

Marlboro's Queer Homecoming Is Ordinarily Extraordinary



BY ERIN L. GEORGE

Marlboro College community members who at one time may have sat in the bleachers at high school homecoming dances – or stayed home – got to strut their stuff at a dance created for everyone: The Marlboro Pride Queer Homecoming Dance.

According to Jodi Clark, advisor to Marlboro Pride, the homecoming dance was both a follow-up and response to the success of the group's first party last year, The Gender Bender Ball.

"We are addressing a desire the group has to host parties with themes that celebrate what Marlboro Pride is trying to do, which is to celebrate the aspects of gay, lesbian, and queer diversity on this campus and to raise awareness of the rest of the community while having a really fun and well-organized party," Clark said.

Kitty Finer, a sophomore member of the group, came up with the initial idea for Marlboro Pride to host a dance where everyone would come with a "queer" date. "This is in recognition that most high school dances were events where gay, lesbian, transgender and bisexual folks always felt a bit on the fringe of, if not completely barred from, because they didn't feel they could go with their girlfriend or boyfriend," Clark explained. "Many of the students, and even my wife and I, have never been to a Homecoming dance, as they felt like it was full of really silly traditions that celebrated football, a false sense of school spirit, and were just popularity contests for the folks who already knew they were popular in addition to only recognizing heterosexual relationships.

"The response to the event has been campus-wide, with people immediately trying to get their same-gender dates, people asking around to see if so-and-so

was thinking of asking them or to see if they thought they should ask this other person, a lot like real Homecomings, but with a wink and a nod for the satire of it, which makes it much more fun," Clark added.

The theme for the event was "Rainbow Connection" (sung by Kermit the Frog) which will be the song played for the dance of the King and King and Queen and Queen of Queer Homecoming, as well as the theme of the decorations.

At least 10 core members of Marlboro Pride worked on this event, and at least 15 others support the group, come to some meetings or events, and in general help the group come up with new ideas or support current ones.

According to Director of Admissions Julie Richardson, this event is another example of "Marlboro valuing diversity and honoring difference." ▼

Erin George works at Marlboro College.

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Jodi Clark

Late to the Party: A Freshman's First Queer Homecoming

BY MEGAN CHAPMAN

Walking toward the dining hall I was guided by the flashing lights and muffled music escaping from the small white building into the darkness. I wasn't dressed and was late to the party.

Running to my dorm I passed a drag queen on my way inside, and stepped over high heels in the hallway. The dance at Marlboro College tonight was a dance out-of-the-ordinary for any school other than Marlboro.

Queer Homecoming has been the anticipated event of the month. For weeks mealtime discussions have drifted toward the usual homecoming questions: who is your date and what are you going to wear?

The uniqueness of this event draws no criticism from the student body – Marlboro's Pride group is strong and creates a free and open environment. Sexuality is not a big issue here. A person's sexuality is not a judge of the worth of a person; we are more interested in a

person's worth. This perspective allows Marlboro students the freedom to have fun with what some people would consider politically incorrect.

Marlboro students even gave the dance a nickname: Homo-coming.

It is difficult to explain why or how this is accepted at Marlboro – it just is. No one takes offense because we respect each other here. Naming a dance Queer Homecoming is a play on society's hang-ups with sexual preference.

Marlboro also has many people to talk to if a student has questions about their sexuality. The members and organizers of the Pride group are well known on campus and easily accessible. They also have many events to help create an atmosphere of acceptance.

Everyone can and does attend their events, which are not limited to gays or lesbians. They have events ranging from "Queer Homecoming" to "Queer Movie Night" to "Gender Bender (a dance in the spring)." Tonight is the first annual Queer Homecoming, but I doubt it will be the last.

The planning for the dance has been taking place for weeks. Dates needed to be found and outfits needed to be chosen. There was nothing subtle about the costumes at Homo-coming. We dress ourselves up for these dances.

I helped several people pick out their outfits for the evening, and nothing was off limits. I helped one straight male 'look gay,' one female look male, one female look like a 'naughty princess' and two males look like they were dating. The outfits were not insulting to anyone. The dance was about students uniting to say that we can have fun with sexuality while the rest of the country makes it an issue of hatred.

After pulling together an outfit from the clothes on my floor I finally arrived at the dance. My first sight walking in was a guy in drag – hot pants, pink sparkly sweater and high heels. He was on the shoulders of another guy dressed to look stereotypically gay. The dance floor was filled with prom dresses, wigs and leather. Marlboro students can go wild with an event that most schools

wouldn't touch. I was quickly lured into the dancing by the song "It's Raining Men" and a man in hot pants.

The night was a typical homecoming: dancing and the crowning of the King and Queen. There was just a small twist to the activities: the King and Queen were males and the slow dances were filled with couples of all kinds. Marlboro does not hide its sexuality, and isn't ashamed of anyone else's sexuality. This dance showed that accepting other people is fun. "Regular" Homecoming dances should be just as accepting of same-sex couples and the election of a same sex King and Queen without giving the dance the 'Queer' title.

Queer Homecoming wasn't an unusual concept for Marlboro College; having a regular homecoming would be unusual for us. If we're going to get all dressed up, we're really going to have fun and show that sexuality is not a big deal. ▼

Meghan Chapman is a freshman at Marlboro College.