

GSA Club sets sights on inclusive MHS, community

By MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

There are more than two dozen after school clubs at McNary High School. Many of these groups feature a multitude of unique individuals, fun activities and common interests.

Some of these clubs, however, have taken it upon themselves to bring about change in, not only their school, but their community as well.

That's where the GSA Club steps in.

The GSA (Gay-Straight Alliance) is an inclusive club and a safe, supportive, environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning (LGBTQ) and straight youth to meet and whose goals are to aid LGBTQ+ youth at McNary by spreading awareness and giving solutions to problems that will help them be accepted and feel included in society.

Michael Hitchcock and Laura Gillespie are the co-presidents of the club.

"It's a relaxed environment. We like to hang out and joke around a lot," Hitchcock said.

"We welcome everyone," Gillespie added. "It's just a bunch of people that hang out and want to make the world a better place."

Back on Jan. 9, the GSA made a presentation to McNary faculty about a multitude of different issues surrounding LGBTQ+ issues at the school.

"The presentation to the faculty was probably the most important thing we have done

this year," Gillespie said.

"We have seen too much happen to other gay kids and we're just tired of it and we want to make a change. That's what we have been striving for."

Two goals that the GSA made back in September was to end any use of the f-slur, as well as ending accidental and intentional misgendering at the school.

These were two of the main issues brought before the staff. "If you open your ears and listen for it, you'll hear it every day," Hitchcock said.

GSA members also educated the staff about the difference between sex and gender, use of pronouns and how they could help support members of the LGBTQ+ community at the school.

"Just the GSA being here is good for the school," Gillespie said. "It was a good way for us to tell the faculty that we are here and that we need their support and acceptance."

Hitchcock also added: "Our final message was just asking the staff to help us make the school a better place."

When the presentation was over, the faculty responded with a resounding ovation.

"It was the most inspirational thing I've ever seen," GSA ally Delaney Campbell said. "Seeing them be so brave and telling everyone all these things they have kept within for so long. It was so amazing."

"When the whole staff started clapping, it was a relief over everyone."



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald
A set of buttons made by members of the McNary High School GSA that will be given out during the club's LGBTQ+ Youth Film Festival on Feb. 23. The film festival is one of several efforts the clubs is working on to create a more inclusive community.

In the future, the GSA would also like to have sexual education options at the school for people who identify as LGBTQ+.

"The school doesn't talk about sex ed for LGBTQ people ever. We barely know anything unless we research it ourselves," Gillespie said. "This is a place of learning. This is where we should be taught these things because

we are people, too, and we're also important and we deserve to be healthy. This kind of thing needs to be taught in schools."

Later this month, the GSA is doing something else for LGBTQ youth in the entire community.

On Saturday, Feb. 23, the GSA is holding a free film festival for all Salem-Keizer high school and middle

school students. The festival will be showing movies that feature prominent characters who identify as LGBTQ+ — such as *Love, Simon, Rent* and *Big Eden*.

"Representation is really important," Hitchcock said. "The idea of being able to connect on such a deep level with a character that shares an identity that is such a big part of you, it just makes you feel good when you watch it." The film festival will take

place from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Keizer Homegrown Theatre space at the Keizer Cultural Center, 980 Chema- wa Road N.E. The club will provide snacks and a Terri Jacobson Photography will be on-site between noon and 3 p.m. to take free, professional photos of attendees.

Additional event details, and the full film line-up, will be posted on the Facebook event page <http://bit.ly/mcnarygsa>.

Keizer's Go-To Guy For Buying and Selling

TALK TO BOB

BOB SHACKELFORD, Broker

Keizer's go-to Realtor with over 20 years real estate and mortgage lending experience.

2018-2019 Keizer Chamber President

HOME SMART

Call or Text 503-983-4086
bobshack1@gmail.com

3975 River Road NE Suite 3, Keizer
Bob Shackelford is a Licensed Real Estate Broker in Oregon.

FREE gallon of milk with 1st delivery*

"Moo-Man Drivers, Customer Supported"

FREE HOME DELIVERY

Delivering for 15 years *New customers

(503)580-4060 moo-man-com.3dcartstores.com

Growing
to better serve
the Keizer
community



5825 Shoreview Lane, Keizer • 503-540-6471
1600 State Street, Salem • 503-540-6300

This spring, we'll be expanding to a FULL SERVICE CLINIC in Keizer. We're bringing Orthopedic care, closer to home.

At Hope Orthopedics of Oregon, we're dedicated to outstanding accessible orthopedic care. As part of that commitment we are proud to be opening a new clinic in the Keizer community. Our highly trained specialists are bringing orthopedic care, closer to you.

Our surgeons, PAs, and Nurse Practitioners have experience in subspecialty orthopedic care, joint replacement, and sports injuries. We

also offer comprehensive therapy services with highly trained professionals who will work with you to speed your recovery and allow you to return to the things you most enjoy doing.

With our services available closer to home, you can spend more time doing the things you love. Hope Orthopedics, where expertise and compassion meet.