

Our stories: Pride 2020 - Michael Brophy

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CATEGORY:

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Why is Pride important? LGBTQ+ visibility, through pride observances and through the positive public representation of LGBTQ+ community members, is significant for many reasons. In my opinion, the most important of these reasons is to offer hope and support to the world's LGBTQ+ youth. Studies show that the experience of many LGBTQ+ young people is that of feeling different or as an outsider. For those youth without positive family or friend support, role models or mentors, this can lead to serious consequences, such as homelessness, hopelessness or even thoughts of suicide. Suicide prevention charities, like the Trevor Project, unfortunately remain necessary to help combat depression and other mental health and social interaction consequences for LGBTQ+ youth who lack a support system and/or are struggling with negative external experiences or internal identity struggles. Pride events and other LGBTQ+ observances play an important positive role in providing those young people who feel like outsiders a highly visible way of not feeling alone and a pathway to feeling positive about, and in fact proud of, being unique.

During this pandemic, virtual pride is even more important. Physical distancing can impact LGBTQ+ youth by decreasing their access to positive social interactions and increasing negative social interactions. Providing safe, positive spaces to reflect on the LGBTQ+ experience, including loud and public support for our LGBTQ+ communities of color, provides a way for the LGBTQ+ youth to feel connected to others even if they have to stay physically separate. Beyond Pride Month, it remains important that those who publicly identify as LGBTQ+ continue to connect with the community in the way that can serve as an example both for those LGBTQ+ youth and for those who are likely to interact with that youth. As explicit and implicit bias continues to negatively impact LGBTQ+ people of all ages and identities, it is also important for LGBTQ+ people to speak out against injustice and to be involved in efforts to make positive change for everyone. I am proud to support and participate in LGBTQ+ pride events and to be involved in internal and external diversity initiatives, because I want to be "visible" and part of that positive change.

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