

Drag Story Hour encourages LGBTQ+ inclusion

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The browsing room at Skillman Library buzzed with laughter and excitement this past Monday at Drag Story Hour when two drag queens – Carol Ann and Sharon Ann – read parodies of children's stories.

"It really felt like I was six again sitting down and having my teacher read a book to me," Caroline Schaeffer '23, the secretary for OUT Lafayette, said. "It felt really nostalgic in that way. Everyone was laughing and having a good time, and it was super chill."

Kate Pitts, the administrative and access services specialist at the library, brought the idea of a Drag Story Hour to Lafayette.

"Pre-pandemic, I took my son to a Drag Storytime at Domaci in Bethlehem, and the fun and positivity was wonderful. I wanted to bring that kind of uplifting and lighthearted fun to campus during an otherwise very stressful time to students," Pitts wrote in an email. "Additionally, there are national efforts to ban drag performances and local LGBTQ+

organizations have been impacted by protests and threats stemming from drag story times. We wanted to provide a space for awareness, education and advocacy about the history and importance of the drag artform."

To Pitts, libraries are critical in their role as centers for new perspectives.

"Libraries are welcoming places that actively strive to promote education and inclusion," Pitts wrote. "There is a larger conversation going on about attempts to ban certain books, curricula and forms of expression, such as drag. In this larger conversation, the role of Libraries as information hubs are essential in providing access to new and different perspectives that are often censored or unfairly stigmatized."

The event was also organized by the women's, gender and sexuality studies (WGSS) department and the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center (GSRC).

"WGSS is dedicated to teaching and learning about the many ways that gender and

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Photo courtesy of @lafayettecollegelibrary on Instagram
Lafayette hosted two drag queens despite local backlash over similar events.

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identity are expressed and we both celebrate and take seriously those traditions,” professor Mary Armstrong, chair of the WGSS department, wrote in an email.

Schaeffer feels that programming like Drag Story Hour reflects a positive direction for LGBTQ+ inclusion on campus.

“Knowing that in the 90s, this was called the most homophobic school [in the country] isn’t

the best. Knowing that we have these events that keep happening, it makes me happy to be a student here,” Schaeffer said.

“Having events where non-queer people and queer people join and just be happy and just have fun, it just makes it not only an inclusive space but also a place that embraces people in the LGBTQ community. It makes LGBTQ people feel secure and happy here,” she con-

tinued.

Pitts wrote that she was happy that the college is taking the initiative to hold events like this, especially with what she views as stigma against the LGBTQ+ community recently being pushed forth in the Lehigh Valley.

“The Lehigh Valley’s LGBTQ+ community center recently attempted to hold a Drag storytime and was met with such intense backlash

that they were forced to cancel the event. I’m thrilled that the Lafayette community came together for this event in a display of pure positivity,” Pitts wrote.

“Drag Story Day at Lafayette was fun and hilarious, and watching my students laugh and enjoy the performance was amazing,” Armstrong wrote. “It was a great moment of community.”