

First Drag King Story Hour a hit for Aurora Public Library



The Magna Room at the Aurora Public Library was the scene of joy and inclusion on June 1 as the APL hosted its first Drag King Story Hour.

Held in conjunction with Pflag York Region, this was the first Drag King Story Hour hosted at APL after several seasons' similar story hours led by Drag Queens.

Nearly 40 people spanning generations filled the room as Gustav, the alter ego of Sare Thompson, led the morning with stories of acceptance, diversity and community.

While Drag Queen and Drag King story hours have seen backlash across North America in recent years, Saturday's event was protest-free, which came as a relief for Gustav and event organizers.

"I am beyond thrilled with the turnout the community gave us," said Sam Marchello, an information and programming specialist at APL, who took the lead on this event for the first time this year. "I am beyond thrilled with Gustav's performance. I'm just in general happy to be here supporting the queer community, especially as a queer librarian here in Aurora. It just makes me so happy to see our community being wonderful to everything. I am really happy."

This same sentiment was by Gustav, for whom this story hour was a first for the Toronto-based performer.

"It was so fun," said Gustav. "I have so many friends who work in the drag scene as Kings and Queens and non-gender specific performers, and it was so nice seeing what they do, seeing what I could take from that and bring into my own thing. It was such a wonderful time the kids and parents were so sweet and it was such a wonderful community. I got great books from the library that are all about bring yourself, being inclusive it was a lot of fun. I think the people who are afraid of drag performers and think we shouldn't be around kids, I think, come and watch this because we're just teaching it is okay to be yourself, it is okay if you're different, it's okay if families are different. It's our differences that make us unique and special."

It was "amazing," Gustav agreed, that protestors failed to turn up outside of the Library and said it could be the sign of a turning tide.

"I think it means that the people in the Province of Ontario are really coming together against people that don't think drag is right, that don't think gender diversity is right, and think that's not appropriate for kids," said Gustav. "I think the fact there were no protestors today speaks volumes that that's not a good attitude to have. We're just people, we just want to have a good time, celebrate pride, read some stories, and have fun just like any other story time!"

By Brock Weir