

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

Gay-Straight Alliance commits to day of silence against LGBT bullying



Photo by Gina Deaton

Participants of the Day Of Silence will be carrying this card on April 17.

Emily Culberson | Staff Writer

Members of the Gay Straight Alliance Club want to end the silence with their silence.

On April 17, members of GSA are taking an oath of silence to raise awareness of the prevalent and damaging effects of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) bullying in schools. According to club co-leader, senior Ryley Arnold, the campaign consists of more than just their silence.

“We are trying to bring attention to an issue that we think is very important here at our school and to spark conversation,” Arnold said. “Not just be noticed for not talking.”

Along with their silence, the club will also hang posters and make t-shirts supporting the Day of Silence campaign. According to Arnold, even the teachers will be getting involved.

“We’re also going to be asking all our teachers if they support the cause or if they feel so enlightened to help since they can’t rationally take a day of silence,” Arnold said.

Arnold and senior Jay Thomas are the co-leaders of GSA, a club that promotes acceptance and tolerance of the LGBT community. According to Thomas, this club has served as a judgement-free zone for a lot of Mason students.

“I knew kids that were (part) of the LGBT community that just didn’t have anywhere to just be themselves and talk,” Thomas said. “I wanted to provide that safe space for them.”

Both Arnold and Thomas said they were victims at one time of bullying due to their sexuality. According to Arnold, he was able to dissolve the situation without too much outside intervention but he wants to make sure that there is a net of support for others being bullied because of their sexuality.

“I was able to handle the (bullying) situation with myself in an effective way but it made me realize that there are people who go to our school that maybe just don’t have that confidence,” Arnold said. “They don’t have anyone to support them and be there for them beyond the means of teachers and

administration and that’s not always effective.”

With this personal tie to the cause, Thomas hopes this day of silence evokes a lot support from his peers and teachers.

“I just hope that we get a lot of supporters and if anyone has any questions they can just ask people from GSA,” Thomas said. “The campaign is going to be centered (on) being silent but we’re going to have things on us like signs and cards and stuff that explain everything so if you’re confused you can ask questions but (we) just won’t be able to respond, we’ll probably just hand you a card.”

According to GSA club advisor Katherine Holmes, this campaign focused on spreading awareness will hopefully give hope to those silently suffering from LGBT bullying.

“It’s good to promote (GSA) causes school-wide and to start branching out so even the kids that can’t come to the GSA or don’t feel comfortable coming to the GSA still know that they have a voice in the school and they can see the

faces of other kids that are standing up for them,” Holmes said.

According to the Day of Silence campaign site, nearly nine out of 10 LGBT students experience harassment at school. Although Arnold doesn’t believe this campaign will solve everything, he hopes it makes at least some strides in establishing LGBT tolerance.

“I think it’s a little ridiculous to think that day could solve all the issues that we have,” Arnold said. “But I think that if we take the steps towards getting people to recognize the gray area behavior that affects other people then we can start working towards those goals (of tolerance).”

Arnold said he hopes that this campaign will bring some new insight to the students of Mason High School.

“(We are) working towards tolerance, not even necessarily equality, just (an) understanding that especially with a school this big we’re not all the same,” Arnold said. “But that’s a beautiful thing. It’s not something to be scorned or ridiculed over.”