

LGBTQ's 'Together, we make it better' video released

by Audralynn See - Monday, March 07, 2011

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/9748/lgbtqs-together-we-make-it-better-video-released/>

In September 2010, Dan Savage created a YouTube video in response to the increased number of teen suicides related to bullying. Savage, author of the internationally syndicated column “Savage Love” and editorial director of “The Stranger,” wanted to show LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and queer) youth that life does get better.

Since then, the ‘It Gets Better Project’ has stimulated almost 10,000 videos including submissions from U.S. President Barack Obama, Adam Lambert, Anne Hathaway, Ellen DeGeneres, Google, Facebook, Pixar, the Broadway community and many more.

The University of Wisconsin Oshkosh LGBTQ Resource Center, is revealing a student-produced video entitled, “Together, we make it better,” as a new spin on the “It Gets Better Project.” Resource Center Director Liz Cannon, along with her student interns, hopes the video might encourage the less vocal LGBTQ students and allies on campus to speak up if need be.

“The idea came out of the LGBTQ Resource Center after seeing what was happening to students and wanting to address the climate on our campus,” Cannon said. “We wanted a video of our own but wanted to change the message to, ‘Together, we make it better.’”

The video was envisioned to touch base with UW Oshkosh students, but also support middle or high school students who might be interested in coming to UW Oshkosh someday.

“We have a lot of questioning students, and we hope the message will give them the confidence in what the University can do for them,” Cannon said. “The main goal of the video is to raise awareness and stress that together, as a community, we make it better.”

Last November, the video was turned over to interns at the Resource Center to do the filming and editing. UW Oshkosh students and faculty were invited to participate in the video by recording a reason about how they personally make it better on this campus.

Nichole Shier, Resource Center intern and senior English major, helped create the video and shared a way that she makes it better.

“I don’t think that queer youth should be expected to suffer through high school, ignored by teachers and threatened by peers, just waiting for college,” Shier said. “One way I make it better is by having conversations with current and future educators, explaining how gendered language and heterosexual assumptions distract all students from learning.”

Like many questioning LGBTQ youth, Shier felt harassed as a teenager and dreamed about the day she would leave for college, where hopefully it would be better.

“At UW Oshkosh I had classes with professors who not only addressed queer issues in class, but were ‘out’ to students,” Shier said. “For the first time in my life I realized that queer people like me didn’t have to hide their relationship or lie about themselves in order to be happy and successful.”

Katie Witz, a senior women’s studies and sociology double major, also found hope on the UW Oshkosh campus. In addition to being a college student, she is a mother fighting homophobic attitudes. By meeting great people at the LGBTQ Resource Center, Witz said she feels less stressed, no longer feels alone and continues the cycle by trying to make it better for others.

“I proudly wear pins exclaiming my orientation and acceptance for diversity,” Witz said. “In class, I speak up to give my perspective on women’s and LGBTQ issues. I question stereotypical and hateful attitudes, actions and language.

“I hope it will give students of all sexual orientations and other perceived differences, the courage to stand up for what they believe in. To stand up to stop hate speech, to accept them as they are and to understand there is a community of people who support them.”

Shier and Witz, along with interns Nick Janis and Andrew Rojahn, worked together to produce the video, “Together, we make it better.”

Read more:

- [UW Oshkosh LGBTQ Resource Center's "Together We Make it Better" video](#)