

il recovery

therapist has been the best way to do so, even though I originally hated counselors.

You don't always know what people are dealing with. Many people mask what they really feel, taking it off at home, only to put it back on the next morning to go to school. So many people walk through this world not knowing that those they share classes with (even those with the biggest smile on their faces) have been through or are experiencing trauma.

People should be more sensitive to those around them—paying attention to what they say and how they treat others. I can't tell you how many times I have walked down the hall and heard someone on the sidelines laugh and say to their friends, "Rape! Stop raping me," when the only "harm" their friend did was give them a hug.

Speaking from personal experience, the worst thing someone can do is to keep quiet and push their emotions down inside.

The best thing you can do is find a therapist or counselor. The key is to find a therapist who works for you, not the one your parents like, not the one that just sits there and listens, not the one that just lets you play with toys, but the one to whom you can talk to and get feedback from; the one that you can learn to trust and open up to. The one who helps you heal.

Ethnic diversity at West Linn—does it exist?

ETA SANTORO

Staff Reporter

Ethnicity is a term used to represent social groups with a similar background, geography or culture. Although having a certain ethnicity can guide an individual's values a certain direction, it does not define a person as a whole.

When it comes to race, West Linn is not exactly a melting pot with 91.8 percent of the population identified as being white. The majority of students at WLHS are slightly more diverse with 88.9 percent white. However, students who are not of Caucasian background do not report being singled out due to ethnicity.

Rachel Chan, freshman, is of Asian background, one of the minority groups represented at WLHS. According to Chan, she receives comments that are stereotypes, but are not malicious.

"In West Linn, you aren't really affected badly," Chan said. "There isn't a lot of racism."

When students analyze people they haven't met, race may be one of the things they consider. Of Mexican descent, Carlos Razo, junior, said that different races don't exclude each other; everyone really meshes together. He believes having a diverse culture is important because it gives students a chance to have a different look at society.

Traditions and culture are often handed down according to one's ethnicity. Students re-

sponding to a poll on diversity seem more interested in learning about others' backgrounds. Many are open to other cultures than their own.

"It's important for personal history and finding out who you are and where you came from," Jesselle Hedman, senior, said. Hedman, who is of African American background, said that her ethnicity hasn't shaped her views. She's lived in Oregon her whole life and feels everyone in West Linn is accepting of different races.

"A lot of family traditions come from ethnicity," Bethany Daughtery, junior, said. "I don't think people choose that to be a reason to be friends." According to Daughtery, who identifies herself as Native American, Irish, and German, these traditions bring out diversity in West Linn, where life can seem like a bubble at times.

In Oregon, Caucasians make up 80.5% of the 3.7 million population. However, in the U.S. with a population 304 million, about 66% are white.

In general, the school is sensitive to topics of ethnicity. Teachers promote values of tolerance in the school according to Tom Swearingen, junior and senior coun-

selor. "West Linn is very diligent about dealing with bullying problems due to ethnicity. The school works hard to make everyone feel comfortable," he said.

The West Linn Wilsonville School District incorporates ideas through their Visions Themes, including students to look at human relationships to answer

ethical dilemmas. The district website states, "Students will consider the ethical dimensions, competing values, and the complexity of the human enterprise."

"In diversity, you can have unity," Swearingen said. "We like to teach beyond the books. We educate the whole person."

WLHS Ethnic Breakdown

88.9%
Caucasian



"I think ethnicity affects what people think about others. They make stereotypes."

—Samuel Dawson, freshman

4.5%
Asian



"In West Linn, you aren't really affected badly. There isn't a lot of racism."

—Rachel Chan, freshman

1.9%
Hispanic



"Having a different ethnicity doesn't mean I'm a different human being."

—Carlos Razo, junior

1.2%
African American



"Ethnicity hasn't shaped my views."

—Jesselle Hedman, senior

0.5%
Native American



"I don't think ethnicity is a reason people choose to be friends."

—Bethany Daughtery, junior

Unaccepted sexual orientation creates hard times for students

RILEY SWANSON

Staff Reporter

Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are discriminated against every day—made fun of and judged based on their sexual orientation.

Once they come out to their families, many are kicked out of their homes, mistreated or blamed for their family's problems according to www.advocatesforyouth.org.

"In the GLBT community, suicide is the leading cause of death. GLBT people are seven times more likely than straight people to be victims of a crime. Most GLBT people struggle with substance abuse issues, and about 40 percent of homeless youth are from the GLBT community," Jasmine Lane, senior and president of the Gay Straight Alliance, said. "Now tell me: why would anyone CHOOSE to be gay?"

In one year, 33 percent of GLBT students reported attempting suicide, compared to the eight percent of heterosexual students that also attempted suicide.

"I think teenagers will always have a problem with what they deem to be different. I think they've done all we can expect from a school, but there definitely isn't acceptance here—just tolerance," Lane said.

Yet in a nationwide survey more than 28 percent of GLBT students drop out of school because of harassment. Eighty-four percent have reported verbal harassment, and 55 percent have been physically attacked according to www.advocatesforyouth.org.

"A gay friend in Redmond (Wash.) was stoned at a football game. Literally. They threw rocks at him," Lane said.

Some are not accepting of GLBT people. There are prejudices and stereotypes that are common, but some think they have no basis.

"For instance, gay boys are effeminate—stupid stereotype. If someone has a certain 'voice', they're gay—FALSE. I know a lot of straight boys with that 'typical gay voice', and quite a few gay boys that have a 'normal' voice," a female freshman said.

All people are different. Among the GLBT community,

some people are out and others aren't so obvious.

"The people that overdo being of a different sexual orientation make it seem like they are so different, but if they just acted normally then we wouldn't seem so alien," a male junior, who identifies himself as being gay, said.

Stereotypes don't examine the reason that GLBT people have been harassed. What people were raised to believe might contribute to the opinions they have about GLBT groups.

"I think Christianity has a lot to do with intolerance—when I've talked with people who don't support gay rights, often religion is part of it," a female freshman said.

Only 12 states in the U.S. have laws against GLBT discrimination. Oregon is one of them. In Jan. 2008, a law prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodation, public education and foster parenting because of sexual orientation and gender identity was enacted in Oregon.

People of a different sexual orientation are athletes, musicians, scholars, or average

kids just like the ones found at West Linn. Some students see no difference between sexual orientations, they just accept it as a fact of life.

"Boys like boys. Girls like girls. Boys like girls. It's all part of life," Laura Davis, freshman, said.

"GLBT people tend to be more accepting of difference, most likely because they know how it is to be different and have to come to terms with their orientation. They recognize what you have to go through in the public eye," a female freshman said.

The Gay/Straight Alliance Club, supports the whole GLBT community. The group has a core group of 20 or more people who have participated in pro-GLBT events like Day of Silence and Transaction Day. They are trying to promote a safe, tolerant and accepting place for GLBT people.

"I thought people would treat me differently once I came out, but they've ended up treating me better than I expected. Most people are accepting," a male junior said. "However, there are the few who don't exactly reach out."

The phrase 'that's so gay' is

used to describe clothes, events, and people who are not even gay, and it is taken as an insult or a put down. How did a word that means 'happy' and is also a guy who likes other guys, become a negative comment?

"It really disgusts me when students throw around the phrase 'you're so gay' or 'that's so gay' because it's used as a synonym for stupid or lame," Morgan Hubbard, English teacher, said. "Think about how it would feel if the word gay was replaced with a term for a group you belong to: that's so Christian, or that's so white. To use the word as an insult disparages an entire group of people, and I personally find it extremely offensive and immature."

GLBT people go through all the drama that most students do, but may face even additional challenges. Groups like GSA promote acceptance.

"I want to promote tolerance, and I want to see more teachers and students standing up to sexual slurs that are constantly used to degrade GLBT students. The first step to creating change is putting yourself out there and making people realize that there's a problem," Lane said.