

# Eye on Campus

## Commentary:

### Banned Books

#### Week

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Are we paying enough attention to Banned Books Week?

The answer to this question is no.

We have not paid enough attention. In fact, a lot of people around Media, and myself included, seem to be in the dark as to what Banned Book Week is.

I remember studying this issue in English class but, arrogant as I was, I thought like most people do. It's a free country right?

Well it's also a free country where its own citizens debate over what reading material should be allowed on the bookshelves.

Once a year, libraries across the country spend a week raising censorship awareness in an effort to convince people to think twice before censoring or banning classics such as "Huckleberry Finn" or "To Kill a Mockingbird" because of their violent and racy overtones.

Both books represent a time in which people in this country spoke of "American Americans" that way. Mark Twain and Harper Lee were simply trying to recreate the time periods in which they lived in.

The libraries also argue that reading a book is like going to a movie on the big screen.

If the book contains content that should not be read by a young adult, then it is the parent of that young adult who should take action not the local community.

According to Vairo Head Librarian, Sara Whildin, books are frequently banned because of the use of profanity and description of sexual activity.

She stands with America's libraries: "No book should ever be banned."

She also went on to say that censoring is unfair both to the author of the book and also to the reader. Whildin believes in common sense: let parents decide what their children can and cannot read.

This reporter was shocked when walking into the Middletown Library to find the librarians unsure as to what Banned Book Week was or what it represented. My request to speak to the director of the library received no response, not even a message. What is going on?

I turned to two professionals whom I respect, Dr. Arnold Markley of the English department, and my favorite English teacher from Penncrest High School, Felicia Quinzi.

When I asked Dr. Markley what Banned Book week was he said he had heard of it but didn't know much about it.

However, he did have some interesting thoughts about this issue.

"People are forgetting that reading what we want is part of a free society. How can we call ourselves a democracy if we censor our literature?" Dr. Markley said.

He also commented that the reason why such classic novels like Huck Finn and Mockingbird are criticized is because of the language which suggests racism.

"There is something to be learned from a book even if you don't agree with it," Markley said.

My mentor from High School Ms. Quinzi also seemed unfamiliar with Banned Book Week, even though she taught me a few things about censorship and why reading is so important to us.

"This is, I think, a week sponsored by the American Library

## GLBT Leaders Come Out to Students

By Sharon Achilles  
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Tomorrow, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people will take 24 hours to celebrate their individuality on National Coming Out Day.

Penn State Delaware County has planned an event to further diversity and promote awareness of gay and bisexual students on campus.

Chris Coia, Assistant Director of Student Activities and Leadership Development, will organize the day's event. He plans to set up an informa-

"College is very good for 'coming out'."

-Anonymous

tional table in the Commons building where reading material and rainbow ribbons (a popular symbol of gay awareness) will be made available for students. Accompanying Coia at this table will be the campus' resident school psychologist, Stacy Shapiro, and other faculty members.

Some students and faculty members may question how effectively Delco promotes diversity, especially for gay individuals. One of the clubs

Association to get the word out about banned books and to encourage people to read them," Quinzi said.

She had me read a book senior year called "Fahrenheit 451" by Ray Bradbury. It is a story about a man who stumbles onto a plot to destroy all the books in the world, a complete holocaust to the pleasure of reading.

When I asked her what we can do to improve the situation, she agreed with Dr. Markley.

"There will always be extremists attacking books. We just have to make sure we have an educated society who will always be in the majority," she said.

I end this report by saying one thing; books are a gift from those who write them.

They entertain us and fill our minds with knowledge and new ideas.

How can anyone seriously consider banning them?

here on campus is the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). However, this club has to hold a meeting this semester or plan any events.

"In the past our goals and activities have centered around trying to establish a goof group of friends for support and for social interaction," said Dr. Arnold Markley, associate professor of English.

Some students regardless of their sexual orientation may wonder the point of National Coming Out Day.

Markley said, "The group [GSA] discusses ideas and plans for raising awareness about GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender) issues on campus."

"The hope is that a comfortable, friendly group that is visible on campus will make others feel more comfortable about coming out, or just joining us for particular activities," said Markley.

GSA president, Meredith Handwerk, agreed that "it's hard in general to get students to come out to meetings. Only a small majority show up."

Handwerk added mostly straight students show up. It seems like students know very little other students who are gay or bisexual. The school is a commuter campus and has been traditionally difficult to encourage students to attend events.

Markley said, "It's hard to make people feel comfortable until there is an active, visible group, so it's hard to get such a group started in the

first place."

"Students may feel intimidated and unsure," stated Handwerk on why students may not "come out" on campus or show up at meetings, but she said, "let them know we are here and [they] can come."

"College is very good for 'coming out' [it is] very liberal," said a student who wished to remain anonymous.

Alternatively, he said, "it is not something I actively seek out. As a general rule it is not as accepting. I don't know campus and other can be possibly afraid. Pennsylvania is mostly conservative. You never know."

Natalie Delva (Junior/Biology) is the SGA chairperson of Diversity Affairs. She said, "I think in today's society that they are more accepted without being riddled....they are afraid to of what people might think."

Markley said, "I think we could do more in terms of educating each other about GLBT issues, but the campus has always been very supportive both of the student Gay-Straight Alliance group, and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Support Network of faculty and staff members, which has been in place throughout the University for many years."

Delva shared her hopes for tomorrow's event when she said,

"We know there are gay people out there and people who are supportive of it and accepting. Maybe it will help us to come up with better ideas for next year."

## Girl Scouts Rain in on Delco Campus.

By Gerry Dungan  
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48 Girl Scouts came pouring in through the doors of the Classroom building, soaked through their vests from the rain, only to get their hands wet again.

Over the weekend, Penn State Delco hosted an annual science program specifically geared for the Girls Scouts of America.

Led by six undergraduate student volunteers and a geo-science professor, the girls were able to participate in a professional science experiment that tested the campus' water both from the rain and in the Classroom building for such data as acidity and oxygen levels.

"It is important to understand good conservation," said troop leader Barbara Krisack of troop 798, "if we pollute our water, we won't live very long."

"Girls get turned off at an early age from science," said Dr. Laura Guertin, the geo-science professor present at the event.

"Just a little science knowledge, and it can change their lives," she said.

Dr. Guertin is the director of these science programs at Delco. Each year there is a different focus on scientific matters that ranged from natural disasters to this year's theme of water testing, in recognition of World Water Monitoring Day.

Being a former Girl Scout herself, Guertin stated that science badges are not popular among the Girl Scout community.

"The problem is that the troop leaders can't teach the [requirements for] science badges," said Guertin, noting that generally troop leaders don't hold PhDs in science.

The answer, according to Vi Jolly who is the program director of troop 1271, is the community programming held at Delco focusing on children who are just about to explore possible career choices.

"I learned that I want to be a cartographer," said Diana a junior scout from troop 3587, "so that you can learn about things, about how to help the earth."

Diana has also participated in the last two previous Girl Scout science programs at Delco.

The program itself is a part of a grant, in which Dr. Guertin was the principle investigator, which is funded by University Park in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency. However, Guertin did not completely organize the three-hour event.

The University's Honor's Society pushes its undergraduates to participate with a community service project.

"I volunteered, not thinking I'd be the only person to volunteer," said Shana Goldson the undergraduate honor's student who directed this year's program.

Of the six other student volunteers, three hold positions on student government and one student holds a secretary position on the Black Student League.

"It is important to see girls and boys in science," said Guertin.