

A Morning Celebration

Annual LGBTQ+ breakfast a time to celebrate victories, plan for the future in fight for equal rights

Wednesday, April 15, 2015

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ELLEN SEMRAN, LGBTQ+ COORDINATOR FOR THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL STUDENT AFFAIRS (LEFT) AND KIDDER AWARD RECIPIENT LANE MCDONOUGH '15.

At the UNH LGBTQ+ and Ally Breakfast this week, [Joelle Ryan '96 '02G](#) recalled how in the past two decades, the presence of transgender students has grown, as have the benefits and support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students and other UNH community members and their allies.

It seemed like perfect timing, then, that as the annual breakfast (now in its 23rd year) brought together members of the LGBTQA+ community and their allies, further progress was made: The school's first student organization focused on transgender students and their allies, Trans UNH, received its recognition as an official student organization from the university just a day before the event.

"In the last 20 years, UNH has done good work relating to residential life, housing, campus rec, HR benefits" and more, said Ryan, addressing the 200 breakfast attendees from across the university. She advised LGBTQ+ students and their allies to continue to "lift up the stories of transgender people, especially students ... so that people will know we are here at UNH."



WONDERING WHAT PANCAKES AND MAPLE SYRUP HAVE TO DO WITH LGBTQA+ RIGHTS? LEARN HOW THE CELEBRATORY BREAKFAST STARTED OUT AS A PROTEST.

The breakfast, sponsored by the Bill Kidder Fund and The UNH President's Commission on the Status of GLBT Issues, is meant to serve as a day of celebration for the LGBTQA+ community for strides made toward inclusivity, but also as a reminder that there is more work to be done.

"Bringing this many people together in one room, we get a chance to reflect on the past year and celebrate together, and also think about where we're going. Year after year ... there are so many negative things that happen that impact the LGBTQA+ community, we need to make sure that we celebrate as well," said Ellen Semran, LGBTQA+ coordinator at the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

President Mark Huddleston noted that among those strides is the UNH Wildcats You Can Play initiative — the university's athletic teams have pledged to create a safe and respectful environment for all athletes, including those in the LGBTQA+ community.

He also called the breakfast "the start of awards season" at UNH, as it kicks off a series of year-end awards throughout different departments on campus. The breakfast is where the [Kidder Awards](#) are given to one staff member, one faculty member, an undergraduate and a graduate student.

The annual awards are named for alumnus and former faculty member Bill Kidder, who worked for many years to educate the UNH community about AIDS. He died of complications from the disease in 1998. This year's winners are Dr. Lessa Brill of Health Services, [associate professor Rebecca Glauber](#), graduate student Mark Anthony and undergrads Alicia Alec Dufield '15 and Lane McDonough '15. [Learn more about each winner's contributions to the UNH community here.](#)

This year's breakfast keynote speaker was Mara Keisling, founding executive director for the National Center for Transgender Equality. Among other topics, she talked about the fight for marriage equality, which she said will be a reality for all nationally by mid-summer. But, she asked, then what?

"When marriage equality happens, the LGBTQ community needs to think about what it really is," Keisling said, noting that making marriage equality a reality was never meant to be the end goal. She believes that the movement's next goals must involve other under-represented groups.

"We cannot have an LGBTQ movement without a poverty movement, without a pro-immigration movement, without a disabilities-rights movement," she said.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER MARA KEISLING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSGENDER EQUALITY.

She said that while the transgender community is facing hardships — losing people through murder or suicide at an alarming rate, battling state legislatures that wanted to ban gender-neutral bathrooms and other fights — the movement is making significant progress.

"We are facing a backlash, but we are beating the beejeebers out of the backlash," she said, noting improvements in federal employment discrimination law and a "light at the end of the tunnel" in the HIV epidemic.

"I'm really confident that we are winning," she said.

Keisling advised the crowd, especially the students present, "In this life it really doesn't matter what you think, it matters what you're willing to do about it. Think about who you should reach out to and who you should stand in solidarity with. Think about being intentional."

See more photos from the event [here](#).

Want to Know More?

Trans UNH, UNH's student organization focused on transgender students and their allies, joins several other student orgs that support the LGBTQA+ community here on campus, including [Alliance](#), [Stonewall Grads](#) and [oSTEM](#) (Out on Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Math). "Each of the other three LGBTQA+ student organizations focus on supporting LGBTQA+ students, and have discussions and programs on a wide variety of LGBTQA+ issues, including focusing on people who are transgender. Trans UNH provides a supportive place for transgender, gender non-conforming, and questioning students and allies to talk about trans and gender related issues and experiences," says Ellen Semran, LGBTQA+ coordinator for the Office of Multicultural Student Affairs.

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INCLUSION

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