



Banned Books Event Celebrates Freedom To Read— And To Laugh

Program Will Honor Memory of Pittsburgher Judith Krug, Founder of National Banned Books Week

For Immediate Release

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Pittsburgh – The **Greater Pittsburgh Chapter of the ACLU-PA, Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh** and **WYEP 91.3 FM** are teaming up again to celebrate “Banned Books Week” with a special program featuring local personalities reading from their favorite banned or challenged works on **Thursday, Oct. 1, at 7 p.m. in the Carnegie Library Lecture Hall in Oakland**. Pittsburgh is one of many cities that celebrate the First Amendment and educate citizens about the dangers of censorship during Banned Books Week (BBW), September 26 –October 3, 2009.

The 14th annual Pittsburgh event once again expands its celebration of artistic freedom with a supplemental video presentation of “Banned Comics from the Funny Pages,” including strips from “Tank McNamara” and “B.C.” to “Calvin and Hobbes” and “Doonesbury.”

“The success of our program over the past 13 years demonstrates that savvy Pittsburghers appreciate not only the intrinsic value of literature they love but also the necessity of protecting literature they may personally disfavor,” observes Bruce Boni, the ACLU’s Vice President of Programs & Public Education.

This year’s readers include local celebrities from a variety of artistic media:

- Zafira Dance Company, a vintage belly dance and vaudeville troupe, will perform two dances to an excerpt from *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis, to be read by Christiane Leach of Soma Mestizo;
- The Highway Puppets (Flora Shepherd and Mike Cuccaro, with music by Kim and Hille Frost), will perform *The Five Chinese Brothers* by Claire Huchet Bishop;
- Gab Bonesso, comedienne and radio personality, will read from *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles;
- Typewriter Girls, known for their poetry and cabaret performances, will perform a poem by dada artist Hugo Ball with accompaniment by accordionist Steve Pellegrino;
- Mark Clayton Southers, founder and producing artistic director of Pittsburgh Playwrights Theatre Company, will feature a work to be announced;

- Lee Ferraro, general manager of WYEP 91.3 FM, will emcee the event.

Of special note at this year's program will be the recognition in honor of the Pittsburgher who co-founded "Banned Books Week". Judith Fingeret Krug, a Squirrel Hill native and University of Pittsburgh graduate, was a lifelong champion of free speech as a librarian, as director of the American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom, which promotes intellectual freedom in libraries, and as executive director of the ALA's Freedom to Read Foundation, which raises money to further First Amendment issues in court cases. When she died in April of this year, the ALA hailed Krug as "principled and unwavering" in her defense of "the rights of individuals to express ideas and read the ideas of others without governmental interference."

A proclamation passed by the Pittsburgh ACLU Chapter's board of directors honors Ms. Krug's life and accomplishments as "one of our country's great civil liberties leaders," praises Ms. Krug's tireless efforts "to ensure the public's right to know through traditional means as well as through the Internet," and salutes how she "intrepidly resisted the provision of the USA PATRIOT Act allowing federal investigators to peruse library patron records."

In 1982, Ms Krug helped found Banned Books Week, an annual event that includes authors reading from prohibited books. She also fought for the inclusion of literature on library shelves that she herself found offensive, like *The Blue Book* of the ultraconservative John Birch Society. "My personal proclivities have nothing to do with how I react as a librarian," Ms. Krug said in an interview with *The New York Times* in 1972. "Library service in this country should be based on the concept of intellectual freedom, of providing all pertinent information so a reader can make decisions for himself."

Each year, the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom receives hundreds of reports on books and other materials that were "challenged" (defined as a formal written complaint, filed with a library or school, requesting that materials be removed because of content or appropriateness). More than a book a day faces expulsion from U.S. libraries – more than 10,300 attempts since OIF began compiling information on book challenges in 1990.

For the third consecutive year, the most challenged book was the award-winning children's tale *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, based on a true story about two male penguins parenting an egg from a mixed-sex penguin couple.

Pittsburgh's Banned Books Reading is free and open to the general public. For more information, call the Pittsburgh office of the ACLU-PA at 412.681.7736 or email bannedbooks@aclupgh.org.

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