

# LGBTQ+ AT MARIETTA

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Throughout the last several years, LGBTQ+ stories have been amplified through increased representation in movies, TV and culture. Students often hear about what they can do to be an ally of the LGBTQ+ community, but

rarely do they get the opportunity to hear directly from members of this community at Marietta High.

By hearing a fellow student's story about their sexuality and experiences, one can understand and appreciate the

diversity that makes each student at Marietta High unique. Through educating and listening to the stories of others, there is an opportunity to grow and progress into a stronger school community.

## OUR STORIES



**Ella Salter (10)** identifies as bisexual, but what's unique about her story is that she accepted her sexuality through a sermon.

"We had a very new preacher, and she was talking a lot about how God made you as you are and how we shouldn't ever demean ourselves because it's how He made us and He loves us for how we are... it was just really good timing and it helped me a lot," Salter said.

Even when she is worried or facing internalized biphobia, this relationship with God helped her to understand her sexuality and learn to accept herself.

"I liked a guy at the time, but I [felt like I]

couldn't like a guy because I'm bisexual, but also like that's what bisexuality is, and I just kind of realized that and came to terms with myself at church... Whenever I do have internalized biphobia, I just think back to that sermon," Salter said.

Ella then explained what internalized biphobia meant to her.

"I was pushed under the idea from society that I had to choose a preference, when in reality I was attracted to both females and males. Biphobia is the concept of not understanding or accepting the idea of attraction to two or more genders," Salter said.

After learning to accept herself, Salter has found it important to connect with people who will support and accept her the same way.

"I like to surround myself with people I know will accept me," Salter said. "A lot of people in my friend group are entirely supportive and most of them are a part of the LGBTQ+ community themselves."

After coming out at school, Ella was pleasantly surprised by the way her identity was received.

"There are a good number of teachers who are very open towards and accepting of their students, and that's very nice," Salter said.



**Allen Yun (12)** is a senior who goes by he/they pronouns and identifies as queer and transgender. He reflects on his experiences finally coming out at school.

"Personally, I'm not a big fan of labels because I find it hard to describe my identity in just one word. However, if someone asks, I will just tell them queer and transgender since it's the closest description to my identity," Yun said.

Yun was supported by friends when coming out as transgender and queer. Similar to other students interviewed, he surrounded himself with people he knew would be accepting.

"Most of my friends are also part of the LGBTQ+ community, so it wasn't anything new. Others are understanding when I correct

them on my pronouns," Yun said.

Coming out at school was a completely different obstacle to face, but it had an overwhelmingly positive effect on Yun's daily life.

"This year was the first year I decided to be open at school and go by my name and pronouns. Last year, it was hell having to go to school and constantly get misgendered and deadnamed. But being able to go to school and get called by name whenever the teacher is taking attendance... is one of the best feelings in the world," Yun said.

Although the process of coming out was mostly positive, to ensure that every transgender student feels safe and supported when coming out, there are improvements that could be made at

Marietta to ease the process, according to Yun.

"I had a surprisingly positive experience with the Marietta staff when I came out. The one thing I would change would be to make it easier to have a preferred name and pronouns at school. For example, I think we should be able to change our name in the school system to our preferred name. I also think that teachers and staff should create a form at the beginning [of the year] to ask for a student's name and pronouns. I also think we need to have more accessible bathrooms for trans people. I avoid going to the bathrooms at school just to not have to deal with it," Yun said.



**Jarrius Jackson (12)** is bisexual and notes how Marietta High has changed over his years attending the school.

"Most people kinda just know or assume [I'm bisexual], so really I don't have to go around saying it... there are a lot of different reactions depending on the people. It's not all the same. But it's not all bad," Jackson said.

Jackson explains that at school he has a group of friends who are accepting of him, but when he doesn't he is unsure whether or not people will be accepting, making him uncomfortable.

"Sometimes it's weird because you can kind of tell who is accepting and who is not... it makes you feel you don't want to be here some days when you come to school," Jackson said.

Despite this, Jackson doesn't let ignorant com-

ments affect him. Instead, he chooses to listen and try to understand why people feel the way they do about how he identifies.

"I don't feel the way other people feel about it. I don't take offense to [people not understanding] because I understand other people's points of view and I see that. I acknowledge [their points of view] and I try to talk to them," Jackson said.

Despite being understanding, over his years at Marietta High, Jackson is happy to say that he has seen the environment surrounding the LGBTQ+ community begin to change for the better.

"Being a senior at MHS, my experience is totally different than it was freshman year. Now, teachers and students are a lot more accepting

than they were prior to the pandemic. We're slowly moving the curve, but there is still a lot more to be done... more barriers to be broken. It's a huge transition seeing people be more open with themselves now because the reality was never that in years prior," Jackson said.

Jackson also had an important, insightful message for students who may be struggling with coming out or coming to terms with their identity.

"The main thing I would say to other people who are nervous about who they are or shy about it: be yourself because the hesitation and the fear are bad and create a toxic environment... with wanting to be at school. I feel like people should just be more open to listening," Jackson said.



**Sage Troutman (9)** is non-binary and brings attention to the importance of correct pronouns.

"[Someone who identifies as non-binary] is somebody who doesn't identify with their assigned sex at birth, and it falls under the transgender umbrella term," Troutman said.

When explaining their identity to other students at Marietta High, Troutman was met with mixed reactions.

"Some people just don't know what it is, so I'll have to explain it to them. Other people are

like 'oh you're still a girl,' but there are other people who are supportive and actually use the right pronouns (they/them)," Troutman said.

Troutman explained how it feels when people use the wrong pronouns in comparison to when people respect them and use the right ones.

"Well, usually it is an accident, but there are people who use the wrong pronouns on purpose. I understand that not everyone is going to accept it, but it hurts my feelings. Why can't you use the right thing? Is it hurting you? When people use

the right pronouns, it makes me feel so validated and good," Troutman said.

Troutman's biggest message to their fellow students: if you don't know, just ask.

"I wish that people would ask. For example, I wish my teachers and peers would ask how I identify and what my pronouns are instead of just assuming," Troutman said.

## WORDS TO KNOW

<b>Lesbian</b>	A woman who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to other women. Women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.
<b>Gay</b>	A person who is emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to members of the same gender. Men, women and non-binary people may use this term to describe themselves.
<b>Bisexual</b>	A person emotionally, romantically or sexually attracted to more than one sex, gender or gender identity though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree. Sometimes used interchangeably with pansexual.
<b>Transgender</b>	An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.
<b>Queer</b>	A term people often use to express a spectrum of identities and orientations that are counter to the mainstream. Queer is often used as a catch-all to include many people, including those who do not identify as exclusively straight and/or folks who have non-binary or gender-expansive identities. This term was previously used as a slur, but has been reclaimed by many parts of the LGBTQ+ movement.
<b>Intersex</b>	Intersex people are born with a variety of differences in their sex traits and reproductive anatomy. There is a wide variety of difference among intersex variations, including differences in genitalia, chromosomes, gonads, internal sex organs, hormone production, hormone response, and/or secondary sex traits.
<b>Asexual</b>	Often called "ace" for short, asexual refers to a complete or partial lack of sexual attraction or lack of interest in sexual activity with others. Asexuality exists on a spectrum, and asexual people may experience no, little or conditional sexual attraction.
<b>Non-binary</b>	An adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being both a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or as falling completely outside these categories. While many also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people do. Non-binary can also be used as an umbrella term encompassing identities such as agender, bigender, genderqueer or gender-fluid.
<b>Genderqueer</b>	Genderqueer people typically reject notions of static categories of gender and embrace a fluidity of gender identity and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as "genderqueer" may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female or as falling completely outside these categories.

DEFINITIONS BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

## RESOURCES

For LGBTQ+ students



LGBTQ National Youth Talkline  
(800) 246-7743



LGBTQ Crisis Hotline  
(866) 488-7386



CDC Resources for parents, friends and students  
[www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth/youth-resources.htm)



The Trevor Project  
[www.thetrevorproject.org](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)



Sources for further LGBTQ+ news

- <https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out>
- <https://abcnews.go.com/alerts/lgbt>

Marietta High Professional School Counselors and the Marietta Student Life Center Staff are available for all students, and there are talk lines for additional support.