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WSU celebrates National Coming Out Day

Date Oct/12/2004 | Topic: CAMPUS



Alonso del Arte/The South End

Kristen David, lead singer of Lazy Sunday, croons at the Coming Out Day Festival in the Fountain Court yesterday.

By Larissa Barlow
Vibe Editor

Wayne State University students celebrated National Coming Out Day yesterday on Gullen Mall with food, friends and live music.

The band Lazy Sunday performed while members of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Student Union passed out free food and flyers of their upcoming campus events.

"Today is just a celebration. It's to promote our events and get our name out there," GLBT Student Union President Tyler Hampton said.

"I really didn't know what to expect. I was afraid no one would show up. And even though we didn't get a huge turnout, I still really like the idea of GLBT students and faculty getting out and hanging out together."

Sponsored by the Dean of Students Office, the event is geared towards bringing awareness to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender issues while celebrating being openly gay. The event first started on Oct. 11, 1987 when nearly 500,000 people marched on Washington for lesbian and gay rights.

WSU's coming out day was also used to kick off the Dean of Students Office's Warrior Safe Zone program. Designed to educate other offices on campus on GLBT issues, the program will provide a place students can go to avoid discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Audra Forsberg, campus life event planner, said the program, like coming out day, is a good way to build awareness of GLBT groups and students on campus.

"A lot of campuses have [programs] and some students are unsure how WSU stands towards GLBT students," she said.

Building awareness and tolerance were key goals of the event and the majority of students who passed by the information table were accepting of the event.

"You expect one or two people to not be open to it," Forsberg said. "There's a stigma to it that, if you do support, you are gay. But we're trying to change that. There's a lot of education we have to do on campus."

John Quinn, a freshman majoring in English, heard about the event from WSU's Warrior News e-mail and stopped by to grab some food and hang out with other students.

"So many students are really accepting, it's such a diverse college," Quinn said. "I went to an all-male Catholic high school, so this is definitely different. But the fact that this group exists isn't good enough — you have to be visible."

The visibility of the band playing and a crowd around the food table was enough to draw over sophomore chemical engineering major Chimere Brown, who took the opportunity to learn more about the campus GLBT group.

“I was just walking past but I think it’s pretty good. I got a lot of information about Proposal 2 I didn’t know about,” Brown said.

Hampton, who is planning several other events throughout the month, was happy students stopped by to take flyers and learn more about what the GLBT Student Union tries to accomplish. And despite a few people who were not receptive, he considers the event a success.

“Obviously, there are a few people who aren’t mature enough to handle it,” Hampton said. “But I think we’re really building visibility and solidarity with GLBT students.”

This article comes from The South End Newspaper

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