



THE CHARGER

Illustration by Ryan Grutsch



Members of WHS LGBTQ+ community share their stories

Emma Alderman | editor in chief

June is pride month in honor of the Stonewall Riots and to promote equal opportunity for members of the LGBTQ+ community. In honor of the month, we interviewed three members of the LGBTQ+ community at WHS to get some insight on their experiences in the community and what pride month means to them.

RYAN GRUTSCH'S STORY

Ryan Grutsch is a recently graduated senior of WHS who plans to study marine biology at K-State in the fall.

"I came out to my friends first and then I told other people months later. Then I waited about a year after I knew for a fact that I was gay to tell my mom. It went well though it was a little awkward. Overall it was fine though I was really nervous because it kind of feels like a really revealing thing," Grutsch said.

Grutsch said that she didn't really feel like making an announcement when coming out and instead chose to just tell those close to her. After she told those people she didn't worry about trying to stay closeted anymore and let others at school know.

"Overall at school most people either didn't say anything or didn't react. It wasn't really negative or positive but I think that's better than them saying something rude so I don't really care that much," Grutsch said.

When asked if she had any worries about coming out Grutsch said that though she was nervous she wasn't too worried about how people in the community would react.

"I think this community is small enough that I wasn't really worried about anyone really

being upset by it because they couldn't really get away with something. And if they tried to do anything I know that I have enough people around here who support me and would be willing to protect me," Grutsch said.

With the start of pride month coming up I asked Grutsch what June being pride month means to her. She said it's nice to see those who support her and that's she's excited for when she'll be able to attend a pride festival.

"I think it's fun because I get to see people expressing whether or not they're okay with the lgbtq+ community or not. I get to see pride flags everywhere so it's fun to see the representation since I don't normally get to," Grutsch said.

TRACE FAGER'S STORY

Trace Fager is a recently graduated senior of WHS who plans to study HVAC at Washburn in the fall.

"I was forced out to the school by my friend who I thought I could trust and then I was forced out to come out to my family by a friend who told their parents who told someone else's parents who told my parents," Fager said.

Fager said the response he got after coming out wasn't very welcoming and he subsequently spent his sophomore year learning online. He said that he feels like he is definitely more welcomed now but that he still sort of feels like an outsider.

"Now people are fine with me because I'm the cool gay, the chill gay — not overly flamboyant. But how people act around here is why I want to leave. I feel like an outcast," Fager said.

Fager said that when he was coming out he was extreme-

ly worried about how people would react and that he is still a little worried about having to tell people in the future.

"I know people are going to act bad and I know that a lot of people around this area still react really badly to it and some people get aggressive so I will purposely try to hide it and suppress it so people don't automatically catch on," Fager said.

When asked what pride month means to him Fager said that it makes him really happy and that there's the added bonus of it being his birthday month. He also said that he sometimes worries about the safety of fellow members of the LGBTQ+ community though.

When asked if he had anything else to add Fager just asked for people to always be accepting.

"Just be a nice person, being gay does not change how you are as a person it is literally just how you are born and there is nothing you can do about it. You can choose to skip it and just live the "normal" default life but that's just going to ruin you in the end," Fager said.

KWINTON WILLIER'S STORY

Kwinton Willier is a junior at WHS who participates in cheer, band, SAFE/SADD, FCCLA and culture club.

"I was in the closet for most of freshman year I guess and then I eventually told my sister Falisha I was gay and she was like 'wow me too.' So it was a lot easier but then I didn't really tell my parents they kind of just found out through like other people so it was okay cause they couldn't care less they still love me for who I am but it would have been better if I just came forward about it," Willier said.

Willier said there are still some people in his family that he is hesitant to tell because he

is worried about how they will react. He said that otherwise he has felt like those at school have accepted him for the most part.

"For the most part all the girls and the teachers are okay with it but then you have the country hicks who think that they're better than everyone else and they'll judge you. Like someone called me a faggot the other day and I was like okay we could use better words than faggot because it doesn't tear me down it just builds me up," Willier said.

When asked if he had any worries when coming out Willier said he was worried how his friends and family would react.

"It took me so long to come out to my mom because I didn't know how she would react but then she was like fully accepting about it and my dad was like yeah okay. Then I was worried again with how my friends would react about it when I came out but they didn't react badly and they were accepting," Willier said.

Willier also mentioned that he was a little worried about the future and possible discrimination but that he's glad that he is out. "It makes me feel pretty good and like I don't have to hide who I am and for every person who doesn't support me I know I have other who do," Willier said.

I then asked Willier what pride month means to him and how it makes him feel. He mentioned that he had attended a Kansas Pride Festival in 2019 and that it had been a fun experience.

"It's just a month that all of us people in the LGBTQ+ community can get together and celebrate how we came to be and who we are as a group," Willier said.

Schutter earns gold medal at state track

Junior Lauren Schutter needed all six attempts to achieve gold at Saturday's state track meet in Wichita.

Schutter, who medaled in the event as a freshman, took the lead on her second jump, 16'7.25". It was good for a five-inch lead that looked like it might hold.

But right before her sixth and final jump, two competitors pulled ahead. Horton's Maliyah Soto jumped 16'9" and Syracuse's Katelynn Riley jumped 16'8", moving Schutter to third place.

"I usually take a lot of time to warm up and prepare for the jump," Schutter said. But not this time. "I wanted to go right away. I knew I needed my best jump."

She got it. With a jump of 17'1.5", Schutter secured her second career gold medal, but she didn't know that right away.

"I couldn't hear them when they measured, so it took a few moments for me to see it on the board. As soon as I realized I won I started jumping around and celebrating."

Schutter, who also placed 4th in the triple jump and 8th in the 800, became the second WHS girl to win three medals at one state meet and only the third of either gender to win multiple state golds (she won the triple jump her freshman year).

Her five state medals places her behind Karsen Schultz's seven, a record she will try to catch next season. It's especially impressive when remembering that Schutter didn't get a sophomore season due to COVID-19.

As a team, WHS had a solid showing, bringing home medals in four events. It's the sixth time in a row that WHS has earned at least four medals.

Along with the boys 4x100 6th place finish, several events finished just outside of the podium. With 3 9th place finishes and a 10th place, the team nearly doubled its medal total.

"It's a testament to the culture that has been built by the athletes in our program over the last decade plus," coach Roger Alderman said.

STATE MEDALISTS

Lauren Schutter
Long Jump - 1st
Triple Jump - 4th
100 - 8th

Aiden Boeckman, Dawson Schultz, Jace Reves, Angel Trujillo
4x100 - 6th