

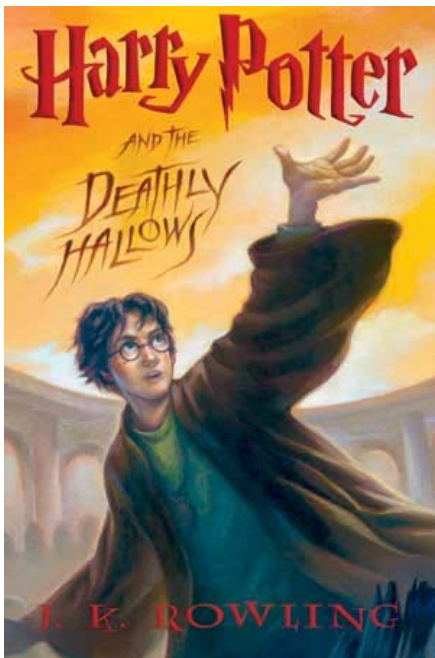
West Valley View

The community newspaper of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, Litchfield Park & Tolleson, AZ
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Friday, September 26, 2008

EMCC celebrates Banned Books Week

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HARRY POTTER BOOKS have frequently been banned, removed from libraries and burned in public.

Reading banned books is a perilous activity in some corners of the globe, but it is being actively encouraged at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale next week.

Between Sept. 30 and Oct. 3, the college is celebrating Banned Books Week with a free screening of five films representing works that have been banned or challenged in the United States or abroad. The First Amendment Film Festival will show the movies at 1 p.m. every day in the Center for Teaching and Learning. Each screening will be followed by a discussion of the film. The films are scheduled to run as follows:

Sept. 29 - *Scarface*

Sept. 30 - *Alice in Wonderland*

Oct. 1 - *Schindler's List*

Oct. 2 - *Catch-22*

Oct. 3 - *Of Mice and Men*

Hosting a Banned Books Week is important because it reminds people that the freedom of expression we tend to take for granted has not always been so widely available, even in the United States, English faculty member Erin Blomstrand said.

"It celebrates the freedom to choose and express one's opinion, even if it's an unorthodox or unpopular opinion," said Blomstrand, who organized the event.

Students from Blomstrand's Banned Books and Censorship class selected next week's film list. Some of them are working individually outside the classroom to create buttons and bookmarks to distribute at the film festival. Others are working on poster and three-dimensional presentations to unveil at the college's library next week.

At least one college employee has experienced attempts at censorship first-hand. Librarian Nikol Price will visit Blomstrand's class on Monday to tell students about the conflict between freedom and community mores she encountered while working as a children's librarian at the Glendale Public Library.

Price will mention two incidents in which several parents objected to items in the library's children's section, both of which were resolved amicably. In another case, however, an upset parent and the library were unable to see eye-to-eye.

Price recalls an upset patron asking the library to remove a book aimed at teenagers that contained vulgarity. When the library refused, the disgruntled patron checked the book out and used White Out to redact the sections she found objectionable. The library eventually traced the

book damage to her and billed her for the book's replacement cost, ending the incident.

Celebrating Banned Books Week "is important because many people don't realize" that incidents like that still occur, Price said.

"People assume their intellectual freedom is protected," she said. "It's protected not just by the government, but by librarians, teachers and school boards that refuse to take books off the shelves."

As recently as last year, copies of Harry Potter books were burned in the United States, Blomstrand and Price point out. Even in the 21st century, censorship endures.

"It's still pretty prevalent," Blomstrand said. "Right now, our biggest problem is technology. How do we protect things that belong to other people that get uploaded online?"

For information on Banned Books Week, contact Erin Blomstrand at 623-935-8332.

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