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# West Bend couple circulate petitions to remove library books they consider obscene

By Don Behm of the Journal Sentinel

March 31, 2009

**West Bend** - A West Bend couple are circulating petitions this week asking the community library's board to remove books they consider to be obscene or child pornography from a section designated "Young Adults."

The books should be reclassified and placed in a restricted area requiring parental approval prior to being released to a child, Ginny Maziarka said. Also, such material should be labeled with a warning about its content, she said.

West Bend Community Memorial Library Director Michael Tyree said state and federal laws prohibit anyone from distributing pornographic books to children.

The books criticized by the Maziarkas are sold in bookstores and are available in public and high school libraries throughout the state, Tyree said.

"We deny that the books are pornography," he said. "These books are from reputable publishers."

The petition drafted by Maziarka and her husband, Jim, also asks the Library Board to balance its collection of books about homosexuality with books "affirming traditional heterosexual perspectives" that are faith-based or written by "ex-gay" authors.

The couple object to "the overt indoctrination of the gay agenda into our community youth," Ginny Maziarka said.

She questions why a taxpayer-funded library makes available "every latest gay-affirming book, including those designed to open up young minds to the false and dangerous notion that homosexuality is normal."

Tyree said the library does not have flags on shelves promoting books with homosexual themes. "The balance we achieved here was to provide homosexual books with the heterosexual," he said.

Ginny Maziarka described two of the books the couple targeted for removal from the teen section, "The Perks of Being a Wallflower" and "The Geography Club," as "explicitly sexual." A third book, "Deal With It! a whole new approach to your body, brain and life as a gURL," is pornographic and "worse than an R-rated movie," Maziarka said.

"Get them out of the kids' faces at the library," she said.

The Maziarkas say other concerned parents have offered to help them distribute petitions Saturday during a "drive through" signing. They will collect signatures from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the parking lot of the VFW Hall, 260 Sand Drive.

The petitions will be presented to the Library Board at a later date. Petitions were on display for signing in a room at the library on two evenings this week.

"We buy books based upon reviews" by the School Library Journal, Library Journal, Publishers Weekly, Booklist of the American Library Association, Kirkus Reviews and other sources, Tyree said. Those long-established review sources would identify books as obscene, Tyree said.

Tyree described the books targeted by the Maziarkas as age-appropriate for young adults. He acknowledged they contain sexual content.

"What is obscene?" he said. "It's not up to them to tell the community what is obscene."

City Attorney Mary Schanning refused to discuss the couple's petition with a reporter.

Under Wisconsin's sexual morality law, obscene material is a publication or recording that:

- "The average person, applying community standards, would find appeals to the prurient interest if taken as a whole.
- "Under contemporary community standards, describes or shows sexual conduct in a patently offensive way.
- "Lacks serious literary, artistic, political, educational or scientific value, if taken as a whole."

Prurient interest generally is defined as an obsessive interest in sex.

Ginny Maziarka says her definition of pornography is "any sexual activity that is spelled out explicitly, even crudely."

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