



# NT Examiner: discussing racism and slurs

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# Greenhouse to be constructed in honor of Sofi Troglia

The Troglia family partners to create memorial project

by Hope Talbot

On Oct. 21, members of the Board of Education approved the construction of a greenhouse on one of the school's rooftop spaces.

The greenhouse is a partnership with the Educational Foundation and the Troglia family to honor their daughter, Sofi, who passed away from a medical emergency in December 2017.

Sofi Troglia was a student in the school's Educational Life Skills program and was greatly missed upon her passing.

Donations from the community were so generous that the district, along with the Troglia family, knew they wanted to create a memorial project to encapsulate her energy.

Sofi's sister, senior Bella Troglia, described the brainstorming stage between her family, ELS staff members, and the Educational Foundation, as to how to best use the memorial funds that had been raised, "The principal, NT Educational

Foundation, as well as ELS staff met with my mom to give her the suggestions and the greenhouse sounded like the best fit. It made her think of Sofi and how she loved going to the community garden in Glencoe with her class," said Troglia.

Troglia recalls how Sofi loved the outdoors, and how she often stopped to smell flowers or jump in leaves while walking the family dog.

Not only will the greenhouse turn tragedy into a tangible space of

**The greenhouse will be an inclusive space for ELS students to develop academic, vocational, as well as social-emotional skills.**

light and growth, but both the Troglia and ELS staff alike are excited for the practical learning opportunities it will provide.

The greenhouse is estimated to be around 300 square feet and will be around 10 percent of the south green rooftop.

Special education teachers

hope that the greenhouse will be an inclusive space for ELS students to develop academic, vocational, as well as social-emotional skills.

The greenhouse is expected to be an extension of the school's well supported ELS program, and everyone in the New Trier community is encouraged to visit upon construction,

"The idea of the greenhouse is to help ELS students both with educational curriculum and vocational training but also to involve typically developing peers," explained Bella Troglia,

"If the ELS students grow flowers or herbs, maybe a science class can help them; if they want to sell the flowers an art class could make pots for them to sell the flowers in and a business class could be in charge of marketing or sales. Ideally this greenhouse would involve all students at New Trier," Troglia added.

The project was presented to Superintendent Paul Sally as costing around \$300,000.

While the Educational Foundation Board approved a commitment of \$100,000 in September of this year, support through donations is still needed to



Rendering by Cashman Stahler Group. Final construction subject to change. The New Trier Educational Foundation plans to begin construction this summer.

equip the structure with the materials needed as well as accommodations such as wheelchair ramps.

Students and parents can donate through the Educational Foundation in \$100-\$1000 increments through the foundation's website or links found on student Instagram bios.

Executive Director of the NT Educational Foundation, Liz Mayer, is equally as enthusiastic as Troglia.

"The Foundation is excited about

the opportunity to build relationships with students in new and exciting ways. The project is truly a partnership between the Foundation, students, and the District. We see this as a model for projects in the future that combines all of our talents, creativity, and innovative capabilities," stated Mayer.

Construction will begin this summer and the greenhouse should be complete by the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year.

# Affinity and support groups create communities for students

Similar backgrounds and safe spaces foster conversations about identity

by Quentin Reebe

New Trier created spaces called affinity and social work support groups to assist New Trier's widely outnumbered marginalized populations.

Affinity groups and social work support groups are there to help students who may have experienced alienation due to their racial or religious backgrounds, sexual orientations, gender, and history with mental health issues.

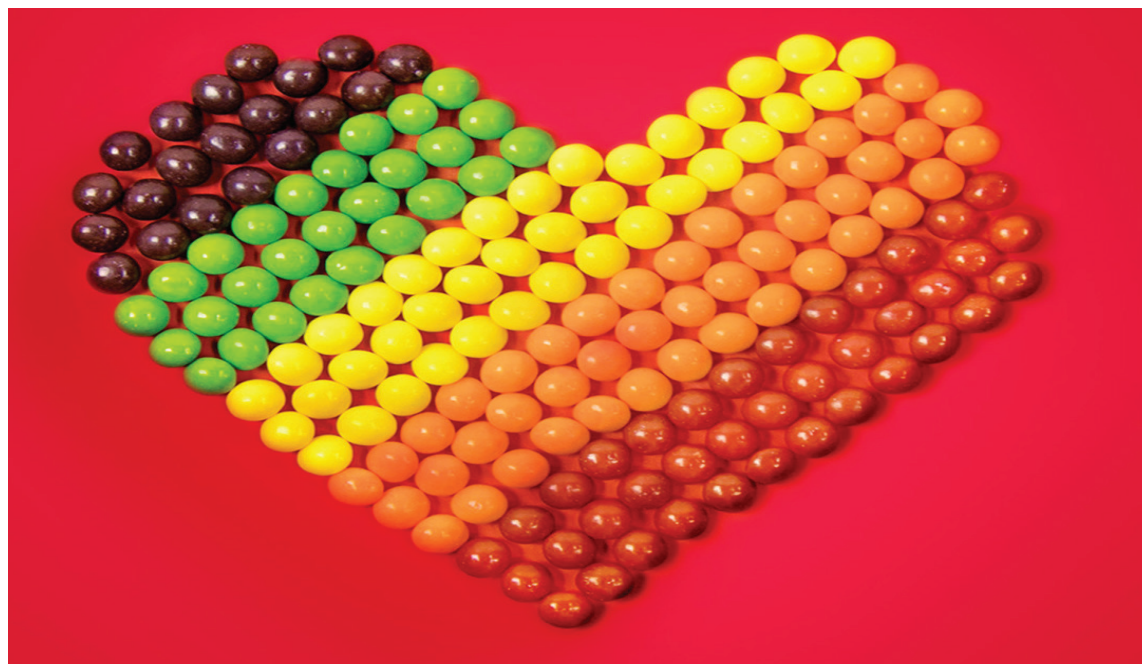
Affinity groups are community-based support spaces focused around aspects of identity, like sexuality or race. Support groups are based upon similar life experiences rather than identity.

Although mentors and sponsor organize the groups' meetings, they are largely run by the participants.

"I would call it a student-driven affinity space," said Cory Calmes regarding Skittles, an affinity group he facilitates for the LGBTQIA+ life at NT. "I run it with Mrs. Offenbach who is one of the social workers."

Calmes has a long history of interacting with LGBTQIA+ youth. The affinity group has undergone several changes since it was founded.

"I started with Skittles five years ago, and they used to have an outside facilitator in addition to a social worker," stated Calmes. "I knew some of the social workers, and they had known that I had a background working with youths who identify as a part of the LGBTQ community, so I



Skittles is one of the many affinity groups at NT. This particular group is for LGBTQ+ identifying youth |skittles.com

met with them."

Sophomore Claire Miller is a member of Skittles.

"The school is mostly accepting but every once in a while you hear people say some stuff. I know in that room with those people that's never going to happen," said Miller.

The space can become whatever each student wants it to be. Students consider affinity groups like Skittles to be a safe space for them to share their experiences.

"It helps you feel safe in situations in which you might not have felt [safe]," Miller said. "There's a sense of acceptance no matter what."

Skittles is a relatively large group which has created some challenges for students.

"We have issues with side conversations and getting too loud. That's to be expected," an anonymous

Skittles member said. "The group changes, and different people come and different things happen, but I feel like everyone who attends generally has the same take on what it's about."

Students also have access to racial affinity spaces like Young Asians With Power, the Asian/Pacific Islander group.

For art teacher and YAWP facilitator Tom Lau, these kinds of safe spaces where students can express ideas or thoughts about their identity didn't exist when he was a student.

"I really wanted to provide that space for students here. I think that a lot of the kids that have come have come because, first of all, they love being in a space where they are not the only non-white people" Lau said. "It's like our own little family."

Affinity spaces like these create a safe, communal space and help

students process hurtful comments and ignorance.

"I've always wanted to be in a club like this because I feel like I can learn more about my own culture and other people's experiences," said junior Angel Zheng. "Sometimes I don't feel very comfortable voicing my opinion," continued Zheng.

"This group allowed me to voice my opinion, allowed me to have a voice about racism and how it pertains to me and other people around me."

Zheng also commented on the prevalence of racial slurs.

"It's kind of surprising how often people make these rude, racist comments. Most of them are ignorant. Some of them are straight out racist and things need to change," Zheng said. "I like to honestly say that this racial community group has really changed my life."

Junior Miguel Alano began attending YAWP recently and was surprised by how easily he was able to start going.

"You just show up and and you write your student ID down," said Alano. "If I had known that I could join easily then I would have started from the beginning of the year."

Other than affinity groups, students can find communities in support groups, which are designed to help students struggling with mental health issues, both directly or indirectly. One such group, the RAFT group, aims to support those who have family or friends suffering from addiction.

"One thing that we end up doing is having student share about what's going on with them and our other group members listen," Kristine Hummel, a RAFT facilitator, said. "If they wanted feedback they can get feedback on how to manage those situations."

RAFT meetings advise students on how to live with addiction and its impact on a student's day-to-day life.

Junior Molly Warden describes the tools that RAFT gives participants to deal with addicts in their life,

"Different coping skills [Mrs. Hummel] talks about are taking care of yourself, making sure you're not worrying too much about the addict, and learning how to interact with an addict," said Warden.

Affinity and social work groups are there to foster communal pride and bravery in the face of adversity.

"I definitely used to not be able to talk about my issues," Warden said. "Talking to the group I have realized how many different people have the same problem and that you really don't need to be ashamed of it."