



Administration

414.302.8501

Circulation

414.302.8503

Reference

414.302.8500

Children's

414.302.8502

February 4, 2021

Dear Ms. Rymaszewski,

Thank you for reaching out to us regarding the book *A Real Friend* and the recent criminal charges against the book's author. I agree with you that the crimes she is accused of are abhorrent. However, the West Allis Public Library chooses books based on the merit of the book, not the character or background of the author. Based on professional reviews and my own reading, this book does not meet the criteria to be removed from library's collection.

When choosing books to add to the library collection, we look at the merits of the book. As stated in the Collection Development Policy, "Specific acquisitions may include items that may be considered unorthodox or even controversial in nature by some. The Library's acquisition of such items does not necessarily constitute endorsement of their content..." I would extend this to the author's character. Despite the horrifying accusations against the author, the book itself does have value, and it being in our collection is in no way an endorsement of the author or her actions. The book also meets our Materials Selection standards of "Timeliness and permanent value", "Literary Style and readability", and "Popular Interest."

After reviewing the book, it does tell a very relatable tale of child friendship. When selecting books for the library collection, librarians consider content and consult professional review sources to help with our decision-making process. *A Real Friend* received positive reviews from both Kirkus Magazine and School Library Journal, both well-respected professional journals. School Library Journal described it as, "A well-told, relatable story about friendship, fighting, and making up for children everywhere." And Kirkus sums it up as, "A feel-good read about a friendship that feels real, indeed."

Unfortunately, this is not the first author who has committed a crime or done something that is morally objectionable, and we are unable to remove all of these books from our collection. When removing books from the library's collection, we make these decisions based on condition of the item and usage by the community, not the personal life of the author.

Thank you for bringing this book to my attention. I do appreciate engaged library users that are looking out for our community and collection.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Henika  
Children's Supervisor