



Photographer: Ollie Wilson

Missing Piece of the Puzzle: Straight Male Allies

By Matt Bailey

When I first came to UNC, I was blown away by all of the support for LGBTIQ individuals. From the rainbow pins and buttons to the Safe Zone signs on a number of professors' offices, dorm rooms, and doctors' office at student health. It seemed that wherever I turned, there was some form of support and recognition for LGBTIQ individuals. However I started to realize that the majority of people wearing these pins and displaying their Safe Zone signs were either themselves LGBTIQ identified or straight females. Very rarely did I come across a straight guy who had some visual evidence of support. I eventually managed to find a few, but it was like finding a needle in a haystack!

This lack of visual support from straight males seemed perplexing, because during my time here at UNC, I've come across many straight males, whether in class or at parties, who are incredibly supportive

and, as we say in the community, "family friendly." Yet, rarely would they wear any visual sign of support and, if presented with the option of wearing a pin or putting up their Safe Zone sign, they would shy away. It was it as if behind closed doors was the only place they would show their "pride."

This got me thinking. What impact does this lack of visibility of straight males have on the LGBTIQ community and our movement for equal rights?

First off this lack of visibility creates the perception that there are no allies among the straight males on campus. This perception, regardless of how false it is, impacts our community in two ways. One is that it is perceived that there are no straight male allies and that homosexuality is still a taboo or forbidden topic to breach with heterosexual men. In my opinion, this hampers any form of discussion and further understanding. The second is that because there is a lack of visibility among straight male allies, this creates the feeling of being the only one, and that fear of isolation may further cause straight male allies to shy away from being visible.