



CHARLIE HUNTS

Charlie's Queer Books owner

Among just a handful of queer bookstores in the state is Charlie's Queer Books, named for its owner, Charlie Hunts, who launched it in 2023. ¶ Hunts' advocacy for LGBTQ+ issues stretches back much farther, though, to his work in marketing, where he made space for his community across industries from sports to fintech. Since launching the store, he has worked to make it a gathering space and informational hub for queer authors, readers and community events, with a particular focus on supporting queer writers of color as they have faced renewed backlash in the form of book bans and censorship.

COURTESY OF CHARLIE HUNTS

ABOUT CHARLIE

Residence: Seattle

Education: Master's in business administration, Santa Clara University

Career history: "I dropped out of college to become a Harley Davidson mechanic. I was bed bound for a year and fell in love with books. After returning to school and getting my undergrad degree, I worked in brand marketing in industries ranging from sports to government and fintech. When the anti-LGBTQ legislation and book bans began reaching all-time highs, I decided I could help my community by opening the bookstore in 2023. Since then, we've had New York Times bestselling authors, queer book fairs and fundraisers for local LGBTQ+ nonprofits."

Q&A

What's your favorite part of your job? I love hearing what customers think about books we've recommended to them! We get to play matchmaker with books. You learn so much about what folks are thinking and feeling in their lives.

What's the hardest skill you've had to learn in your role? Time management is a pretty difficult skill to master when you own your own business. Our store is a community hub that hosts a lot of events, so making sure I take time away from both the counter and my laptop is absolutely the hardest part.

What advice do you have for someone who wants to be an ally in the workplace? Three keys for allies:

Firstly, speak up! If the affected person is in the room, it can be scary and sometimes dangerous for them to correct or address the hurtful speech. Allies need to help check other people with or without the marginalized person in the room. It's a 24/7 job to be an ally.

Secondly, normalize things such as asking pronouns and offering your pronouns even if you think your gender is "obvious." You never know how the other person may identify, and asking that simple question signals you are someone who is cognizant of expansive gender presentation and identities.

Thirdly, don't leave education to the marginalized group. It's important to do your own homework instead of placing the emotional burden on the affected person.