

Red Oak Response to Cancelled Holi-Drag Storytime Event

For immediate release: December 5, 2022

First we want to thank everyone who worked to make this amazing event happen, and give some history about Red Oak Community School. We are a small, independent K-5 school in Clintonville, Ohio. We have been solely operating on tuition from loving parents, fundraising from our community, and the passion of our educators. We offer a learner-centered approach to education dedicated to cultivating joy in learning, fostering self-confidence and agency, and preparing students to be environmental stewards and champions of social justice. This is the core of who we are.

We utilize a shared governance model, designed to share the management of the school primarily between parents of currently enrolled students and the staff employed by the school. This is a family school full of people that care about our mission.

The reason we are having this discussion is because our annual Holi-drag fundraiser was picked up by some groups who disagree with how we do things. Accordingly, a slew of counter measures had to be put in place due to threats placed on the event, performers and kids. As educators and parents, we had to do everything in our power to protect our kids, our performers and ourselves. We do not feel we did everything right, but this isn't about us.

Let's focus on why we are here and what we are trying to accomplish. Everyone has the right to be treated fairly and justly and exist happily. It is our duty as educators and parents to equip our kids to realize their full potential. This event helps us accomplish that, while fostering social justice, creating social awareness and nurturing empathy for others.

We will put on another drag story time event, in the full light of day, in-person and with transparency regarding the overall safety plan between our performers, our attendees, and city leadership. We will request a meeting with the Columbus & Central Ohio LGBTQ+ Roundtable to discuss how they could actively support this effort and to create a plan regarding what we can all do better to provide an environment that feels safe and welcoming to ALL families who wish to participate. We will be reaching out this week to schedule that meeting. If this happened in one of the best cities in America, we know others are also dealing with similar issues. Let's be an example of how to get this right.

At Red Oak, we teach our children to use their voice and stand up to oppressive forces, take risks in challenging norms that harm vulnerable communities, reflect on steps taken, acknowledge where improvement can be made and do the work with others to make those improvements. With this, we offer to do the work. We ask, who will join us?