

GLSEN Day of Silence

A stand for equality

by Cris Rojo

On Thursday, April 20th, the Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) got the DHS student body together to participate with them in GLSEN's Day of Silence. The day is an international event that brings attention to the name-calling, bullying, and harassment experienced by LGBTQ youth in schools.

Students who take part in this event vow a day of silence as a symbol of the silencing effect of anti-LGBTQ language and bullying. According to the official GLSEN website, this year's theme was "Break The Silence" and the color was red in support of transgender youth.

The transgender youth have faced a lot of challenges in recent months, more notably with the Trump administration revoking protections that allowed transgender youth to use public school bathrooms that correspond with their gender identity. In addition to being silent, GLSEN also urged participants to send letters to their governor this year as another form of protest.

GLSEN's Day of Silence is one of the largest student-led actions in the country, with thousand of students from middle schools, high schools, and universities in every state and 70 coun-



GSA members pose for a photo at Trader Crows while getting students to sign up for the Day of Silence. Photo taken by Asher Lowrey.

tries around the world having participated in the past.

According to GLSEN's most recent study from 2016, 75% of Transgender students felt unsafe at school because of their gender expression, 70% of Transgender students said they'd avoided bathrooms because they felt unsafe, and 60% reported that they had been required to use a bathroom or locker room that did not match the gender they identify with everyday.

Ms. Shult, the advisor of GSA, was asked what students and staff at DHS could do to create a more supportive and safer environment for the LGBTQ members in the building. "Teachers can help a great deal by asking students on the first day during their beginning of the year questionnaires, by asking students what preferred pronouns they would like to be called, and if teachers could honor that, that's a big step! If a student has a preferred name other than what's in Skyward that would also go a

long way to safety. In addition to that, if a teacher hears some kind of verbal bullying, the teacher must stop it immediately. The teacher must address the student that made the comments and needs to follow through follow through."

She concluded by saying, "If our goal as a staff is to make all students feel safe, then if we can do those things that will help."

When asked about what GSA is all about, Lou Peckys, the president of GSA says, "The most important part of GSA is that it's a safe spot for anyone whether they're LGBTQ or an ally. It's just a safe place that people can go and talk to one another." Peckys also went on to say "We have also done feed my straving children and earlier in the year we went to a place to go paint which was a fun activity. It's really what the members make of it. It could be activism or it could just be a fun safe place."

Any students wanting to know more about GSA should join! They meet every Wednesday after school in Ms. Shult's room.



GSA day participants Photo by Asher Lowrey.