December 2014

Dressed in Drag

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Zach Houborg knew he was gay in middle school. His parents, who are still not accepting of his sexuality, encouraged him to turn to the church, where they believed religion could “save” him.

“I kept pushing it off, even though I always knew…no matter how hard I tried, God was not going to make me straight,” says Houborg, who decided to embrace his sexuality by ‘coming out’ during his freshman year of college.

Now a senior in landscape architecture at Iowa State, Houborg says he’s completely comfortable in his sexuality and is still an active member in the religious community.

“When someone comes out—when it comes to their spirituality or God—they either run to the church like I did and try to pray to Jesus that maybe they’ll become straight…or [they] run away from the church,” Houborg says. “I think there should be more of a middle ground, more of a conversation between the LGBT community and the religious community.”

In the end, Houborg says it comes down to what everyone has in common—everyone is human, has their own story and their own struggle. To him, it’s wrong to compare one person’s struggle to another’s.

“Everyone is different,” Houborg says. “But we’re all human. We all deserve to be treated equally [and] to be given a chance to be understood.”

This year, Houborg participated in the first of two drag shows put on by the LGBT Alliance throughout the year at Iowa State. The proceeds for this drag show went toward the Alliance’s cost of attendance to the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference (MBLGTACC), an annual conference held by a different college each year with various workshops tailored to the LGBTA community.

The first ever MBLGTACC conference was held at Iowa State in 1993. This year, the conference will be in Kansas City, MO from Feb. 7 to 9.

Blake Miller, president of the LGBT Alliance, says the drag show allows participants to express themselves as a community while promoting diversity.

“Life is a drag show, really,” Miller says. “We’re all just putting on a show [with our bodies]…the only true differences are the bodies. We’re all just people…to force people into gender boxes does a disservice to the human experience. Everything is a spectrum.”

Houborg tried drag for the first time at the Alliance’s drag show on Oct. 31, 2013, dancing and lip-syncing to “Not Fair” by Lily Allen.

Check out the video online for the rest of Houborg’s story.
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