

Library officials: Police remove two protesters from Severna Park Drag Queen Storytime



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As parade-goers in Annapolis drank glitter beer and celebrated the city's first LGBTQ pride parade Saturday, two protesters were removed by police for disrupting a drag queen at a story time and shoving a library board member among 165 toddlers and parents in Severna Park, library officials said.

Anne Arundel County Libraries spokeswoman Christine Feldmann said about 30 protesters prayed and talked peacefully on McKinsey Road outside the 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. Drag Queen Story Time sessions at the Severna Park Community Library.

Feldmann said the group had signs that said drag queens are dangerous for children and gender fluidity is not real.

Two protesters went into the 3 p.m. story time, where Feldmann said they began shouting at the performer, Balena Canto.

"It's funny because he was participating the whole time, singing along and doing the dances and stuff like that," said Matthew Maisano, who performs as Balena Canto.

Maisano said he was halfway through reading "Be Who You Are" when one of the men started shouting, "This is corrupting your children," and "This isn't right."

Feldmann said the men were removed by police after one of them shoved board member Rob Sapp, of Severna Park, who asked them to be quiet.

Sapp said he plans to press charges and saw police arrest the man who pushed him. Anne Arundel County Police Spokeswoman Jackie Davis could not immediately confirm any arrests.

"I wanted to get between him and the kids," Sapp said. "You don't know where people are these days... I have a lot of martial arts training, multiple black belts, but I was scared. I wanted to make sure the only dangerous thing was coming out of his mouth."

Both Feldmann and Maisano said the incident lasted less than a minute.

"The customers cheered when they were removed and the storytime continued," Feldmann said. "Lots of happy families."

Maisano has had protesters outside his Drag Queen Story Times before but said no one has ever come inside to interrupt like this.

The owners of Diehl's Produce across the street from the library put up rainbow flags and play ABBA at full volume to block out the protesters.

"We want to promote equality in our business and in the community," Diehl's owners said. "We were discouraged by the protestors at first and were happy to find a way to create our own positive environment."

Sapp is one of the newest members to enter the board in recent months.

"Talk about hitting the ground running right?" Sapp said. "I can look back on it and laugh but I was afraid."