Book bans rob readers of the right to make independent decisions about the information they consume, and bans substitute one person's judgement for another's freedom."

Impact on Children and Adults

The restriction of access to books has far-reaching consequences for both children and adults. Research from the National Coalition against Censorship (NCAC) indicates that children who are denied access to diverse literature are at risk of developing a narrow worldview, which can hinder their social and emotional development. Similarly, adults who lack exposure to a wide range of perspectives are less equipped to participate in informed civic discourse.

"When books are banned, it's not just about restricting access to a single title—it's about limiting access to ideas, cultures, and experiences that help us grow as individuals and as a community," **Spears** continued, "It mutes our access to the world."

Join Us & Support

Buffalo & Erie County Public Libraries invite everyone to join us during *Freedom to Read Week 2024*. The system is also partnering with Oxford Pennant for a collection raising visibility for the Freedom to Read.

Below are opportunities to mark *Freedom to Read Week*:

- **Buffalo & Erie County Public Library x Oxford Pennant:** In partnership with Buffalo's own Oxford Pennant, [we are offering new products](#) emphasizing the week – and the *Freedom to Read* and the importance of libraries in our community. Funds raised support the Library System.
- **Installation – Winds of Freedom:** An installation in the Central Library's Reading Park will recognize *Freedom to Read Week*. Over 800 pinwheels will be planted to symbolize the abundance of voices and stories that have faced calls for censorship, yet continue to resonate and inspire.
- **The Colorado Librarian who Fought Back – An Interview with Brooky Parks:** Monday, September 23 at 6 p.m. at the Crane Branch Library, 633 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo. Colorado district Librarian Brooky Parks, fired for refusing to cancel workshops for LGBTQ+ teens and youth of color, will kick off the week with a discussion on the harms of censorship.
- **The History of Book Bans & Book Burnings:** Tuesday, September 24 at 6 p.m., North Park Branch Library, 975 Hertel Ave., Buffalo. Ellen Rajnisz of Buffalo's independent bookstore Burning Books will discuss book bans from the 19th century on.
- **Books Through Bars:** Wednesday, September 25 at 6 p.m. at the Crane Branch Library, 633 Elmwood Ave., Buffalo. Join us for a discussion on the history of prison censorship and how to support access to literature and information for people who are incarcerated.
- **Library Card Sign-Up:** The best method of supporting your library is becoming a cardholder. We challenge Buffalo and Erie County residents to support their local library system by signing up as a cardholder and using the vast resources.

These are free and open to the public. For more, visit www.buffalolib.org.

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