

# 'Everyone matters': Bradford library opens gender-affirming closet

BradfordToday Staff  
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1 / 2 The Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library will be hosting a gender-affirming closet between February and June. | Photo supplied by Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library

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## NEWS RELEASE

BRADFORD WEST GWILLIMBURY PUBLIC LIBRARY

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The Bradford West Gwillimbury Public Library in partnership with CONTACT Community Services and The Gilbert Centre will be piloting a 'gender-affirming closet' between February and June 2024.

The BWG Gender-Affirming Closet, sponsored by The Clothes Line thrift shop (CONTACT's social enterprise), is a place where people can sort through free clothing, accessories, and other gender-affirming gear to find items that help them explore and express their identities. This initiative takes the lead from various libraries in the United States, and is

intentionally created to support transgender, non-binary, gender-diverse and questioning youth, particularly those who may not have access to resources that support their identities, or may experience discrimination when shopping for these personal items.

“The motto at The Clothes Line is: ‘A place where everyone matters’. CONTACT Community Services values all residents in our community, and we are so excited to be able to support this incredible initiative to ensure all residents know they are valued, supported and appreciated for what makes them unique. A special thanks to the BWG Library for bringing this initiative to life and to The Gilbert Centre, that does such critical work in our communities,” shares executive director, Emily McIntosh.

The BWG Gender-Affirming Closet will have two components: The Alcove and The Pop Ups:

The Alcove will be a passive and stationary display of clothing provided by The Clothes Line, and hosted on the first floor Alcove. The items in The Alcove are open for anyone to come, sift through, and take what they’d like, free of charge.

The Pop Ups are monthly events hosted in a library programming room. These will include the collection from The Clothes Line, gender-affirming gear, a private space to try on items, and support from staff at the Gilbert Centre. The Pop Ups are available through drop-in or by appointment.

“Clothing is one of the main ways we communicate to others who we are, and the importance of gender affirming clothing for trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people cannot be understated,” said Ellis Greenberg, Family and Youth Supervisor at the Gilbert Centre. “We are thrilled to partner with the BWGPL and CONTACT community services to provide this essential service for our community, and we hope to see this kind of initiative spread across the region.

A library card is not required to participate in the pop ups, and anyone under the age of eleven must be accompanied by an adult to engage. The Alcove will launch in mid-February. The first pop-up is March 8 from 3-6 p.m.

“In our community and in our region, very little support exists for trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse youth. Through this pilot project we hope to take a step towards building a safe and welcoming space for these youth in our community.” said David di Giovanni, manager of cultural services at the BWG Library and Cultural Centre.

Anyone interested in donating clothing items to this initiative, including items relevant for prom, are welcome to donate these directly to The Clothes Line in Bradford.

“We are pleased to announce this pilot initiative, a significant one that to our understanding is a first in Ontario. Libraries have long been recognized as places of inclusivity and equitable access, transcending their traditional role. The introduction of the gender-affirming closet embodies this ethos,” said BWG Library CEO Matthew Corbett. “This initiative underscores our dedication to fostering an environment of inclusion, reducing barriers, and providing a place where every individual feels valued and empowered.”

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