

Ally Appreciation Day



What is an ally?

In the most general sense, an ally is a "person who is a member of the dominant or majority group who works to end oppression in his or her personal and professional life through support of, and as an advocate for, the oppressed population." (Washington and Evans, *Becoming an Ally*). However, GLBT people can be allies to each other; for example a gay man can be an ally

to the transgender community.

Allies to racial, religious, and ethnic minorities have been remarkably effective in promoting positive change in the dominant culture, and only recently has their instrumental position been extended to the area of sexual orientation and gender identity. The past few years have witnessed the development of heterosexual ally or-

ganizations which have attempted to make the culture of a campus or workplace more aware and accepting of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals.



Gay Lesbian
Bisexual
Transgender Ally

Bridgewater State College

December 3, 2009

Resources for allies:

www.pflag.org

www.glsen.org

www.safeschoolscoalition.org/RG-all_youth.html

www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/SafeZone.cfm

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A Completely Different Light

"I have a childhood best friend who I've always considered my older brother. He always looked out for me, and our families were close. It wasn't until my freshman year of college that he confessed he was gay. I had never even

suspected it. This was something I thought I'd need to adjust to, but it made me realize that my friendship with him had never depended on his sexuality. He is an amazing person, and if being gay is a part of who he is, I love him all

the same. It made me look at sexuality in a completely different light."

- Autumn Chauvin,
GLBTA Pride Center Student Worker
Junior, Psychology Major

What It's Like In China

"There are some countries, like China, which are a little bit conservative in this aspect, compared with America or other capitalistic countries. In most people's mind, the word 'homosexuality' is a symbol for AIDS or contagious diseases. So homosexuals have to hide in the darkness. What's worse, movies about homo-

sexuality will be treated as pornographic or crime film. Parents do not allow their children to watch these kinds of films. [But] love is something you feel from inside. It is beyond national boundaries and it is also beyond gender. I know some people may feel ridiculous when they talk about homosexuality because



what they think about this word is sex between people of the same sex, but not their feelings and emotions. "

- By Yunxiang Li, international student from China

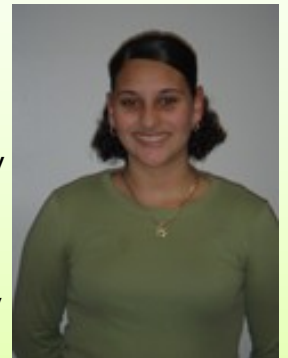


Chinese Flag

I have never understood why...

I became an ally because I believe in equal rights for all. I have never understood why people feel the need to give some people rights and not others solely based on who that

person is. I think we should accept people for who they were born to be. Who a person decides they want to be with is a



private matter and no one else should have a say in it. Why should people be given the right to tell another person who they can love? No one wants their rights to be taken away but they feel the need to take rights away from people who are not like them. I became an ally so that we can change this world so that everyone is equal and therefore everyone has the same rights.

- Rochelle Walbridge, GLBTA Pride Center Student Worker, Student Diversity Council Co-Chair, AWARE Treasurer

What made me want to be an ally?

I think that all too often, the majority (in any setting) can think that just because there are more of them, their way of doing things, or way of life is the "Right" way. I have been outside of the majority many times and have appreciated when someone believed in me, even though most did not. Knowing that just because there are more people who are straight than those who are not does not mean that it is the "right" or "normal" thing. So treating others poorly because they are not straight was something I did not want to tolerate or sit back and take lightly. Whatever the personal reason be; whether I know someone who has been treated poorly for their sexual orientation or whether I am putting myself in their

shoes; I need to use my privilege as a straight woman to help fight the discrimination of those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. It's about education also. It is my job as someone who understands that being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered is not a choice to educate those who think otherwise about the truth.

"I have been outside of the majority many times and have appreciated when someone believed in me, even though most did not"

- By Amanda Surgens, BSC Resident Director



Amanda Surgens

Anti-GLBT Discrimination

I became interested in being an ally as I learned that anti-GLBT discrimination was sometimes a matter of life and death. Even where the threat might not be that serious, I learned, discrimination and the difficulty of the coming-out process created obstacles to academic success. As I worked with colleagues and students here at BSC, I also just found it enjoyable to spend time with people who

had a shared burden but did not let it burden them. I also found that being an ally could actually make a difference, often in a small but important way, perhaps for just one student. Also, I remember that as an undergraduate, I had no guidance for being an ally. I think

that relative to fellow GLBT students, I was sometimes very helpful, but I also had misconceptions that sometimes got in the way. So I am glad to be part of a community that promotes dialogue.



James Hayes-Bohanan

- James Hayes-Bohanan, Ph.D.
Professor of Geography

"All One Human Family"

I once had a small bumper sticker in my office that stated that we're "All One Human Family" and this phrase sort of sums up my thoughts about being an ally to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender individuals. I have relatives, friends, and colleagues who

are all unique and special in their own way. Someone's sexual orientation/preference should not even be an issue but we all know it sometimes is. We need to continue to

educate one another and be one global, inclusive community.



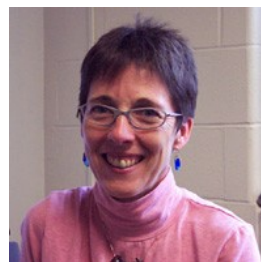
- John J. Paganelli, Jr.
Director Career Services Office

What it's like...

After hearing two students in my middle school classroom exchange homophobic taunts, I was struck by how little I knew about homosexuality. It was only 1990, and I had grown up at a time when homosexuality simply was never mentioned. As a teacher, I had been struck by the meanness of the youngsters comments and felt a responsibility to learn more about this issue. I started with Ann Heron's *One Teenager in Ten*, and continued to read any information I could find. What struck me was the amount of damage that had already been

done before many teens even came out. Ever since then, I have been continually examining and revising my own gender-based assumptions. When my own daughter came out in the seventh grade, which was very young at the time, I was in a much better position to support her and assist her in connecting with local GLBT youth resources. I am currently engaged in ongoing

research on young adult literature with GLBT content and teach a second-year seminar on GLBT Teen Experiences in Young Adult Literature.



Anne Hird

- Anne Hird, Associate Professor

GLBTA Pride Center

Rondileau Campus Center 006
Details at: [www.bridgew.edu/
GLBTA/calendar.cfm](http://www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/calendar.cfm)

Contact: 508-531-1408
glbta@bridgew.edu
www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA



Official BSC GLBT Allies are those who have taken the Safe Zone training and signed a pledge to be accepting of everyone regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity? To find out who they are, visit:

www.bridgew.edu/GLBTA/SZmembers.cfm

Close to Home

I have had a number of friends “come out” over the years but it wasn’t until a close family member revealed to me that he was gay, that I really became aware of the complexities of life as a GLBT. Watching someone I love deeply struggle with whom to tell and how to tell them, made me a true ally. I hope, someday in the near future, that the world will be more accepting and no one will feel uncomfortable for naturally being who they are and for loving who they love.



*Carol Crosby—Assistant Director,
Career Services*

I Want It to Stop

When I was in the 2nd grade my family moved to Ogunquit Maine. There is now, and was back then, a large openly gay population in Ogunquit. I remember being curious about it. We would see men holding hands with other men as they walked the beach. It was different. My parents are interesting. Although Catholic, and conservative in many ways, they are also very accepting. I never got the impression from my parents or from my siblings that there was anything “wrong” with being gay. In fact, as a member of an artist’s community, my mother socialized with people from many different cultures. Everyone was welcome in her gallery, which was a part of our home.

We moved back to Massachusetts when I was in the 5th grade, but we continued to own a home in Maine for a number of years.

When I was older, I worked summers in the restaurants in Ogunquit. Here I had an opportunity to work with and serve customers who were openly gay. I became friends with co-workers who had same sex partners. It all seemed very normal to me.

In high school one of my best friends identified as being gay. I went through the coming out process with him. It was hard. He struggled enormously. His father was very anti-gay. I heard the father talk about beating up “fags” when he was in the military. It was awful. He was abusive. My friend dropped out of high school and ran away when he was 16. He was gone for over a year. His life has been a constant battle.

He ended up marrying a woman. It was a very unhappy marriage. I’m not sure if they are still together.

Anyway, I realized through this that to some people being gay is “wrong” and it’s not “normal.” I also learned how this type of thinking impacts people those around them.

It disturbs me. I want it to stop. This is why I became an ally.



- Amy MacMannis, Academic Advisor