

February 11, 2005 Friday  
FINAL EDITION

## **SAME-SEX BOOKS EYED FOR SCHOOL LIBRARIES**

**BYLINE:** BY MARISSA NELSON, FREE PRESS EDUCATION REPORTER

**SECTION:** NEWS; Pg. A3

**LENGTH:** 527 words

A London group is raising \$35,000 to buy books promoting tolerance of different sexual orientations for schools in the Thames Valley District school board.

Barb MacQuarrie of the University of Western Ontario's Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children said the goal of the Strong Communities Campaign launched Wednesday is to get the books into libraries at each of the board's 156 elementary and 30 secondary schools.

"We think it's really important for all children to see families and people with diverse sexual orientations represented in their learning material," MacQuarrie said yesterday. "Books are the best tools for teaching empathy."

The board was mired in controversy last spring when it decided to expand its safe schools policy to include gays and lesbians. The expansion was supposed to make gay and lesbian students more safe and comfortable in school.

A board committee that directed those changes recommended the board spend \$200 a school so libraries could update their collections -- one of the few recommendations not approved.

MacQuarrie said that's why her group is trying to fill the gap, raising \$200 per school, with help from the London-based Association for the Elimination of Hate and Bias.

Board staff are drafting a list of approved books, then school librarians will pick books they want from the list.

The campaign concerns some groups, including the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

Janet Epp Buckingham, director of law and public policy for the organization, said she is concerned about whether schools will accommodate religious perspectives "on issues of appropriate family relationships and sexuality.

"We just want to make sure that this kind of accommodation is there in all public school systems. This has been an issue in a number of places in the country," she said.

The purchase of books about sexual orientation also concerns Diane Watts, researcher with REAL Women.

"If the school goes ahead and accepts books and doesn't inform the parents of what their children are being taught . . . then we're definitely against that," she said.

"If parents don't want their child to read these books in the library, the children shouldn't be exposed to them."

Watts also said it's a pattern she's noticed that if a group cannot get resources into the classroom, they'll push to get them in the school library.

Susan Dale, who runs the board's safe schools program, stressed the board would decide how the cash is spent.

"We have lots of things we'd like to include in our libraries and it all comes down to funding," Dale said, noting the board's policy advocates for tolerance, not acceptance.

"Our goal is to further the respect of diverse beliefs . . . if we can provide books in our libraries that promote tolerance, that's a positive thing."

#### STRONG COMMUNITIES

- Send donations to The Association for the Elimination of Hate and Bias at 652 Elizabeth St., T-Block, London ON N5Y 6L3.

- Contact the association at [aeht@londonagainsthate.org](mailto:aeht@londonagainsthate.org) or go to the association's website [www.londonagainsthate.org](http://www.londonagainsthate.org)

- For more information, contact the Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children at 661-4040, or [mcallag@uwo.ca](mailto:mcallag@uwo.ca)

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## SPECIAL-INTEREST IDEAS FORCED ONTO CHILDREN

**BYLINE:** BY GORDON PHILLIPS, DENFIELD

**SECTION:** OPINION PAGES; Letters to the Editor; Pg. A8

**LENGTH:** 192 words

Why on earth is the University of Western Ontario, through its Centre for Research on Violence against Women and Children, promoting a homosexual agenda in area schools?

The article, **Same-sex books eyed for school libraries** (Feb. 11), says the centre's community director, Barb MacQuarrie, is attempting to raise funds for the purpose of placing pro-gay rights literature in schools.

Thames Valley school district parents will recall the centre recently solicited volunteers for a long-term study of family violence. Is that study actually a legitimate exercise or does it also serve as a means by which MacQuarrie and group can obtain regular access to impressionable young minds?

I support tolerance for all as a basic principle. I resent abuse of that principle as a smoke-screen to cover up what appears to be the centre's true purpose in this instance, sliding gay-rights promotion into the schools.

I wonder if the major financial institution that funded the start-up of what it thought was an important centre against violence is aware that its gift is being used, via the centre's name and staff efforts, to force special interests onto local children.

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February 17, 2005 Thursday  
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## LET PARENTS DECIDE ON SAME-SEX EDUCATION

**BYLINE:** BY LEIGH-ANN EASTWOOD, LONDON

**SECTION:** OPINION PAGES; Letters to the Editor; Pg. A10

**LENGTH:** 221 words

Regarding the article, **Same-sex books eyed for school libraries** (Feb. 11).

What gives the Association for the Elimination of Hate and Bias the right to decide that children need to learn about sexual orientation and that it should be available in schools, let alone in public schools.

As the mother of two children under eight, I strongly object to this material being made available in the public school system. I would be extremely upset to find out that my children are being taught about same-sex relationships in school, let alone be given a book on it.

I believe it is my responsibility as a parent -- not anyone else's -- to decide if I want to teach my children about same-sex relationships.

I can understand having the material available in a high school library for those wishing to learn about it, but I do not agree with it being taught to them in the classroom.

We should worry about real issues in the schools, such as learning to read and write and the never forgotten bullying, and not worry about whether children have access to books about sexual orientation.

If you want to raise money for the schools, go right ahead. But put it toward something useful such as educational assistants, who can help the children who are struggling in the school system and need the extra help that is currently not available to them.