



Lawrence Township Celebrates

LGBTQ+ History Month

October is LGBTQ+ History Month. LGBTQ+ History Month was conceptualized in 1994 by Rodney Wilson, a high school teacher in Missouri. In 1995, the National Education Association passed a list of commemorative months, including LGBTQ+ History Month. October was selected because it would overlap with the already established National Coming Out Day (October 11th) and the anniversary of the first march on Washington for Gay and Lesbian rights in 1979 (October 14). The month now also includes Spirit Day (October 20th), a day to wear purple in support of LGBTQ+ youth, Ally Week, during which students are encouraged to be allies and stand up against bullying, and the death anniversary of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old who was murdered in a hate crime on October 12, 1998.

The purpose of LGBTQ+ History Month is to celebrate the complex history of the community, so here is an overview of one major key point in the fight for queer rights and representation. In the aftermath of World War II, gay rights activists began finding new ways to make their voices heard. The war brought many young people to cities, therefore, giving the gay

community a new level of visibility. This brought some serious backlash, especially from the government and the police, but there was also political activity among gays, as many aimed to decriminalize sodomy. An increasing number of gay organizations were also formed around this time, and activism for gay rights was steadily picking up steam. On June 28, 1969, the Stonewall inn, a gay bar in New York City's Greenwich Village, was raided by the police. Patrons of the bar, other village lesbian and gay bars, and neighborhood people from the streets – nearly 400 people in total – joined together to fight back when the police became violent. Officers quickly lost control of the situation. The protests continued for several nights, as tensions erupted between New York City police and gay residents of Greenwich Village. The riots are widely considered to represent a turning point in the gay liberation movement and the 20th-century fight for LGBTQ+ rights in the United States. It led to the formation of many rights organizations, including the Gay Liberation Front, Human Rights Campaign, and GLAAD (originally known as the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), and PFLAG (originally Parents, Family, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). On the one-year anniversary of Stonewall, the first gay pride marches took place on the streets of Manhattan, and in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. Today, LGBTQ+ pride events and marches around the world are held annually in June, in honor of the Stonewall Riots.

Following the themes of diversity, equity, and inclusion, this LGBTQ+ History, we should talk about the need for a more LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum in schools. An inclusive curriculum helps to make LGBTQ+ students feel represented and safe in their school environment, and ultimately more connected to their community. In 2019, New Jersey enacted a measure that required public states to implement an LGBTQ curriculum for students in grades five through 12, but many school districts still face challenges in rolling out the new curriculum.

These include insufficient resources and funding to get the curriculum established and underway, and the stigma surrounding LGBTQ-inclusive curricula. Some other U.S. states have been quick to pass bills that ban curriculums about sexual orientation and gender identity, including Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law, so it is crucial that we continue to advocate for the importance of actually implementing LGBTQ+ curriculums in our schools. Below you will find some helpful links where you can learn more about LGBTQ+ issues and history.

Resources:

[Helpful Info and advice for young queer people and allies](#)

[Free LGBTQ+ Lesson Plans and Resources](#)

[Resources for making classroom safer for LGBTQ+ Students](#)

[Resources for LGBTQ+ Youth](#)

[More info on Stonewall](#)