

Empowering through Education

My computer pressed tightly into my lap. I hovered across my screen, the babbling fading into the background. Originally, my focus that day was on organizing the spreadsheets for NEHS.

I had not intended to participate in the book chat. In fact, I had not even read the book. However, after hearing the most insightful statements about the trans community and domestic violence- topics that were frequently shoved to the side, especially in a school setting- the discussion shifted to the center of my attention.

On April 1, 2026, the Trumbull High NEHS chapter in Connecticut hosted a book chat on *Mad Honey* by Jodi Picoult and Jennifer Finney Boylan, a mystery following the murder of a teenage girl. It intertwines domestic violence, trans rights, and other things of societal importance seamlessly.

Fiona Rossi, a junior at THS, explains “the honesty of this book was what made it truly heartbreaking, especially the way that the characters were created to be more than stereotypes. Picoult and Boylan opened a world that’s inaccessible to most and demonized: the remarkable empathy of their writing and the way that they put who Lily and Olivia were as people, instead of victims, first lends a truth and empathy to this story....”

Through *Mad Honey*, Rossi was taught a type of quiet leadership, one without judgement and stereotypes. Truthfully, this can only be obtained from another perspective, one that literature provides.

Service does not always come from loud gestures. In fact, education can be the most important service. By opening the conversation, especially within schools, it empowers students to lead within service.

Additionally, last fall, from October 5th to October 11th, banned books week was honored at THS. NEHS advisors recruited several NEHS students and faculty throughout Trumbull High to rally support for a worthy cause.

Eight students made a bulletin board representing the magnitude of banned books in the country, arranged to uniquely inform students of the dangers it presents. One student, Nicole Yezersky, shares, “I think it’s important to bring talk like that to schools, because in such an area that won’t allow banned books to students, it is especially imperative to make sure that they have an idea of what content is being hidden because society’s view of free speech, and how it applies to them. Students should be aware of books that are often for their target audience, like Fahrenheit 451 and 1984. Even if it’s a heavy topic, it’s not an excuse to avoid it....”

Yezersky’s dedication to literature has been truly unmatched at her time at THS, and her dedication to the fight against censorship is no exception. In making resources like a bulletin board and Instagram posts, the information became accessible to others who may have been formerly left in the dark.

Trumbull High’s NEHS chapter is not just focused on direct service. By creating a space for these stigmatized topics within schools, it focuses on creating the next generation of leaders within service.