

Pride Month

1924

The first documented gay rights organization is founded, the Society for Human Rights in Chicago.

1952

Homosexuality is listed as a sociopathic personality disturbance in the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic manual.

1953

Homosexuals are banned from working for the federal government for "security" reasons by Dwight D. Eisenhower

1961

Illinois becomes the first state to decriminalize homosexuality by repealing their sodomy laws.

1969

Stonewall Riots in New York City ensue following police raids. It later becomes known as the impetus for the gay civil rights movement in the United States.

1970

First Gay Pride Parade (Christopher Street Liberation Day) on the Anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.

1973

Homosexuality is removed from the American Psychiatric Association list of mental disorders in the DSM-II Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.

1978

Gilbert Baker designs and stitches together the first rainbow flag.

1979

The first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights takes place. It draws an estimated 75,000 to 125,000 individuals marching for LGBT rights.

1982

Wisconsin becomes the first state to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Q&A WITH THE LGBTQA

Anonymous student #1 (11)

What is your gender / sexuality?

I'm a guy and I love guys. I'm gay as hell.

How did you realize you were not straight / cis?

Puberty, mainly during middle school. It just started feeling so weird to be called a girl— not bad necessarily, but certainly uncomfortable as hell— and it didn't fit at all. Later, in about 8th grade, I realized what was going on and I (eventually) figured out that I might be trans. It sucked at first, but now it's literally the best epiphany I've ever had.

How has your identity as an LGBT person impacted your life?

It's impacted my life in each and every way. At first, when I first came out to my friends, it wasn't terrible. But after I came out to my family, things were really bad. For a while in middle school and freshman year, I didn't even know what my future was gonna be like (or if I even had a future). But after I came out, my dad almost immediately started looking for the next steps to take in my transition (shout out to keepin' me alive, Dad!). After years of (mandatory) therapy, doctors notes, and various discussions, I went on T- shots (aka Depo Testosterone injections) to transition. In high school, my appearance, voice, attitude and everything about me changed. I think it made me even cooler.

What was your coming out experience like? How did your family/friends/community react?

My coming out experience is a bit complicated. Like a lot of [transgender] people, I actually thought I was just a tomboy. But, after I realized that most tomboys are actually okay with being called a girl, I recognized that maybe I actually wasn't a girl. After I asked my friends about this, they provided me with the word "transgender". I came out to my friends in a chill, low stress way, over lumps of clay and paint in the art room. After that experience, I came out to my siblings, which both immediately accepted me and provided me with my first binder. However, my parents were a different story. My parents are from a traditional society that emphasizes normalcy. Me coming out was not normal. To say it sucked and I cried a lot is understating it. But later my dad (being the softy of the family, as we joke) acknowledged that this wasn't some silly phase of mine, and started talking with me about my next actions. My mother, on the other hand, refused to acknowledge this new development. It was frustrating and downright annoying. It was only until we made her come to my therapy session, and then a doctor's appointment, that she caved and started to face the facts. I love my parents, but my coming out wasn't the fairy tale that we all hope for. Now, nearly four years later, my family and friends fully support me, and I couldn't ask for a better support system.

How would you describe the LGBT community / overall attitude towards LGBT people in Okemos?

I would call it "toleration" rather than "acceptance". People don't talk about [LGBT people] but they don't outright talk badly about us. Although it's generally an unsaid rule that you shouldn't talk about it either unless you have to. It sucks, but it's better than other areas.

What could the school / community do to support LGBT people more?

Start normalizing things. Start getting more gender neutral bathrooms. Start educating people. Stop the stigma that comes with the word "gay" and "queer", and make people realize that we exist, we have always existed, ya'll have just been ignoring us. (also why can't we learn about the Stonewall riots in history class? Or the AIDS epidemic? I mean, come ON). The "I am an Ally" things are nice, but until you actively support your peers and start checking yourself when homophobia and transphobia rear their ugly heads, you aren't doing anything [of substance].

Have you experienced discrimination due to your sexuality/gender before?

Heck yeah I have. It's bad, but it happens. In my freshmen year before I started [testosterone shots], occasionally people would block me from the bathrooms or refuse to call me my name (or even acknowledge me). It happens everywhere. In freshman year, I tried to apply to a summer camp that EVERYONE was going to. I wasn't allowed to go once [my family] told the camp that I was trans. They told us that either I stayed in the girls cabins or I didn't go at all. Even though we got a full refund, it hurt alot and tanked my confidence.

Do you have any advice / tips for people who may be questioning their sexual orientation / gender identity or thinking about coming out?

Come out when you're ready. Whether that's now, or in a decade, is all up to you. Always remember to look to the future. It's really, really, hard to do that, but I BELIEVE IN YOU! The saying "it gets better" is completely true. But it won't get better quickly, and it'll take a heck of a long time. But it will. If things are tough right now, just know that there are other people like us and you'll always have a family with us. No matter how tough things get, you CAN'T GIVE UP. Keep on truckin' and when the light seems really, really dim, just tell yourself to breathe. It seems dumb, but it's what got me through. See the future, focus on your potential life, and imagine what it'll be like when you're free. We believe in you.

Sara Lee (12)

What is your gender / sexuality?

Lesbian.

How did you realize you weren't straight?

It was in seventh grade. [I noticed that] the girls were really pretty, so I was like, 'oh, maybe I want to be them', but then I thought about it, and then I was like 'well, maybe not,' so I went on the Internet and looked up videos of a couple of YouTubers, and that helped me realize that I was gay.

What was your coming out experience like? How did your family/friends/community react?

My friends at school were really cool about it, everyone was supportive and no one has made any comments about it. My family was a little different. My brother and cousins were okay with it, but my mom was kind of iffy because she's more religious. My family is also religious, so they didn't know for a while, and my mom wasn't okay with it for a little bit. But [my mom and I] talked about it, and it got a lot better. Now my whole family knows, and it's all good.

How would you describe the overall attitude towards LGBT people in Okemos?

I think for the most part it is pretty good. No one really outright says stuff, only stupid guys that say 'Oh that's so gay!'. Other than that, I think everyone is pretty accepting of [LGBT people].

Do you have any advice / tips for people who may be questioning their sexual orientation / gender identity or thinking about coming out?

Do your research. Use the Internet, look it up. That's what I did, and it helped me. Even if you're scared to come out, remember that you have a whole community behind you that will help you. If you need to talk to someone, there's people to talk to. You're not alone.

Anonymous student #2 (11)

What is your gender / sexuality?

Female, Bisexual

How did you realize you were (not straight / cis)?

I first started to figure it out in eighth grade when I looked at one of my best friends and thought "Holy f*** she's hot". At first I thought it was just jealousy but as time went on it became very apparent i had a crush on her.

What was your coming out experience like? How did your family/friends/community react?

I came out to my friends first. Most of them are pretty liberal leaning and I knew they would take the "news" well (and they did). My parents on the other hand were not as open to it: While they are both lovely, loving people, when I first voiced my suspicions to them they immediately gave the stereotypical response: "It's just a phase." As time went on and I started to show interest in another woman, they pulled me aside and gave me a long talk that essentially boiled down to "while we support your sexuality, we would prefer that you don't exhibit it." The subject has become a long time source of tension and arguments between us, and I have a feeling they won't come around for a long time.

Do you think that LGBT history should be taught more in high school curriculum?

Yes I think the school curriculum should be more inclusive of LGBT+ people. A lot of kids who are part of the community feel secluded and alone and hearing about a history that directly impacts you, can have a lasting effect on someones self pride and identity. Having good role models to look up to as well as knowing one isn't alone really makes a difference in someone's life.

Do you have any advice / tips for people who may be questioning their sexual orientation / gender identity or thinking about coming out?

I would say be proud of who you are. If you're questioning your sexuality or gender know that trying to figure out who you are is an important part of life and that any conclusions you come to, whether it be you are LGBT+ or not, is a valid expression of yourself. If you're considering coming out then kudos to you: I wish you the best of luck and hope your family and friends are supportive of you. And if they aren't, then I know how that feels and I know how much it hurts; But, things will improve and one day you'll be able to act and feel comfortable in your own skin. You'll be okay.

Month 2018

Pride Month gives LGBTQA Michiganders reason to celebrate

Meg Wiseman

Staff Reporter

America—land of the free and home of the gay.

During the month of June, the rainbows are put on full display and one glaring message echoes throughout the hills: pride.

National LGBTQ+ Pride Month is recognized in June to remember and honor the Stonewall riots held in Manhattan in 1969. The Stonewall Inn welcomed all genders and sexualities in a time where being different was seen as a crime. During a police raid of Stonewall on June 28, officers were met with protests from all walks of life, especially those who were arrested for being at a gay bar in the first place. The injustices from that night and the arrests of innocent people caused gay

alliance groups to form and eventually the first gay pride march was held in 1970.

The legalization of gay marriage in 2015 in the United States fueled the fire even more. No longer would LGBTQ+ Americans feel afraid, no longer would they have to hide in the shadows.

The extravagance of the marches are not just for show, however. Pride Month is symbolic of the struggle many have faced and will continue to face. It is a means of empowerment, of letting others know that it is okay to be whoever you are.

Angela Demas (10) and Asha Mukhtar (12), two members of the OHS PRISM Club, have strong feelings as to the importance of Pride Month.

“[Pride Month] is a way for those who are gay, bi, queer, asexual or questioning to celebrate and be themselves,” Demas said. “That’s why we have the parades, the marches, the rallies.”

Michigan is no exception to the festivities. In 1989, a gay/lesbian rights rally was held in the Lansing area, branching off into other cities including Dearborn, Ferndale and Royal Oak.

“In general, I think the representation matters a lot to people, and being able to celebrate each other,” Mukhtar said.

Now, the Motor City Parade in Detroit is one of the largest Pride events in Michigan, taking place on both June nine and ten. Following the march this year will be a candlelight vigil to honor those lost in the Pulse Nightclub shooting in 2016.

The 2018 March and Rally on the Capitol will also be held in Lansing on June 15 and 16, beginning on the first day with the annual White Party. The White Party allows attendees to visit different bars and restaurants for ten dollars, offering live entertainment and

dancing. The following morning, the march to the Capitol building begins, where a rally is held on the front lawn. All ages are welcomed to come and paint the town red with others who share their beliefs.

Unfortunately, the Lansing parade is the closest event to the Okemos area, making it difficult for some to take part in a show of public pride.

“MSU’s Pride Month can (and will) grow,” Oprah Jrenal, Associate Director for the LGBT Resource Center at Michigan State University, said. “I started work here in January and was a little shocked that we had not had blowout events across campus.”

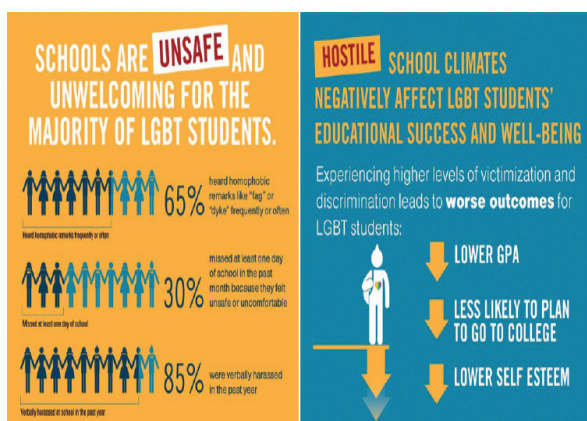
For many, Pride Month is a way to be themselves without shame or fear of judgement. Homophobia and transphobia are both very real, so having a safe space to gather in peace and love is absolutely vital. Understanding is key. Realizing the injustices LGBTQ+

people are met with each day is the first step to creating a safer community.

This June, everyone can find a way to celebrate Pride, even those who are straight allies.

“[I think] allies should be attending events and listening, challenging their straight and cisgender friends and family on heteronormative and homophobic language. They should also be bringing things up *before* the LGBTQ+ peer has to,” Jrenal said.

Having a specific time set in place is valuable to creating change. Sure, you can be proud of your gender or sexuality any day of the year, but June is the time for all to band together in one unified voice. Much has been done to improve conditions for those who are LGBTQA+, however, there is still more to happen. Speaking together and loving each other is the way to create change, and that is one of the central messages of Pride Month.



Images courtesy Human Rights Campaign

Out of 97 polled students...

78% identify as straight

15% identify as LGBTQA

60% of LGBTQA students have been discriminated against because of their sexuality

73% of LGBTQA students feel Pride Month is not given enough attention

59% of straight people feel Pride Month is adequately recognized

1993

Don't Ask, Don't Tell is signed by President Bill Clinton. It is a military policy directive that prohibits openly gay and lesbian Americans from serving in the military, but also prohibits the harassment of “closeted” homosexuals.

1995

The Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act goes into effect as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, allowing judges to impose harsher sentences if there is evidence showing that a victim was selected because of the “actual or perceived race, religion, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person.”

1996

Defense of Marriage Act is signed by President Clinton, banning federal recognition of same-sex marriage and defining marriage as “a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife.”

2004

The first legal same-sex marriage in the United States takes place in Massachusetts.

2011

“Don't Ask, Don't Tell” is repealed, ending a ban on gay men and lesbians from serving openly in the military.

2013

In United States v. Windsor, the US Supreme Court strikes down section 3 of the Defense of Marriage Act, ruling that legally married same-sex couples are entitled to federal benefits. The high court also dismisses a case involving California's proposition 8.

2015

Same sex marriage is legalized

2016

Secretary of Defense Carter announces that the Pentagon is lifting the ban on transgender people serving openly in the US military.

2017

President Donald Trump announces that the United States Government will not accept or allow Transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US military

2018

The Pentagon confirms that the first transgender person has signed a contract to join the US military.