

The New Trier News

NEW TRIER HIGH SCHOOL, 385 WINNETKA AVENUE, WINNETKA, IL 60093

VOL. XCV, No. 6

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2015

The new era of gender identity awareness

This is the first in a three part series on transgender students at New Trier

by Nora Crumley

For freshman transgender student Alex Singh, his first-day-of-school jitters went beyond determining what to wear or finding all his classes.

"It's really hard sometimes because when you walk around and look at all the other guys, they don't have to worry about having a completely flat chest or being strong or tall," he said.

Singh knew he was stuck in the wrong body from a very young age. "When I was four I didn't feel right and I told my mom that I was a boy stuck in a girl's body," said Singh.

Singh has faced many challenges growing up on the North Shore but is happy with the fresh start New Trier offers, especially considering his somewhat challenging junior high experience.

"Junior high was a bit rough, especially considering that most kids knew me before my transition. It was hard to make new friends, and it just wasn't the best experience."

Lizzy Appleby, Pride Youth Program Coordinator at Angles (formerly named Links), described the discomfort many transgender students face in academic situations. "Even basic activities in educational settings cause discomfort for transgender students," Appleby said.

Despite his past school experience, Singh feels positively about New Trier. "I am in a boys advisory, and the school was totally open to me being in a boys advisory, which is awesome because I am not used to being counted as a boy."

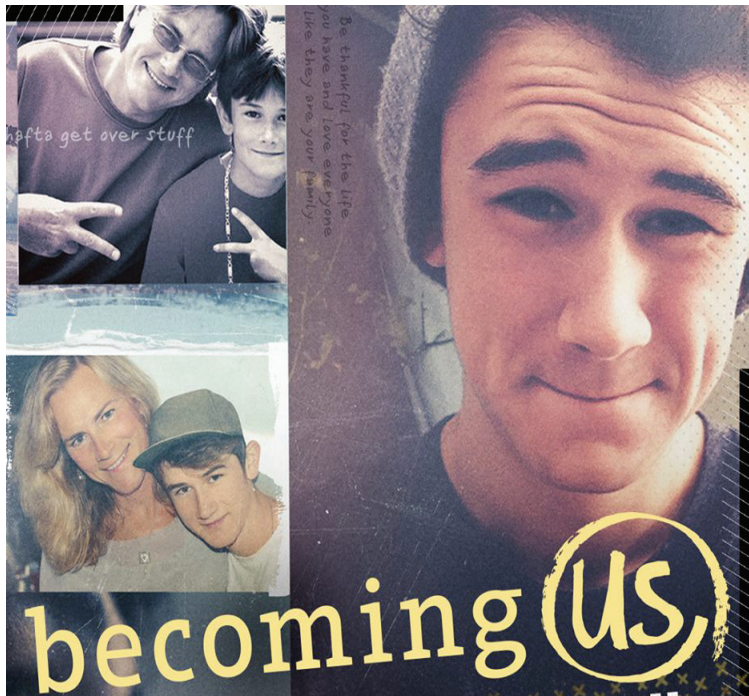
That is not to say that every day is without worry. "Considering that all my life I have grown up with a bunch of girls, it's harder for me to become friends with guys," Singh said. "Even though I see myself as a guy, it is harder to make guy friends because I didn't have a lot of guy friends when I was younger."

But overall, these first months of high school have been positive. Singh explained, "There are so many kids at New Trier who either didn't know me before I transitioned or that are more accepting of me as a peer."

Singh praises the New Trier community for its role in making him feel comfortable. "New Trier has been super considerate," said Singh, "They are doing a good job. The teachers are using the correct pronouns, and I can go into the guys bathroom if I want. I don't think they need to do much more as of right now."

Freshman Hannah Kadin, commenting on her peers' attitudes, echoed Singh's statement: "I have never met someone at New Trier who said they didn't like or were not welcoming towards transgender students."

Not all transgender students are as content with their school experience. In Palatine High School District 211, a transgender student wished to use the girl's locker room,



"Becoming Us" focuses on a family with a father in transition | ABC Family

but was denied by school officials due to the privacy concerns of other students.

The district has since been given 30 days by the U.S. Department of Education to comply with federal law.

In a recent Chicago Tribune article on this issue, District 211 Superintendent Daniel Cates said, "At some point, we have to balance the privacy rights of 12,000 students with other particular, individual needs of another group of students."

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is representing the District 211 student. In its complaint, the ACLU calls the District's stance "blatant discrimination, no matter

how the district tries to couch it."

John Knight, director of the LGBT and HIV Project at the American Civil Liberties Union of Illinois, told the Chicago Tribune, "We're talking about somebody who is being denied fair and equal treatment as compared to the other students, only because she is transgender."

Federal officials responded to the complaint filed with the U.S. Department of Education, stating that the school is violating Title IX, a federal law which requires gender equality, but the school's administration is unfazed and continues to prohibit the girl from changing in the girls' locker room.

Thus far, New Trier has not had to deal with the issue of locker rooms, but is considering the added privacy gender neutral bathrooms may provide, according to Winnetka Principal Denise Dubravec.

"We are still in the planning stages to add gender neutral restrooms in the new building and the portion of the building we are renovating," Dubravec said.

Nor has New Trier had to consider the impact of a transgender student participating in sports.

"We have been called upon to think about this policy regarding transgender students playing sports, but not to use it," said Athletic Director Randy Oberembt about the new ISHA policy regarding participation by transgender students.

"The level of awareness has been broadened. We have become more aware of all the students who populate our institutions," Oberembt said.

New Trier's willingness to engage in conversation about Singh's needs seems to be the key factor in the positivity he feels about his school experience.

"This school is amazing at talking about issues and changing or adapting to better help students," Gail Gamrath, Freshman Adviser Chair said.

But with 4,000+ students, student attitude is also important. Freshman Pallavi Simhambhatla sums this idea up. "What body parts you have don't matter any more; it matters more what's inside."

Girls cross country joins Bright Pink's fight against cancer

Raising money and awareness for breast and ovarian cancer

by Sarah Zhang

This past October, New Trier Girls Cross country raised close to \$12,000.00 in support of the breast and ovarian health organization Bright Pink.

Bright Pink, founded by Lindsay Avner in 2007, seeks to educate and inspire women of all ages in order to spread awareness and reduce the risk of breast and ovarian cancers.

Manager of Marketing and Partnerships, Lindsay DeThorne describes the organization's mission. "Bright Pink is saving women's lives from breast and ovarian cancer by empowering women to live proactively at a young age," DeThorne said.

The girls cross country team had wanted to choose a non-for-profit that the whole team could relate to, eventually selecting Bright Pink as their charity of choice. Hannah Wineman, senior and captain of the girl's cross country team explained, "Today, one in eight women will be faced with breast cancer, so this disease is one that will directly impact each of our lives, if it hasn't already. I think the team took this to



Collectively, the New Trier Girls Cross Country team ran a total of 800 miles in support of Bright Pink | Gunther

heart, and that's one of the reasons we were so motivated."

Juliet Gunther, senior and captain of the cross country team, said, "I got emails from parents saying 'thank you so much for raising money for this organization, we were touched by breast cancer in some way, so this means a lot to us.'"

Bright Pink is important to the community as well as the team. John Burnside, girls cross country coach, said, "Dealing with breast and ovarian cancer obviously effects this community of young women athletes, and from there, they really

took the reigns and organized the fundraising end of it."

The team originally set their goal low, especially since they had never attempted a fundraiser before. As they continued to fundraise, their goal kept increasing. At the end of the allotted time, they had raised \$11,780.

"Within half a week, our total was triple our original goal. Seeing how inspired everyone was by the cause and to collect so many donations was one of my favorite parts," Wineman said.

The fundraiser itself was

driven by the members of the team themselves.

"As a coach, I just sat back and facilitated so that they would have the arena to do this," Burnside said. "Once the plan was put in place, the girls really pulled through and made sure everyone was involved."

Not only did the fundraiser go smoothly, it also worked as a way to bring the whole team closer together, especially in a sport like running, which is more individual. "Our team is so big, it's hard for us to feel like one team. But this fundraiser made us realize that if our gigantic team

comes together, we can make a huge difference," Wineman said.

The fundraiser's unofficial end culminated in an event where the team as a whole ran 800 miles in one day, around four or five miles each, getting pledges and dressing up in all pink.

"We came up with the idea of this event, where you run 800 miles in a single day, and we got girls at both campuses involved. To see the entire team show up in pink to do this was amazing," Burnside said.

Burnside cited the way the team latched onto this idea, and how they were so motivated to raise money and spread awareness as the proudest moment for him. "You never know, when you throw a new idea out there for the first time, what the response will be. To see the entire team really embrace something beyond themselves, for the community was a great moment."

With the help of the girls cross country team, DeThorne said Bright Pink was able to help so many women, educating them on building healthy habits for the rest of their lives: "Through their fundraising efforts, Bright Pink is able to educate over 10,000 women on their personal risk of breast and ovarian cancer and equip them with tools to save their lives."