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**Celebrate Your Right to Read at Hartford Public Library's *Banned Books Readout!***

*"To ban a book is to gag the writer and blindfold the reader. Neither is acceptable in a country where freedom of speech is treasured." Wally Lamb*

**Hartford, Connecticut (September 13, 2012)** The banning of books dates back to 450 BC and continues to the present day, and in the spirit of celebrating our freedom to read, Hartford Public Library, the American Civil Liberties Union, and the Law and Government Academy at Hartford Public High School will present Hartford's original ***Banned Books Readout*** on **Tuesday, September 24, at 6:00 p.m.** at **Hartford Public Library's Mark Twain Branch**, located in Hartford Public High School at 55 Forest Street. Light refreshments will be available at 5:30 p.m. and the program starts at 6 p.m. The annual event is free and open to the public.



This year's ***Banned Books Readout*** will feature John Dankosky, WNPR News Director and Host of *Where We Live*, as program moderator, as well as prominent members of the community reading passages from their favorite banned books. Readers will include Connecticut bestselling and once banned author Wally Lamb; Cathy Malloy, executive director of the Greater Hartford Arts Council; Tom Condon of the *Hartford Courant*; local musician Lorena Garay; Wilfredo Nieves, President of Capital Community College; Rebecca Duncan, a student at the Law & Government Academy, Hartford Public High School; and Stan Simpson, host of Fox TV's "The Stan Simpson Show."

Wally Lamb, both a featured author and reader at this year's event, said: "To ban a book is to gag the writer and blindfold the reader. Neither is acceptable in a country where freedom of speech is treasured."

Historically, books have been banned out of fear: fear of being too depressing, fear of anti-national sentiment, fear of the use of profanity – just to name a few. The renowned author of children's books, Judy Blume, remarked on the subject of banning books: "Let children read whatever they want and then talk about it with them. If parents and kids can talk together, we won't have as much censorship because we won't have as much fear." To draw attention to banned books and in celebration of the freedom to read, *Banned Books Week* has been observed since 1982. This year it is being celebrated September 22 – 28.

Some of the most popular books in the United States, including titles such as Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, have been challenged or banned from schools and libraries. *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* by Julia Alvarez has been challenged because of its racial and sexual themes. George Orwell's *1984* has been banned due to content related to nationalism, sexual repression, censorship and privacy. *Fallen Angels* by Walter Dean Myers has been removed from classrooms due to vulgar language and sexual explicitness.

According to Matthew K. Poland, chief executive officer of the Hartford Public Library, "Banned Books Week draws national attention to the harms of censorship. The books featured at the Readout have all been targeted with removal or restrictions in libraries and schools. While books have been and continue to be banned, part of the celebration is the fact that, in a majority of cases, the books have remained available. This happens only thanks to the efforts of librarians, teachers, students, and community members who stand up and speak out for the freedom to read. So read a banned book and anything else that you want to read."

Andrew Schneider, executive director of the ACLU-CT said, "The government's urge to censor has not abated, as the Connecticut Department of Correction recently demonstrated with its attempt to ban Wally Lamb's acclaimed novel *She's Come Undone*. We must strive to protect the right of all people, including prisoners, to read, learn and confront new ideas. And we must also confront a more subtle and insidious threat to our right of free expression – the pervasive, universal and secret government surveillance that compels people to guard their words, stifle their ideas and chill their free expression."

#### **About [Hartford Public Library](#)**

The Hartford Public Library traces its roots to 1774. It operates 10 locations and a Library-on-Wheels in the City of Hartford. The Library receives more than 833,500 visits per year. Services include access to a large collection of materials for reading and research, as well as music and video. Programs provide education, information and enrichment to the people of Hartford in such areas as citizenship training, literacy, business skills and cultural awareness. The mission of Hartford Public Library is to provide free resources that inspire reading, guide learning, and encourage individual exploration. Visit [hplct.org](http://hplct.org) and the library's new blog at [blogs.hplct.org](http://blogs.hplct.org)

#### **About American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut:**

The American Civil Liberties Union of Connecticut (ACLU-CT) is a nonpartisan, non-profit membership organization whose mission is to assure that the Bill of Rights and the rights guaranteed by the Connecticut Constitution are preserved for each new generation. The ACLU-CT accomplishes these goals through legislative advocacy, litigation, grassroots organizing and public education on a broad array of issues affecting our liberties. The ACLU-CT is one of 53 affiliates of the American Civil Liberties Union nationwide.

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