

## Message from the President

Judy Oberlander

The OVLFF Board is happy to welcome two new members who will bring new talent and energy to our group.



*Catherine McKinnis* grew up in Ojai attending local schools and graduating from Nordhoff, becoming a devotee of the Ojai Library at an early age. After Ventura College, she moved to Arkansas and worked in the Central Arkansas Library System for many years, returning to Ojai in 2015. Catherine is currently working as a librarian for the Meiners Oaks and Mira Monte Schools. This makes her an invaluable liaison with our public schools, especially as we look forward to the new Meiners Oaks library being built on the Meiners Oaks School campus.



*Lisa Braithwaite* was born and raised in Santa Barbara and Carpinteria and now resides in Ojai. She began her relationship with OVLFF by working as a volunteer at Twice Sold Tales, where she has become well known for posting entertaining videos about TST on Instagram. We quickly recognized her talents and invited her to join the board. She has a BA in Theater and an MA in Education, but her previous work experience has centered on working as an advocate and educator in non-profit organizations. At present she works as a motivational speaker, working as a coach to train and motivate. Her mission is to “help thought leaders and change-makers build visibility, credibility, and awareness for their work through engaging presentations, a mindset of service, and authentic connection.” Lisa has been active on the membership committee and helping set up the bookstore Venmo and PayPal accounts

Adding the ability to pay by Venmo or PayPal at Twice Sold Tales has helped us enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While many of us (luddites) were reluctant, the transition has been fairly painless and the result is a significant increase in bookstore revenue, which in turn gives us more funds to help the libraries.

The board will meet in March to discuss our mission, our goals, and how best to achieve them in the future. We are particularly interested in further involving the community in the library, raising awareness of what the library does and how important it is. We look forward to our new members (including Kara Hooper and Liz Beaty – both newer members) contributing ideas and energy to this important goal.



## Join The Library Friends (OVLFF)

*“Libraries store the energy that fuels the imagination. They open up windows to the world and inspire us to explore and achieve, and contribute to improving our quality of life. Libraries change lives for the better.”— Sidney Sheldon*

All funds raised by *The Friends* are dedicated to support of our valley’s three public libraries. Your contribution to *The Friends* is an indication of your support for public libraries.

Become an Associate Member through a donation today.

OVLFF – P.O. Box 1005 – Ojai, CA 93024

or drop your donation at our bookstore: Twice-Sold Tales

As a 501(c)(3) corporation all donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by current tax law.

## Winter Weather and Wonders at Your Ojai Library

By Ron Solórzano, Regional Librarian

As we move through the colder months, we are glad to see so many of our customers continuing to come out to our library. Many folks are looking to pick up the latest title on their reading list, but we have also seen people coming to use our meeting rooms, to use our computer lab or ask for help with technology, and to check out a Home Energy Kit or Induction Cooktop Kit from our Library of Things. It is a wonderful reminder that the library fills a wide variety of needs and wants for people in the community—including a place to stay warm and dry!

Library staff here at the Ojai Library continue to offer lots of fun and informative programs. Our Fiber Fun (kids) and Knitting and Fiber Arts (adults) clubs have returned to Sunday afternoons, starting at 1pm and 3:30pm. Customers can join us for basic instruction and project ideas, or just work on their own designs in a friendly, social setting. We have also begun hosting teen volunteers from Besant Hill School who are able to provide one-on-one technology assistance on Wednesday afternoons. The Agora Foundation has also returned, bringing their free community seminar series, *The Foundations of Our Republic*, back to the library on the first and third Mondays of each month at 12pm.

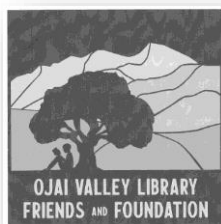
Library staff are also offering a weekly Storytime for children age 0-5 years. This fun and engaging program happens every Wednesday morning at 10:30am, and is followed by a special family craft activity. Storytime is also available at the Oak View Library, taking place on Tuesdays at 3pm and followed directly by a Play to Learn session featuring sensory, art, and perceptual/motor development activities. These activities are an opportunity for social-emotional learning and to practice school readiness skills. The Oak View Library also offers a number of other regular programs, including monthly STEAM Labs for children grades 3-6, and monthly Art Salons for adults to get creative. Finally, there is the Oak View Library Reading Society, which is currently reading *The Violin Conspiracy*, by Brendan Slocumb. Call or visit the Oak View Library for more information!

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### **Twice-Sold Tales**

**Your used bookstore**

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you might be  
surprised what you  
find.**



## Attacks on the Freedom to Read Escalate

[www.publishersweekly.com](http://www.publishersweekly.com)

In 2022, a pernicious wave of politically motivated book bans continued to surge in local library and school districts across the nation, with the overwhelming majority of book challenges involving LGBTQ authors and themes or issues of race and social justice. And as a new year approaches, observers say the attacks on libraries and schools are only intensifying.

The numbers tell a disturbing story. In April, the ALA's Office for Intellectual Freedom released its annual report on banned and challenged books, announcing that it had tracked some 729 challenges involving 1,597 individual titles in 2021—the highest number of challenges since ALA began compiling its most-challenged-books lists 20 years ago. And during Banned Books Week in September, the ALA reported that the number of challenges through the first eight months of 2022 was on pace to shatter the already-record-breaking numbers from 2021.

Free speech defender PEN America also released some alarming numbers in 2022. In an April report titled "Banned in the USA: Rising School Book Bans Threaten Free Expression and Students' First Amendment Rights," it tallied 1,586 attempted book bans and restrictions in 86 school districts across 26 states. By September, PEN said that number had swelled to more than 2,500.

But the headlines and stories behind the rising numbers of attempted book bans really speak to where things stand. In 2022, a number of communities reported that far-right protesters had begun showing up at children's events, intimidating staff. In Louisiana, a local school librarian Amanda Jones sued two men for defamation after being harassed online over her brief defense of the library's collection policies at a public meeting. In Llano County, Tex., local library supporters are suing county officials in federal court for sweeping new policies they say violate their First Amendment rights. And in a story that has generated national headlines, the Patmos Library in Michigan was defunded by voters after librarians declined to pull a handful of books involving LGBTQ themes from shelves.

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## OVLFF & friends - LFLs!

Our original Ojai Womens' Fund grant to The Library Friends, back in 2017, provided OVLFF with \$2200 to install LFLs around Ojai. For those who do not recall, LFLs refer to Little Free Libraries and can be found on streets, in front of homes and shops, at schools and libraries- actually, virtually anywhere in the USA and Europe. They exist in others of the world's countries too. The majority of them are registered and can be found at [LittleFreeLibrary.org](http://LittleFreeLibrary.org). Located in Minnesota it keeps a registry of all LFL's and maintains a map of their locations.

The Friends, under the guidance of Board Member Kris Humphries, used those funds to initially build, install, maintain the LFLs at OUSD school sites and several others, all of which are still going strong. The Google map & spreadsheet show 48 LFLs that are registered in the greater Ojai valley! And that does not include ones that friends and neighbors simply put up and maintain. This past year a donor wanted to replace the LFL at Topa Topa Elementary as it wasn't large enough to handle all the books cycling through that site. The new, larger LFL is now in place and the original one was approved to go to A Place to Grow preschool, behind the OUSD/Chaparral High School building. A friend and her family took on refurbishing the LFL & pics are attached! Her son attends Topa Topa School so this was near to their hearts.

Kris likes to think of this as a reduce, reuse, recycle, repurpose example...no cost to us, free books to the community, new location close to new readers - true win-win situation

The LFL concept is to allow books to be an easy access, especially to those members of the population that might have difficulty getting to the physical public library. Some of the books are targeted to children and a number are in Spanish, especially when the LFL is located in a largely Spanish speaking area. If you are interested in hosting a LFL contact Kris Humphries at [ovlff121@gmail.com](mailto:ovlff121@gmail.com) – and put “LFL” in the subject line.



### **Book Banning –a chat with Elizabeth Harris and Alexandra Alter**

Book-banning attempts have grown in the U.S. over the past few years from relatively isolated battles to a broader effort aimed at works about sexual and racial identity. Alexandra Alter and Elizabeth Harris of *The Times* cover the publishing industry.

#### **How did book-banning efforts become so widespread?**

ALEXANDRA: We've seen this going from a school or community issue to a really polarizing political issue. Before, parents might hear about a book because their child brought a copy home; now, complaints on social media about inappropriate material go viral, and that leads to more complaints in schools and libraries across the country. Elected officials are also turning book banning into another wedge issue in the culture wars. Last fall, a

**OVLFF aka**  
**“The Friends”**  
**Your library support organization**



Republican representative in Texas put together a list of 850 books that he argued were inappropriate material in schools and included books about sexuality, racism and American history. In Virginia, Gov. Glenn Youngkin campaigned on the issue by arguing that parents, not schools, should control what their children read. Democrats have also seized on the issue through congressional hearings about rising book bans.

#### **Why do parents and conservatives want these bans?**

ALEXANDRA: For some parents, it's about preventing kids from reading certain things. Others want to introduce certain topics — like L.G.B.T. rights or race — to their children themselves. A lot of the people I've

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# OJAI VALLEY LIBRARY FRIENDS & FOUNDATION

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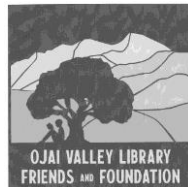
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OJAI VALLEY LIBRARY  
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### Has any banning effort stood out to you?

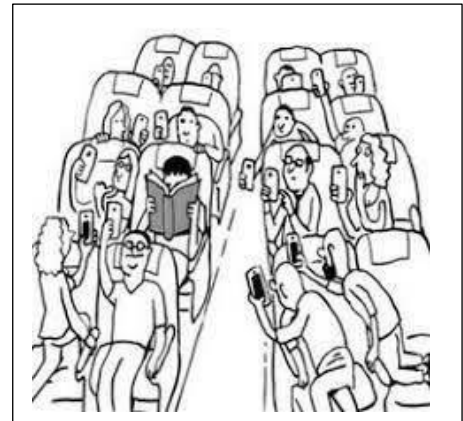
ELIZABETH: In Virginia Beach, a local politician sued Barnes & Noble over two books, “Gender Queer,” a memoir by Maia Kobabe, and “A Court of Mist and Fury,” a fantasy novel. This lawmaker wants Barnes & Noble to stop selling these titles to minors. The suit probably won’t succeed. But it’s an escalation: The issue went from people thinking their children shouldn’t read certain books to trying to stop other people’s children from reading certain books.

**I understand why some of the fights over school reading are so intense: By definition, teachers are making choices about which books children are — and are not — going to read, and parents may not always agree. The efforts to take books from libraries feels different, yes?**

ELIZABETH: When people are trying to push a book out of the library, they’re making a decision for everyone, that nobody has access to a particular book. But librarians are trained to present a range of viewpoints. For them, it’s a matter of professional ethics to make sure that the point of view of one person or one group isn’t dictating what everyone reads. Book banning can also be damaging to kids who identify with story lines in books that are banned in their communities. The question for the child becomes, “What’s wrong with me?”

spoken to say they don’t consider the bans they want to be racist or bigoted. They say the books contain content that they feel isn’t appropriate for children, and they’ll sometimes point to explicit passages. But librarians we speak to say that the most challenged books around the country are basically all about Black or brown or L.G.B.T. characters. In Texas, residents sued a library after a library official took books off the shelves based on a list from an elected official. They weren’t all children’s books; the list included Ta-Nehisi Coates’s “Between the World and Me” and “How to Be an Antiracist” by Ibram X. Kendi.

ELIZABETH: Book banning is part of a wider political context right now, of extreme polarization, of heightened political tensions and the amplification of certain messages by the kinds of media — social or otherwise — that people consume.



### How are librarians responding?

Alexandra: It’s heartbreaking for them. Librarians say they got into this field because of a love of reading and talking to people about books. Some have left their jobs; some have been fired for refusing to remove books. Others quit after being subject to a barrage of insults on social media. A librarian in Texas quit after 18 years because she was harassed online. She moved out of state and took a job in tech.

### What’s next?

Elizabeth: The movement is not going away as long as the midterms are ahead of us. And the school year will start just as election season is really heating up, so both could add fuel to this fire.



## School safety: A legal labyrinth

Robert Kim – Phi Delta Kappan on-line  
November 28, 2022

We all know student misbehavior exists on a spectrum of seriousness, ranging from mild teasing to more serious acts of bullying or harassment, all the way to physical and sexual violence and the use of deadly weapons. Teachers and administrators can handle most student misconduct without referring to the law. This is a good thing: Were every student misdeed to trigger a legally prescribed response, school operations would surely grind to a halt. Also, normal misbehavior could become criminalized, and even more students of color would be disproportionately pushed into the criminal justice system.

For behavior impacting student well-being and safety, however, an array of federal, state, and local laws and policies comes into play. This legal apparatus is confusing and ever-changing, which is challenging for school personnel. Federal, state, and municipal laws (including school district policies) combine to form an intricate and sometimes inconsistent patchwork of protocols that schools must follow. Federal law shapes, but doesn't specifically address, most kinds of student misconduct.

[Note: a PDF copy of the full article is available by sending an email to [ovlff121@gmail.com](mailto:ovlff121@gmail.com) with the words "School Safety" in the subject line.]



*How about YOUR library?  
What is it about your public library that you love? Do you have a good library story? Send us your story and, perhaps, we will publish it in our next newsletter. Send to [ovlff121@gmail.com](mailto:ovlff121@gmail.com) subject line: "library story"*

### Quotable quotes:

"A good library will never be too neat, or too dusty, because somebody will always be in it, taking books off the shelves and staying up late reading them."— *Lemony Snicket, Horseradish*

"The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library," - *Albert Einstein.*

### OVLFF BOARD (2023)

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The Board welcomes anyone who is interested in its activities to the Board meetings at Twice-Sold tales meeting room the fourth Tuesday of each month.

*Librarian continued...*

Elsewhere in the Ojai Valley, the Ventura County Library's Mobile Library continues its regular visit to Meiners Oaks Elementary School every Friday from 10am to 12pm. The Mobile Library also stops by the Ojai Community Farmers' Market every second Thursday of the month from 3-4:30pm. For more information on the Mobile Library, including the services offered and other places you can meet it, visit [www.vencolibrary.org/locations/mobile-library](http://www.vencolibrary.org/locations/mobile-library).

For more information on any of our events or hours of operation, or to check out our eBook collections, virtual storytimes, and our ever-growing Library of Things, visit [www.vencolibrary.org](http://www.vencolibrary.org)



### Stay in touch electronically

Each batch of mailed newsletter costs The Friends nearly \$400. It would be so much easier to receive our communications by email - we will not share your email address - as well as a savings of money that otherwise would go to our libraries. Join our electronic communications list today!

Send your email address to [ovlff121@gmail.com](mailto:ovlff121@gmail.com) and put "newsletter" in the subject line.

*Attacks continued...*

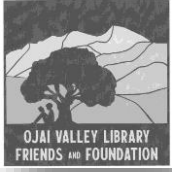
Library advocates say the pressure on libraries from right-wing groups is poised to enter a dangerous new phase in 2023. "Library supporters and freedom-to-read advocates will have to work hard to avoid a situation where 'defund the library' campaigns become the new endgame for book banners," said EveryLibrary executive director John Chrastka, after the November elections. "If they can't ban the books, will they instead try to shut the library down?"



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## BULLYING MATTERS

By: Shelby Ballard

I feel safe in my school because there is a strict policy regarding bullying, and so I worry less about “What will be said today?” or “Is anyone going to make fun of me today?” These questions should never be on a student’s mind when going to school. It is known in my school that they will trust and believe you when something is going on, and they will investigate without showing bias for who, what, and where the students that are being bullied are from. The school will suspend, expel, or even charge the student if it is a bad enough circumstance.

If schools allow bullying to go on, they are failing the students in greater ways than they could imagine. This is the reason we have to have school shooter drills; the school system failed students, and they are overcome with paranoia, rage, and hurt.

Every student should feel safe when they walk onto any school property. As an aspiring educator, I never want to see a student who feels unsafe, unloved, and uncared for, as I did when I was in elementary school. I want to spread awareness that words are the most dangerous tool. All people should learn this. Even if the person saying the piercing words doesn’t remember, it makes no difference. The scars never disappear; they linger and sometimes grow and create more scars. They are a constant reminder. I strongly believe that schools should make all students aware and protect them from the worst possible wounds.

10th grade | Ebarb High School  
Noble, Louisiana  
November 28, 2022

