

Does Coming Out Day do more harm than good?

National Coming Out Day raises controversial perspectives

By Katie Kim

The month of October is not only the month of spooky costumes and jack-o-lanterns, it is also the month of LGBT history.

This year, National Coming Out Day was celebrated on Oct 19.

National Coming Out Day originated 29 years ago on the anniversary of the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights.

The Human Rights Campaign “first observed National Coming Out Day as a reminder that one of our most basic tools is the power of coming out. One out of every two Americans has someone close to them who is gay or lesbian. For transgender people, that number is only one in 10.”

There’s a question in the air whether the national holiday is either a blessing or a curse.

“I think it can be both good and bad. Bad because I feel like it can possibly pressure someone into doing something they aren’t yet ready for. Good because it gives them an opportunity to do it on a day where it is respected,” said senior Carson Koy.

Senior Sofia Mena said she’s not in favor of the day because think it puts pressure on people who aren’t ready to come out.

“Coming out is a personal choice that some people can’t even make because of how their family or friends would take it. I think we should support people taking the time they need to come out,” agreed senior Sofia Mena.

Furthermore, Senior Elle Terrado said that although, it’s a good day to show awareness, it doesn’t change the problems people have at home or school on coming out. “Just because it’s national, doesn’t mean it’s any easier.”

On the other side, some look at the day in a positive way. Junior



CTA Members Aviv Crystal (left) and Kathryn Braeseke (right) | Pearlman

Grace Lestrud said the LGBTQ+ community should have a day where they can support one another and can express themselves.

“It’s great that New Trier is trying to show support for the community and I wish it was more promoted throughout the school because it’s a very important day in my opinion,” she said.

Senior Graham Rhodes said Coming Out Day itself is important

because it gives an outlet and erases the stigma of coming out.

“For me [that] has been one of the hardest parts of my queer experiences. I do feel like it adds pressure to a person to come out. Everybody should feel comfortable to come out when they are ready, not when a day tells them to.”

One possibility of the reasoning behind the controversy of the day may have been due to the approach

at which it was promoted. Some may have seen the poster hung in the P stairwell, saying “help NT celebrate LGBTQ+ Spirit Day by participating in Coming Out Day.”

The simple sentence can and has been interpreted differently by students of distinct opinions.

“At first glance, it sounds like it is trying to make people come out but I think the word ‘participate’ means show support and love, not ‘come out.’ However, that can be easily mistakable,” said Rhodes.

The poster was made by the CTA (Committed to Action) club, sponsored by English teacher Rachel Hess. Hess said that the motive behind New Trier’s celebration of this day was to “help make support more visible all around.”

“I absolutely agree with the students that believe this day doesn’t make the act of coming out any easier because that was never the intent. The intent was never to pressure individuals into doing something they aren’t ready for but it was to get people to participate in supporting the peers around them,” said Hess.

Building bridges through dance



Participants excitedly reveal fundraising totals at last year’s event | Lorenz

Children’s Bridges Teen Leadership Council aims to meet goal of \$50K

by Jesse McCauley

For the third year in a row, The Children’s Bridges Teen Leadership Council will host a Dance Marathon, an event dedicated to raising money for Lurie Children’s Hospital.

Dance Marathon is an annual event that takes place across the country in various colleges and high schools. It truly is a marathon, as it ranges from 3 to 24 hours of dancing, games, and food.

This year, the dance program, WERQ, will teach Zumba to the participants. The event will also feature catering from Giordano’s Pizza and Garrett’s Popcorn, games and raffle opportunities, and messages from patients and families.

“The dancing is always a fun time, and even if you aren’t much of a dancer, there are plenty of other activities to do. It’s such a good cause, and it is great to be with friends who

are all there to support the same goal,” said senior treasurer Stephen Hajjar.

After raising around \$37,000 last year, Hajjar and the council, composed of students from New Trier, Woodlands Academy, and Loyola, have been working to meet their fundraising goal of \$50,000.

The Children’s Bridges Teen Leadership Council was started by two Loyola students in 2015. One of the girls’ father worked as the head cardio surgeon at the hospital. They wanted to find a way to connect the patients there to teens in the North Shore. After contacting Julie Troyer, the Dance Marathon coordinator at Lurie, the board was born.

Students got a first hand experience and heard from patient families during their annual kick off meeting at the hospital. They got to see what kind of impact they and the hospital had on these kids.

“From that experience we truly got an understanding of how important the work we are doing for the kids really is. It got everyone super excited for the dance,” said junior Caroline Trukenbrod, the Vice President of the board.

Over the summer the students also engaged in other fundraising events such as car washes,

bake sales, and canning food.

The main portion of the donation comes from the participants of Dance Marathon, who can choose to be in one of the 22 teams. Teams are formed by students on the board who register to become team captains. Captains can then invite whoever they want to join their team.

It costs \$35 to register, and each participant must have a minimum fundraising goal of \$100. Each member of the team is encouraged to raise money towards the fundraising goal that the team agrees upon before hand. On average, a team will try to raise \$3,000, which goes towards the overarching goal of \$50,000.

The captains also elect team names and often organize team attire. They are also expected to fundraise more than the team members they invite. Executive board members, like Hajjar and Trukenbrod, tend to bring in \$500, while other board members raise around \$350.

Senior Katie Lorenz, who has been on the board all three years, is a captain of a team named “FTK all DM day.” Lorenz often hosts meetings at her home and has worked tirelessly to contribute to the cause. Her team aims to raise \$7,000 this year.

“It’s super cool to be a part of something bigger, something that is taking place all over the country. Bridges Dance Marathon is an incredible event, and I feel extremely lucky to be a part of it,” said Lorenz.

All of the Dance Marathon events feed into an organization called Miracle Network. As a whole, Miracle Network raised over \$32 million last year. One of the biggest contributors to Dance Marathon is Penn State, raising about \$15 million each year.

Since 1991, Miracle Network has raised over \$200 million and 100% of the proceeds go to the 170 pediatric hospitals across North America. Nationally, there are 300 Dance Marathon programs and 250,000 student participants.

“Lurie Children’s Hospital is an amazing organization that has benefited so many people. When we visited the hospital and heard the patient’s stories, we knew how important the organization was to them and how much the hospital has impacted their lives,” said Trukenbrod.

Debates over costumes haunt Halloween season

Is your costume a culture?

by Rebecca Lee

Although the celebration of Halloween traditionally calls for outrageous costumes, there has recently been much debate about the appropriateness and the political correctness of costumes that students wear.

The New Trier administration emphasizes, “no racially or ethnically stereotyped costumes; no masks or face paint; no sexually suggestive costumes; no real or fake weapons; no scooters, rollerblades, or roller skates,” according to an email sent to advisors by Assistant Superintendent Peter Tragos and Assistant Principal Scott Williams.

In recent years, administrators have also encouraged advisors to discuss cultural appropriation with students. In the same email, the assistant principals shared a poster campaign called “We’re a Culture Not a Costume,” created by a student organization at Ohio University.

The campaign uses a series of photos to argue that especially white Americans should neither mock nor generalize diverse groups of peoples, many of whom have profound or tragic histories in this country.

When adviser Dyan Marich presented the campaign to her former advisees one year, not all of them understood or agreed.

“I was kind of surprised, and I tried to get [them] to make sense of it [by explaining] ‘I don’t have an answer for you, but sometimes something does not feel right and makes [you] uncomfortable,’” said Marich.

Students seem to agree that costumes referring to races and religious groups are often offensive, and should be avoided.

“If you’re putting on blackface, you know that what you’re doing is offensive and wrong. You know what [black] people have gone through. Blackface is not funny,” argued sophomore Emily Rhee.

However, as many students suggested, people have varying

opinions on what constitutes cultural appropriation and what does not.

“It’s not something that is always very easy to talk about,” said senior Mateo Blair.

Senior Peter Leutz expressed the need for open dialogue on these matters. “If a person wore a costume that appropriated a culture, I hope that people would speak up and educate that person. Then that person could say, ‘You’re right. I didn’t think about that,’ or ‘Next year, I will be more educated,’” said Leutz.

Some students also suggested that costumes mocking political figures may be offensive.

“If you’re putting yourself out as a public figure, you have to expect that kind of stuff. But with Indians or black face, black people are not a meme or a public figure,” countered senior Clara Jungwirth.

Sexually suggestive costumes seem to appear more frequently during Halloween season.

These costumes can also offend those whose professions or beliefs are being sexually caricatured.

“I’ve seen a lack of clothing with a lot of costumes, like nurses, cops, and even nuns,” said Jungwirth.

“Almost all women wear ‘slutty’ costumes, so there kind of is an expectation that they do that. But at the end of the day, that is a woman’s own choice,” said Blair.

Ultimately, students and faculty seem to agree that anyone who dresses up on Halloween should consider the message that a costume sends.

As Williams said, “We are blessed with a lot of students who have very good judgment, who take that second and pause. It’s a matter of taking that second and pausing and saying, ‘Number one, could somebody be offended by this? Then, will this be appropriate for school?’”

Leutz expressed hope that Halloween could remain a holiday when students feel free to dress up and have fun.

“I hope that people don’t lose the excitement and fun of dressing up for Halloween because they’re afraid of offending someone. But I also hope that if you dress up in something that could offend someone else, you are ready to own that.”