

## **D.C.'s celebrates Lavender Con, its first LGBTQIA+ Readers Book Festival**

The independent all-queer bookstore, Little District Books, hosts its first book convention to celebrate LGBTQIA+ content and interested readers. Over 50 authors will attend the event on June 29 and 30 at the National Press Club in downtown D.C.



Little District Book's storefront located on Barrack Row Main Street, D.C.

Opened in 2022, [Little District Books](#) is D.C.'s only bookstore to exclusively sell LGBTQIA+ content. Dozens of books line the shelves, sharing a variety of stories about different queer experiences and stories that surround a multitude of identities. The store prides itself in having something for all age groups, from picture and children's books to teen and young adult series. Patrons can browse the colorful rows of content to find any genre which all include some form of LGBTQIA+ inclusivity.

"I loved visiting Little District Books," Mishelle Goykhberg, a student at American University and frequent visitor of Little District Books, said. "The environment is just so welcoming and wholesome, and the staff is so friendly."

The founder and owner of Little District Books, Patrick Kern, can often be found greeting customers as they enter the bright shop, offering book recommendations to those who ask. Kern originally had no experience within the book industry until he spent a year expanding his knowledge to open Little District Books.

“The whole concept is celebrating LGBTQI+ authors and stories,” Kern explained. “I think we've been able to kind of create a lot of community around it.”

Amir Youmes, a member of the Little District Books’ team, expressed a similar hope for queer representation. “I think it helps celebrate diversity... It’s good to see yourself represented and to have a space for yourself.” Youmes has worked at the store since its opening, and they enjoy connecting with new customers, especially if there’s an interest in graphic novels.

Little District Books expands its community through monthly [book club meetings](#), [author Q&A sessions](#) and, now, Lavender Con. [Lavender Con](#) is set to take place June 29 and 30, and Little District Books is currently selling 900 tickets for interested attendees. The convention will include more than 50 confirmed authors in panel discussions and book signings. The [event schedule](#) is to be published on May 15.

“I was kind of really inspired,” Kern said. “There are several other book conventions in D.C... I wanted to do one that was more focused on readers, kind of creating the event atmosphere for readers. And I think that there's an appetite for queer authors to do ones like that.”

A convention celebrating queer literature comes during a controversial time in America’s politics. Book bans have become a polarized topic in the last decade and hit a record high in 2023 with more than 4,000 book titles targeted for censorship according to the [American Library Association](#). Almost 50 percent of these censored titles involved queer stories and identities.

“Pick any book off the shelf, and there's something in it that someone is going to object to,” Kern remarked. “Most of the stuff that's in here, someone has tried to ban it at some point.”

Youmes agrees, reflecting that most of Little District Books’ content would be banned in other places. “A lot of it comes from fear of not knowing gay people, not knowing marginalized groups and being afraid of what you don’t understand,” said Youmes. “So I think it’s nice that there’s a space where people can be like, oh, all of these are gay.”

Goykhberg voiced a similar opinion. “I think the influence of having queer spaces in D.C. is huge and part of what makes it feel like a safe haven to so many queer people who come here.”

Little District Books continues to grow in its ability to be a safe space for queer expression and for queer literature to thrive. Kern has high hopes for Lavender Con, and his team will continue preparations for its premiere in June. He reflected that it’s all “very rewarding” and anyone interested in LGBTQIA+ content should join Little District Books this summer.