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### Reading of book at Mt. Horeb library supports transgender child

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MOUNT HOREB (WKOW) -- Families in Mount Horeb turned the page after a controversy surrounding a book about a transgender student.

They read the book "I am Jazz" at the village library Wednesday night.

The school district was planning to read the book to students to support a transgender child in the village, but an out-of-state religious group threatened to sue, saying it's inappropriate for public schools to talk about transgender issues.

The co-author of the book, Jessica Herthel, said local families proved otherwise Wednesday night.

"I don't even know who the child is that's the subject of all this controversy, and I don't think most of the people here knew, but they showed up to say, 'Whoever you are, we're behind you,'" Herthel told 27 News.

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MOUNT HOREB (WKOW) -- Families are coming together Wednesday night to talk about a controversial book that brought national attention to Mount Horeb.

The book, "I am Jazz" tells the story of a transgender child. Mount Horeb's elementary school was planning to hold a reading of the book last month, to support a local child who was born a boy but identifies as a girl and has started making that transition at the Mount Horeb Primary Center this school year.

After hearing of the plans, a religious group based in Florida threatened to sue the school district if it didn't cancel the reading. Mat Staver, founder of the Liberty Counsel, tells 27 News a concerned parent contacted his organization, so they sent a letter to the school and the school board. That's when the district canceled the reading at the school.

When parents like Amy Lyle, whose child also attends Mount Horeb Primary Center, heard they were disappointed.

"I really just felt concern for this child and this family and I worried about how they would be feeling and that they might not feel supported, so I thought what better kind of positive thing can we do than read the book in another setting," Lyle tells 27 News.

So Lyle stepped in and organized a reading of "I am Jazz" at the Mount Horeb Public Library, which is unaffiliated with the school district. She says she hopes the event will show the family that the community is supportive and inclusive.

Staver says he was pleased the district canceled the reading and says the reading at the library is a better idea.

"If someone wants to rent a local public library or use a public library or some other meeting room where people can voluntarily attend off school grounds then that's up to them, that's their freedom of choice and that's their right to freedom of speech, but it's not appropriate to subject all students in an elementary school to this kind of material," Staver tells 27 News.

Lyle says support for the family has been overwhelming, even reaching nationwide. After the Human Rights Campaign, based in Washington, D.C., got involved, that organization talked with the co-author of "I am Jazz" who is making an appearance at the reading in Mount Horeb Wednesday.

"I don't think any of us anticipated such a large response and it has gotten conversations going in our community that weren't happening before, so a lot of good has come from this," says Lyle.

The library has on copy of the book in its parenting section, but after the reading, they'll have many more. HRC and the author are donating multiple copies after the reading.

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