



Issue 002

August 2023

Who are we? A growing, truly grassroots group originating in Nixa, MO, we are concerned citizens, teachers, and parents of public school students who want to support educational opportunities for ALL who seek them. *What do we do?* We concern ourselves with education related issues in our community. We fight against censorship, and support open choices in education, and for a wide breadth of educational experiences for all.

What have we been up to?

We have exciting news to share with you all! One of the books that was initially slated to be removed from the library has been restored. Since no one option (remove, restrict or keep) had a majority of the vote, the school board made a crucial decision to revote on the matter of keeping the book "Unpregnant" by Jenni Hendriks and Ted Caplan in school libraries. We are thrilled to announce that this time, the outcome to keep it on shelves counts as a win for freedom of expression and against censorship!

"Unpregnant" is a contemporary young adult novel that addresses essential themes such as friendship, personal growth, and a woman's right to make choices about her own body. By keeping this book accessible in school libraries, the school board has demonstrated their commitment to supporting diverse voices and promoting intellectual freedom.

At U Turn in Education, we firmly stand against any form of censorship. We believe that literature plays a crucial role in shaping young minds and fostering empathy, critical thinking, and understanding. By providing access to a wide range of perspectives and ideas, we empower students to engage thoughtfully with the world around them.

This victory for freedom of expression reminds us of the importance of open dialogue and embracing diverse viewpoints in our educational institutions. As we celebrate this moment, let us continue to advocate for the protection of intellectual liberties and promote an environment that encourages the free exchange of ideas.

Together, we can create a more inclusive and enriching educational experience for all students.

If you are a subscriber you can read about it in the July 12th edition of the Springfield News Leader.

READ
MORE



Upcoming events

- August 3: Book Bag, 5pm, Nixa Library
- August 5: Back to school bash, Nixa Junior High
- August 10: Book Bag, 5pm, Nixa library
- August 17: Nixa school board meeting, 6:30pm, Faught Administration building
- August 21: Nixa school district first day of school
- August 22: Christian County library board meeting, 6pm, location tbd

Our Public Libraries need our help!

Recently, the Christian County public libraries have faced distressing attacks, with locals disrupting board meetings by demanding the implementation of a values-based rating system, calling for books to be removed and most recently, passing out unrelated pornography. This behavior extends to library staff, who have been subjected to verbal abuse, name calling and degradation.

Librarians, more than ever, need our support. So, what can we do? Utilize your public library! By using our libraries, we keep them relevant and show a need for them. Attend your library's board meeting and voice support for the staff and librarians. They are being hit with an onslaught of negativity right now.

How you can help

No matter what your comfort level, EVERYONE can contribute to our movement somehow. Some ways to get involved are:

- * Attending board and council meetings
- * Write emails to board members and legislators
- * Build or donate to a little free library
- * donate

In The News

An excellent opinion piece was featured in the Springfield News Leader on July 9th by Gene Davison. Please see page 3 for the text of that piece. Thank you Gene!

Our Socials



In the News-Leader article about the June 20 Nixa school board meeting, a picture showed an unidentified woman wearing a "Moms for Liberty" t-shirt. This organization is a leading proponent of book banning under the guise of parental rights and was recently named an extremist anti-government group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. They have quoted Adolf Hitler in a newsletter as justification for their activities.

Not identified as a member of MFL, Nixa parent Mary Hernandez De Carl called for banning books. She said, "Restricting access to books has nothing to do with political party, religious beliefs or a person's sexual orientation and everything to do with preventing Nixa schools from being indoctrinated with woke propaganda." She also claimed, without evidence, that it was because of "activist teachers and librarians."

Give Ms. Hernandez De Carl credit for studying her talking points and using the appropriate buzz words: "indoctrinated," "woke," "propaganda," "activist."

Her comments are inaccurate at best if not a deliberate prevarication.

The issue of removing library books — and let's be honest and call it what it is: banning — has everything to do with political party, religious beliefs, and sexual orientation/sexuality.

There is only one major political party, Republicans, calling to ban books both in schools and public libraries. Only in Republican dominated states are legislatures imposing restrictions on libraries, as is being done in Missouri where access to books is being criminalized.

And it is a particular religious belief, predominately Evangelicalism, characterized by abhorrence of sexuality and sexual orientation, especially gender dysphoria, that is behind denying students and library patrons the right to read what they choose.

Another spurious claim by Ms. Hernandez De Carl is that banning books is about "protecting children" (a code for censorship when pertaining to books). If she was serious about protecting children, she would be working to get guns off our streets, not books out of a library. She would be fighting for stricter domestic violence laws. She would be advocating for comprehensive and fact-based sex education in our schools and readily available contraception (to protect the many high school students who are sexually active).

Ms. Hernandez De Carl also asserted that the school library has books that "reduce the worth of a person." Most of the challenged books contain characters and situations with whom minority and LGBTQ students relate. The students see themselves, and their own experiences and problems, in those books. She needs to learn that what reduces the worth of a person is to deny or denigrate their existence.

The teachers and librarians under attack are not "activists." They are dedicated professionals serving all the students, straight or LGBTQ, and helping them realize their potential.

The best way to protect our children, which Moms for Liberty, the Concerned Parents of the Ozarks (and the Republican party and Evangelicals) claim they want, is not through censorship and book banning, but validating all students and ensuring that they are supported regardless of identity.

Gene Davison lives in Springfield.