



I'm more than just a: Gay Best Friend

Don't expect gay males to fit into the stereotype of the GBF

by *Darcie Kim*

Our society has constructed artificial schemas and expectations for who gay guys should be. We indulge this misconception by buying into the media's often overly effeminate characterization of queer males. Damien from *Mean Girls*. Kurt from *Glee*. Walt from *The Carrie Diaries*. Anwar from *Sex Education*.

We're unbothered when these men wear pink blazers or the skinniest of skinny jeans, just as we hardly bat an eye when we discover their self-professed love for shopping and sipping overpriced cappuccinos.

What's most problematic is that we fail to separate this dramatized perception of gay males from our reality, thus leading queer male students at our school feeling trapped and confined by this cliché Gay Best Friend (GBF) stereotype so often the subject of popular Netflix content.

For senior Chris Sciortino, the label GBF feels degrading. "GBF has who just follows you around with an iced coffee while you shop and sasses each outfit you try on," said Sciortino. "To be honest, I actually hate shopping and caffeine gives me headaches, so not all of us fit into that stereotype."

The frustration with this stereotype is echoed by senior Andrew Kline who expressed that many of his straight friends treat him like a prop.

"I'm the type of person that they



want to take shopping, the type of person to watch a movie with when they're bored, the person that they need involved in their drama - but not one they would invite to a party. In other words, my friendships can be one-dimensional. I silently blamed myself for the shortcomings of my friendships without giving thought to a larger role that I was consistently being placed in," said Kline.

And when queer males refuse or fail to conform to these preconceived expectations, we're often surprised and taken aback.

"So many people that I met coming in to New Trier said, 'You know, you're actually really chill.' And each time my response would be an awkward, 'Thank you?' Society has ingrained one idea of a gay person into everybody's head and for them meeting a gay person who does not fit the cookie-cutter mold

is different. But there are still so many things people assume about me before they've even met me," said Sciortino.

Because we're so quick to group gay males into the romanticized role of the GBF, we sometimes forget that sexuality doesn't define a person. Albeit one's sexual orientation is a critical aspect of their identity, it remains a single part of who they are.

"What's important to remember is even though I, or any gay person, seem to fit into one idea or stereotype of what a gay guy is like, that's not the extent of our personality or our character. There is so much more to that person than their sexuality. Not all gay guys love to go shopping and gossip. Just like not all straight guys like to play football and watch sports all the time," said Sciortino.

The struggle for numerous gay males to accept and be

comfortable with their sexuality in a predominantly heterosexual high school environment is one that should be recognized.

"At first I was obsessed with fitting in and acting straight in order to fit in. But after reflecting for a long time I realized that fitting in is so incredibly boring. I want to stand out from the crowd and express myself in ways that other people don't," said senior Connor Hester.

But despite the self-acceptance that these students have reached, some still feel like outsiders in a community that has promised to provide a safe, welcoming environment.

An anonymous student communicated his anger and belief that members of the New Trier faculty have failed to appropriately identify and acknowledge homophobia.

"At Cross Country practices, meets, and other events, I frequently

heard the F-word and listened to my teammates make fun of queer people. Freshman year I was petrified I would never make friends and I was in a situation where I felt effectively silenced. I would be able to understand if a coach was unable to hear these statements, but comments were also uttered in the presence of faculty," said an anonymous student.

For Hester, the awkwardness of being a gay student at New Trier was felt by various micro-aggressions from homophobes who he associated with when he was closeted.

"At New Trier gays exist in the oh-so-uncomfortable middle ground of 'Tolerance.' I can still see the people who can't help but stare and I've noticed the people who have distanced themselves from me as I've changed and become more comfortable in my own skin. This isn't to say that there aren't excellent resources available to students, and not everyone who is gay feels this way," said Hester.

Despite the numerous battles and obstacles that are still inherent parts of being a queer student in high school, Hester believes that coming to a resolution of one's sense of self is ultimately worth it.

"It takes courage to be out in high school, to constantly worry about what people think of you while you walk through the hallways, and to willingly to express yourself despite any backlash that you may receive. But everyone deserves to be themselves. No one should have to pretend to be someone else in order to make friends and survive a toxic social climate like New Trier's," said Hester.

Nine graduates to join Alumni Hall of Honor

'08 grad Wamariya among graduates to be recognized

by *Simren Dadwani*

On Mar. 14, the New Trier Alumni Achievement awards will be held, inducting nine graduates into the Alumni Hall of Honor.

The following are this year's alumni award recipients:

Dr. Allan Conney
Class of 1948

Conney (1930-2013) was recognized as a pioneer of cancer prevention and one of the leading pharmacologists of his generation. During his career, he received many awards and honors for his contributions, including election as President of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics and election to the National Academy of Sciences. Conney's research focused on everyday acts and products tied to increased risk of cancer as well as cancer prevention through, for example, exercise or use of caffeine.

Judge Roy McLeese
Class of 1977

McLeese has served as an Associate Judge for the District of Columbia Court of Appeals, the highest Appellate Court in D.C., since 2012. His previous positions include Chief of the Appellate Division of the United States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia and Acting Deputy Solicitor General of the United States. He is a recipient of the Attorney General's Distinguished Service Award and the John Marshall Award for Outstanding Legal Achievement for Handling of Appeals.

Dr. Alan Robin
Class of 1966

Robin's work has been instrumental in developing self-sustaining eye care, an increased awareness of glaucoma, and fostering research and clinical ties that have benefited patients in both India and the developing world. He has been instrumental in developing and establishing the glaucoma service at the Aravind Eye Hospital in southern India, the busiest eye hospital in the world. Robin is also a founding member of the American Glaucoma Society and the Indian Glaucoma Society.

David Sellers
Class of 1956

Sellers pioneered the "design-build" concept in architecture and is known for his improvisational, sustainable buildings. He partnered with Dr. Patch Adams to build medical clinics, hospitals and eco villages in El Salvador, Peru, Haiti, Mexico, Senegal and the Amazon. Sellers has won numerous awards from The American Institute of Architects and has been named one of the top 100 architects in the world by Architectural Digest. He was inducted into the College of Fellows of the AIA in 2017.

Scott Smith
Class of 1968

Smith served as President and Publisher of the Chicago Tribune. Publishing until his retirement in 2008. He is currently chairman of National Louis University, where he worked to make college affordable for low-income and first-generation students. He was the founding chairman of The Chicago Public Education Fund and serves on the boards of the McCormick Foundation, Mather Lifeways, Northwestern Memorial Foundation, Chicago Humanities Festival, and Kellogg School of Management.

Young Alumnus Award:
Clemantine Wamariya
Class of 2008

Wamariya, a human rights advocate, at six years old was separated from her family during the Rwandan genocide and forced to flee with her sister. They were granted asylum in 2000 and moved to Chicago. During her senior year at New Trier, Wamariya was selected as one of Oprah Winfrey's essay contest winners and was reunited with her parents on Winfrey's show. In 2011, she became the youngest member of the board of the Holocaust Memorial Museum. She recently published a memoir, "The Girl Who Smiled Beads: A Story of War and What Comes After."

Fred Schmidt
Class of 1961

Schmidt won two Olympic swimming medals and multiple NCAA and national AAU championships. After enrolling in the U.S. Navy Special Warfare and Basic Underwater Demolitions/SEAL training, he served two tours of duty with the Navy stationed in the Western Pacific and was named Swim Team Leader and Officer in Charge for the Apollo 14 and 15 recovery missions. Following his time in the military, his real estate and law career focused on community development and community improvement projects.

Sen. Charles Percy
Class of 1937

Percy (1919-2011) began his career in business, where he was named President of Bell and Howell company at age 29, becoming the youngest chief executive of a major corporation at the time. He ran for a U.S. Senate seat at age 46 and won as a moderate Republican, rising to become Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and serving three terms. He led the Senate to appoint an independent prosecutor during the Watergate scandal, and after serving, he worked as a consultant in exporting.

Sheila Hicks
Class of 1952

Hicks is an award-winning American artist, listed by the French newspaper *Le Figaro* as one of the 20 cultural figures who would "make Paris in 2018." She received a Fulbright scholarship in 1957-58 to paint in Chile, where she developed her interest in working with fibers. Her monumental works are in the collections of museums around the world, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, and many more.