

Headlight

Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

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Marriage Equality

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As this week is Gay Pride Week in Massachusetts, and the Supreme Court is deliberating upon two pieces of legislation regarding gay rights, it seemed like the perfect time to do a bit of history regarding marriage equality.

What is marriage? Marriage is defined as the institution whereby individuals are joined in a marriage. Just a few weeks ago, Minnesota became the twelfth state to have same-sex marriage legal in the United States, and before that Rhode Island, and Delaware. The journey to marriage equality has been long and hard fought, but it is not without its successes and its failures. There has been more progress towards marriage equality in the last twenty years than the last 2000 years. Marriage has many conditions that affect the economy, taxes, and most of all, people's lives. However, often unions are not recognized by the government, and thus these benefits aren't given. Being married and that marriage being recognized by

the country is an important and necessary step on the road to marriage equality.

Marriage equality has been a struggle outside the U.S. as well as inside. In 1979, the Netherlands became the first Country in the world to allow gay marriage by allowing same-sex couples apply for limited marriage rights. But in 1989, Denmark was the first country to recognize same-sex unions. Now, there are fifteen countries where same-sex marriage is legal: Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, and Uruguay. France was the most recent country to allow same-sex marriage and to allow same-sex couples to adopt children, which is a separate issue all-together.

The controversy around same-sex marriage has deep roots in religion and politics. In 1993, Baehr v. Lewin was a lawsuit in which three same-sex couples argued that Hawaii's prohibition of same-sex marriage violated the state constitution. Then in 1996, President Bill Clinton signed the Defense of Marriage Act into law, which bans the federal Government from recognizing same-sex unions. It officially declared that marriage

could only be between a man and a woman, invalidating same-sex unions. Recently, the United States Supreme Court ruled that the definition of marriage in the Defense of Marriage Act was unconstitutional. Massachusetts became the first state in the U.S. to legalize same-sex marriage and, as of now, twelve states and the District of Columbia now fully recognize same-sex marriage. The 2012 Presidential election brought with it much progress, as three states voted on legislation that would legalize same-sex marriage. Maine, Maryland, and Washington were the three states that voted yes on same-sex marriage laws that went into effect shortly afterwards.

The fight for marriage equality has been a long and arduous one that has a hopeful view on the horizon, but still with its tests and challenges in front of it. It is will be a long battle that is not short in its allies, nor its enemies.

Marblehead's Peer Mentor Program

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Every year freshmen come to MHS excited and worried about what the next four years will hold for them. But now, thanks to the Peer Mentor Program developed by guidance counselor Judy Luise, they aren't as nervous. Each year an incoming eighth grader is paired with an upperclassman (a junior or senior) who will be their mentor for the next year. The eighth graders meet their mentors every year during an afternoon in May called "Step-Up Day." The mentees come to MHS for an afternoon that includes meeting their mentor, getting a general tour of the high school, playing games, and watching and listening to some of the best performing arts groups in the school. However, before all of this can happen, the mentors are trained and prepped to assist their mentees in any way they may need. Students go through a rigorous process in order to become a mentor and then lead their mentee through high school.

This year every student who wanted to apply had to be in an orientation group. Ms. Luise discussed with them what it means to be a mentor, the time commitment they will have to give and the qualities that they all should have. Ms. Luise spoke to sixteen groups in one week, meeting with approximately four groups over the course of four days! Students were then told whether or not they made it into the group. If so, they then had to attend a training session led by the Core Group of Mentors during which they learned what they would have to do with their mentees and how to answer any of their mentees questions. After this they were mentors and got their list of mentees.

The main goal of the mentor program is not to be able to put this experience on a college resume, but to introduce a younger student to high school. The goal is to make them feel comfortable in the new environment. Through meeting veteran students

of the school, incoming freshmen gain a friend, and maybe an interest in a new school activity.

Ms. Luise likes to explore the program at the end of each year and figure out what she and the mentors did well and what they need to improve. In order to tighten up the program, she developed a new tool that will be implemented this summer among the mentors and Core Group Mentors called tracking forms. Tracking forms require the Core Group Mentors to keep track of the mentors in their color group and make sure they're keeping up with mentees through the summer and through September and October. Another new addition to the program is a table is going to be set up in cooperation with the Social Network Group, where mentors and social network group members can sign up and sit with people who don't have anyone to sit with during lunch. Sign-ups will be posted throughout the school year. Ms. Luise also wants to develop poster boards with GSA, Team Harmony and Student Government that will promote a positive school environment and work to break stereotypes. She said that they will "be visual reminders that you can easily be nice." During my interview with Ms. Luise these were some of the new expansions that she was excited about for the Peer Mentor Program.

The Core Peer Mentor Group is the leaders of the leaders. This group of students is trained personally by Ms. Luise and Richard Cohen of School Mediation Associates. This group then trains the mentors during their orientation and is tasked with helping to organize Step-Up Day and go to the middle school to speak with the eighth graders about their transition to the high school. When talking with Ms. Luise she said that she was very proud of the Core Group, calling them the "most fluid and flexible group that we've had in a long time." The mentors that are part of this program are involved in a variety of activities in the school. It is a very well-rounded group of individuals, a group that, along with the entire mentor program, Ms. Luise says is

"succeeding already." This is a committed and very secure group of 30 students who are all role models in the school. This group helps to shape the Peer Mentor Program, as is seen by the motto of the group for the year: "You are who you are when no one's watching." That motto was written by Core Group member Seamus Kraft who was a part of the program years ago but whose idea is still be used today. Another theme of the group is to be genuine in actions. Ms. Luise says, "We all pose and act in a certain way, but be genuine with your mentees because you care."

Tommy Gabel, a Core Group member, said of the Step-Up Day event: "I think it's a great way for the new students to meet the mentors and get a good feeling for the school before they come here." That is exactly the kind of thing that Ms. Luise is trying to accomplish each year with the mentor program, get students comfortable and give them someone that will look out for them.

For me, my experience with my mentor was exactly how Ms. Luise would have wanted it to be. My mentor gave me a tour of the high school, showed me all of my classes, kept in touch with me, and he was always there to answer my questions. The funny thing about my mentor and me is that we both had a lot of the same interests, lived near each other and had similar classes at the same time. We would walk to school together some days, we had band together and we did theatre together. In all honesty, he was one of the reasons why I had wanted to join the mentor program. I wanted to give my mentees the same great experience and knowledge that he had given to me. Since he's graduating this Sunday, I wanted to write this last paragraph as a way to thank him one more time for all that he's done for me. So, thank you very much, Max Levine, for being a great mentor and guide for me. I only hope that I can be as good as you were for me as I will be for my mentees next year.

Summer Memories

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This is it, Marblehead, the season we've been waiting for all year. Summer is just around the corner, and if the last week or so has been any indicator, it is going to be a sweltering one. We all face that same problem where after the first couple days of freedom and the beach, we don't really know what to do with ourselves. That is when the summer boredom sets in, when the boiling days stretch on and the mosquitoes get hungrier. This summer don't let that happen – fill your days with exciting activities to make your summer memorable! Here are some ideas from Headlight:

103.3 AMP Radio Birthday Bash Concert – To celebrate one year on the airwaves, this radio station is having a free concert in City Hall Plaza. The concert takes place on Sunday, June 30th, just three days after finals end. It is the perfect way to kick off summer 2013; big name acts include Selena Gomez, Ariana Grande, Sammy Adams, Jason Derulo, and Timeflies. Take the train in with your friends and hang out in Boston for the day; Faneuil Hall is right nearby!

Salem Willows – A classic summer hang-out, most Marbleheaders have memories of visiting the Willows as a kid. But the arcade, ice cream, carousel, and pier can be just as fun for teenagers. A picnic in the park and a stroll down the pier puts a sunny day to good use. Darby Neuss, a sophomore at MHS, spent a recent sunny day at Salem Willows and highly recommends it for summer fun: "Walking down the boardwalk under the blazing sun with a popsicle in hand gave me a taste of what is sure to be a long hot summer." Not to mention there are bumper cars...

Paddleboards in Marblehead – For an activity a little closer to home, renting a paddleboard is fun, cheap, and different from your typical beach day. The Little Harbor Boathouse on Gas House Beach rents out paddleboards as well as single and double kayaks. Boards are just \$20 per hour or \$75 for the whole day. And if you're a first timer, don't worry – they also offer instruction. Lay out on your board while floating on the water to make a true summer memory. Just call ahead for a reservation, and you're good to go!

Hopefully these recommendations have given you some ideas on exciting things to do this summer. It is hard to forget nearby amusement parks such as Water Country and Canobie Lake Park, exciting local events such as the Marblehead Arts Festival, and, of course, the classic day at the beach. Have fun this summer, everyone!

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