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## West Virginia Libraries Celebrating Banned Books Week

Charleston, WV. Libraries across West Virginia are celebrating Banned Books Week, September 21-27, to draw attention to the books people prefer we not read.

The American Library Association launched Banned Books Week in 1982 in response to an increase in challenges to books in schools, bookstores and libraries. More than 11,000 books have been challenged since 1982. Bannedbooksweek.org reports that 307 books were challenged 2013, and that many more go unreported each year.

Banned Books Week 2014 focuses on comics and graphic novels, which often face the zeal of those who would ban them. The Comic Book Legal Defense Fund highlights a number of challenged graphic works, including Marjane Satrapi's "Persepolis."

In step with libraries across the nation, West Virginia libraries are supporting banned books and the freedom to read. One of the most striking displays greets visitors to the Philippi Public Library in Barbour County: the cardboard effigy of a man who can't read banned books.

"There's yellow caution tape over his eyes," said Philippi library director Judy Larry. "He can't see because he's been censored. He can't speak because the word 'censored' has been taped over his mouth."

The effigy wears a t-shirt that reads, "I'm with the Banned." The back of the t-shirt lists frequently banned books, including "Harry Potter," "The Grapes of Wrath" and "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings."

The Philippi Public Library is giving away the t-shirts, according to Larry, along with "I'm with the Banned" bookmarks. "We want people to come in and explore banned books, pick up a t-shirt and a bookmark or two, and maybe get their picture taken with the guy in the t-shirt."

Raleigh County Public Library is celebrating Banned Books Week by letting their patrons return books without fines. "We're running our Banned Books Week and Fine Free Week at the same time," said Amy Stover, collection development and programming librarian at the Raleigh County Public Library. "We're doing this in honor of the fact that we're all free to read whatever we like, and we want to give our patrons a chance to clear their fines in celebration of that."

The Raleigh County Public Library also hosts a display, according to Stover. "We have a display of the most commonly banned books, and some that people wouldn't think of as banned books,

such as Eric Carle's 'Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me.' That one always shocks people that it's banned. Another is 'In the Night Kitchen' by Maurice Sendak."

At the Bridgeport Public Library, teens celebrated banned books with a read-a-thon on September 15. The library is sponsoring a Banned Books Reading Challenge through the end of September.

The Parkersburg & Wood County Public Library is committed to banned books as well. "It's safe to say that our celebration of Banned Books Week this year is bigger than it ever has been," wrote Parkersburg research librarian Carey Clevenger in a recent email.

"I was asked to assist with Banned Books Week this year because I'm one of the only staff members with an interest in comics," Clevenger wrote. "I designed some posters listing the titles of graphic novels that have been challenged in various places across the country."

Clevenger added that he is proudest of the bookmarks he "made for the graphic novels on the Banned Books Display. On the front, I have the book's title along with the reasons given for banning the book."

For more information on Banned Books Week, visit [Bannedbooksweek.org](http://Bannedbooksweek.org).

The West Virginia Library Commission serves the people of West Virginia and encourages lifelong learning, individual empowerment, civic engagement and an enriched quality of life by enhancing library and information services for all West Virginians. More information is available at [www.librarycommission.wv.gov](http://www.librarycommission.wv.gov).

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