

# DRAG QUEEN

# STORYTIME



FAYE KIT-KNIGHTLY READS DR. SEUSS TO KIDS AT BARNES AND NOBLE

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## A debutante tells a story of acceptance BY CARL SEGERSTROM

*The Sneetches got really quite smart on that day,  
The day they decided that Sneetches are Sneetches  
And no kind of Sneetch is the best on the beaches.  
That day, all the Sneetches forgot about stars  
And whether they had one, or not, upon thars.*  
— Dr. Seuss, *The Sneetches*

Dr. Seuss's classic tale of contrived differences and ultimate acceptance got a fabulous telling at Eugene's Barnes and Noble store Aug. 5. Faye Kit-Knightly, a debutante of the Imperial Sovereign Court of the Emerald

Empire, a local drag queen organization, read *The Sneetches* and *The Zaxx* to a crowd of parents and children that swelled to around 70.

Kit-Knightly wore a flowing white dress, long eyelash extensions, a large sparkling feather necklace, tall platform shoes and a bejeweled tiara on her otherwise bald head. She added timely quips to the classic tales — the strange car, “probably a Tesla”, the crazy winding road, “I-5 at Gateway” — and handled the restless crowd of three-somethings with elegance and patience.

She says reading to children is a great way to teach

them about acceptance and tolerance, and that she picked *The Sneetches* because it's a story about overcoming differences in perception.

The drag queen storytime program started at the San Francisco Public Library and has spread around the country. According to the organization, the program is intended to create a space where “kids are able to see people who defy rigid gender restrictions and imagine a world where people can present as they wish, where dress-up is real.”

This was the second drag queen story time at the store. Event organizer Ben Brock says they'll keep the program, which has been well received, going on a monthly or every-other-month basis.

Brock has been working to build an LGBTQ section in the local Barnes and Noble, and to bring in authors and speakers from the LGBTQ community. He says the store's LGBTQ offerings have been expanding and they've received a lot of positive feedback for opening their space to the community.

Anthony Garcia, whose daughter sat in rapt attention at the storytelling, has attended both of the local events with his family. “I think it's fantastic,” he says. Garcia says his daughter loves to dress up, and that it's important to him and his wife to show her “all the diversity of life that we can.”

“People call it alternative lifestyles, but I just see it as a lifestyle,” he says. Though Garcia says he's not likely to dress in drag anytime soon, he does add that “if dudes can rock it, then rock it. I'm all for it.”

While the crowd's response was universally positive, similar events have faced backlash from conservative media outlets like *Fox News* and in inflammatory posts on Facebook. In North Carolina, one group successfully pressured a local library out of hosting a drag queen storytime.

Proceeds from sales by event-goers raised money for the Gay Straight Alliance at the Network Charter School in Eugene. ■

Go to Barnes and Noble's Facebook page at [facebook.com/BNeugene](https://www.facebook.com/BNeugene) for future drag queen storytime events and for other book related events such as the Aug. 10 book signing with the authors of *Interviewing Jesus the Man* and the Christian romance novel, *Road to Paradise*.