



## NEWS RELEASE

September 15, 2022

### **Celebrate Banned Books and the Freedom to Read**

[Banned Books Week](#) is September 18 to 24 and Sonoma County Library is creating displays, raising awareness about censorship and celebrating the freedom to read. This annual event highlights the value of free and open access to information. The most challenged book nationwide in 2021, “Gender Queer,” is by Santa Rosa author Maia Kobabe.

There has been a significant increase in book bans and challenges the last few years across the country. The American Library Association (ALA) reports that challenges of library books have jumped fourfold, from 2017 to 2021. In 2021, ALA recorded the highest number of attempted book bans since the organization began compiling the lists 20 years ago. Most targeted books were for a teen audience and were by or about Black or LGBTQIA+ people.

“This week is about celebrating the freedom to read. We encourage community members to read a banned book from [the list](#) or any other book of your choosing,” said Jaime Anderson, Sonoma County Library’s Acting Co-Deputy Director and Collection Services Division Manager. “Our collection includes a wide variety of views and expressions. There is something for everyone.”

[Banned Books Week](#) unites the book community in support of the freedom to seek and to express ideas, even those some consider unorthodox or unpopular. By focusing on efforts across the country to remove or restrict access to books, Banned Books Week draws national attention to the harms of censorship.

Deborah Caldwell-Stone, Director of ALA’s Office for Intellectual Freedom, said in a statement, “This is a dangerous time for readers and the public servants who provide access to reading materials. Readers, particularly students, are losing access to critical information, and librarians and teachers are under attack for doing their jobs.”

Visit [sonomalibrary.org/BannedBooks](https://sonomalibrary.org/BannedBooks) to learn more about Banned Books Week. Banned Books Week typically occurs during the last week of September—Library Card Sign-up Month. Visit your local library branch to sign up for a library card. Five new Sonoma County Library cardholders will win a Sonoma County Regional Parks Pass. Participants must sign up for a physical library card during September 2022 and share email at time of registration to be eligible to win.

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