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Concerned West Bend Citizen

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Wednesday, August 19, 2009

[Effingham Library Refuses to Censor Book from Teen Section](#)

I don't know what route Ginny Maziarka took to [get to Myrtle Beach](#), but this week the good folks in Effingham, Illinois [have been dealing with](#) their own local bunch of folks trying to restrict access to young adult books.

Seems a mother didn't like that her 15-year old daughter was moved by the book [Living Dead Girl](#), written by Elizabeth Scott. The book is about a 15-year-old's perspective of living with her captor after being forcibly kidnapped and imprisoned at the age of 10. The book has [received several accolades and awards](#) from book critics.

Certainly, the book deals with heavy issues, which would cause many readers to be affected. But, of course, that's what makes a book good -- the way it can move you emotionally, take you places you've never been, feel things you've never felt before (and in this case, hopefully never will).

Well, our Effingham mother become concerned because her 15-year old daughter was affected by the book. She formally requested the book be removed from the library or at least the teen section because of the graphic content of the book and the "unsatisfactory ending." (Yep, the main character is murdered at the end of the book, but if unsatisfactory endings is a suitable criteria to remove books from the library, I have a LONG list to present at the next WB Library Board meeting)

This pretty much sums up the mother's position:

"I don't think any teen or adult should read this book," Hibdon said. "There is no good coming out of this book."

Sound familiar, West Bend?

Fortunately, the library board knew better. The director has a good perspective, noting that just because a book might make one uncomfortable, that's no reason to remove it:

Library Director Jeannie May said she agrees the book takes on a painful topic, but she doesn't believe that is reason enough to remove the book from the library.

The teen librarian also recognizes the importance -- and popularity -- of books dealing with "dark" subject matter:

Teen librarian Shirley Marshall told May removing the book could start a trend because the middle teens is when young adults begin exploring dark things as an outlet. That is why the "Twilight" series, which revolves around vampires, is so popular. If the requested book is removed from the shelf, how long before someone asks that these other type of "dark" books be removed? questioned Marshall.

A board member agreed:

Board member John Latta said although the subject of the "Living Dead Girl" is a difficult subject, it also is something that actually happens in society and having access to that reality may not necessarily be a bad thing. He added the book's point about the character having the chance

to get out of the situation and not taking it illustrates a harsh reality that occurs in those type of abusive situations.

Finally, nearly everyone recognized that it is the *parents* who need to be involved in what their kids are reading:

- Library Director Jeannie May: “We believe parents know what is best for their children and it is their job to review the materials they are reading.”
- Board member John Latta: “It is up to the parents to censor the material they are reading, not the library.”
- Board member Rod Wiethop: he would not want his 12- or 13-year-old daughter reading this book, but it is up to families to make those type of decisions.

Ginny, are you listening?