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QUEERS AND ALLIES SPEAKS OUT

by Brooks Dozier



Queers and Allies. These two words have helped define my time here on the campus of Johnson County Community College. The Queers and Allies group, whose former name was GLBTSU (or Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Student Union), has been on this campus for the past 10 years. Over the years Q and A has helped students, faculty and staff understand and deal with the issues facing the LGBT community on our own campus and abroad. Queers and Allies has provided a safe-space on this campus where everyone, regardless of orientation, is able to socialize, communicate, but most importantly, educate. Some of our past events have included a drag show, speak out panels, and trips to educational conferences. Since Queers and Allies' inception, the number of active members has grown, and today we are happy to have 15 or so active members, making Queers and Allies one of the biggest groups on campus.

One of the main goals for Queers and Allies is visibility. In September, the club organized a "Speak Out" panel, which visits classes that have LGBT-related curriculum. This is a group made up of students and faculty from Q and A who go into classrooms and openly and honestly talk about their experiences. The goal of these panels is to educate the students and give students the opportunity to ask the panel any question they might have about the LGBT community. The questions range from the most basic myths about homosexuality to deep religious questions. All of the panels take on different tones and go in different directions, but the one common denominator is the impact the panel has on both students and staff alike. The reactions to our panels have been overwhelmingly positive, and Queers and Allies will continue them for the foreseeable future.

Queers and Allies has been on this campus for a long time and the future looks bright. As a member of our panel says so eloquently, "We are people just the same as you, dealing with the same set of obstacles, and all we want is respect."

