

# The Beacon

## Hunt is on for 'banned' books

To celebrate freedom of speech, the Lambertville Public Library is holding a hunt for banned books through Saturday.

Wednesday, October 3, 2007 12:04 PM EDT

By Linda Seida, Staff Writer



Howard Dunn, director of the Lambertville Public Library, holds some of the books people have tried to have banned over the years.

Staff photo by Robyn C. Stein

LAMBERTVILLE — What do J.K. Rowling, Margaret Mitchell, Judy Bloom, Harper Lee, Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, Jack London, Mark Twain, Mary Shelley, Toni Morrison and John Steinbeck have in common?

It's true they are all authors, but there's more.

At different times and in various places, someone has formally challenged or tried to ban their books.

Objections to the books have been brought by governments and school boards. Most often, it is a parent filing a formal challenge to a book in a child's classroom or school library, according to the American Library Association. Often the challenge fails, but, sometimes, it does not.

Imagine a world where you or your child had no access to Harry Potter, Scarlett O'Hara, Frankenstein, Scout, Tom Sawyer or Hamlet because someone else found something objectionable in a book's content.

At one time, even the young adult classic, "Black Beauty," was considered objectionable in South Africa.

It doesn't just happen overseas or in times past. It also happens every single year in the United States. More than 3,000 attempts were made between 2000 and 2005 to remove books from schools and public libraries, according to the association.

"Most, thanks to librarians, were kept on the shelves," said Sara Scully, president of the Friends of the Library in Lambertville.

It happens so much, the association co-sponsors an annual event called Banned Books Week to celebrate First Amendment rights. The First Amendment protects freedom of speech, press, religion, assembly and petition.

This year, Banned Books Week runs through Saturday. To celebrate freedom of speech, the Lambertville Public Library is holding a hunt for banned books through Saturday.

The event is fashioned as a treasure hunt, and the object is to locate 10 books that have been placed throughout Lambertville in shops or other establishments in the central business district.

Clues for the hunt are available at the library. Those who find all 10 books and report back to the library on their location are considered winners and will receive a prize.

There is no limit to the number of prizes that will be awarded, but Ms. Scully would not say what the prizes will be.

Most of the participating merchants also have provided discount coupons for the winners.

All of the books featured in the hunt are titles from the association's list of challenged books. Some have been on the list for a decade.

Some are "mega classics," Ms. Scully said, "books people just can't deal with, and they want them to go away."

The association defines a challenge as "a formal, written complaint filed with a library or school requesting that a book be removed because of content or appropriateness."

Most were not removed from the libraries' circulation.

"Hosting the 2007 Hunt for Banned Books throughout the town publicly demonstrates our library and our community's commitment to freedom of information and to embracing diverse perspectives," Ms. Scully said.

Finding the books may take only a few hours so there is still plenty of time left to join the hunt, Ms. Scully said.

Participation is free and open to all ages, but requires registration at the library, located at the corner of Lilly and Main streets. After registering, entrants will be given the official list of clues to begin their hunt. Those under 13 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to register.

Banned Books Week was first observed in 1982. It is sponsored by the American Booksellers Association, the American Booksellers Foundation for Free Expression, the American Library Association, the Association of American Publishers, the American Society of Journalists and Authors and the National Association of College Stores. It is endorsed by the Library of Congress Center for the Book.

For more information, call the library at 397-0275.