

GLBA urges students to 'come out'

Constance Parten
 Standing on a stage in front of more than 100 people, Becky laughed as she began a sex demonstration by pulling a plastic penis from the back of her jeans. Before allowing her co-trainee to place a condom on her new appendage, she playfully twirled the phony phallus while the audience laughed and applauded. "I had no intentions of telling my parents when I did," Pinkard said. "They came down for a visit and met the girl I was going out with, along with some of my other friends. My mom completely picked up on it." Pinkard said her mother called after her visit and asked if her girlfriend was gay. "All I could do was say yes," Pinkard said. "Meanwhile I was thinking, 'what a way to word that question.'" Before long, Pinkard's mother was asking if "When Mom called me at work and asked me if I was con-

regular people living regular lives," Pinkard said, "and the only way I can make a difference is to be out. Being able to do things for GLBA in the public eye is very important."

Like many homosexuals and bisexuals, Pinkard accepted her sexuality in her early twenties. But letting others know about her sexuality, especially her parents, was very difficult.

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sidering that lifestyle also, I told her I didn't want to talk about it right then," Pinkard said. "That was all she needed to hear. She was on her way down immediately to talk to me."

Pinkard's mother said she couldn't believe her daughter was a lesbian. Then her mother said she almost wished her daughter hadn't been born. The next day though, she decided Pinkard was still her daughter, but she just couldn't support her financially anymore.

"When she said she almost wished I hadn't been born, it broke me in two," Pinkard said. "The fact that they weren't going to give me money anymore wasn't that bad, but what she said about not being born really hurt."

Pinkard said that what happened with her parents is pretty typical. She said most parents go through disbelief, denial, self-blame and anger before they come to terms with their child's sexuality.

"Parents go through the same process we do when we start dealing with our sexuality," Pinkard said. "Expecting them to accept it immediately is a little too hopeful. If you want to tell someone really close to you, like your parents, you have to expect them to take at least as long to deal with it as you did. That's only fair."

For some people, coming out is a much easier process. GLBA Treasurer Hobby Benavides had a comparatively easy time. He said his family dealt with his being gay really well.

"I've always been pretty close to my family," Benavides said, "and they took it pretty well, especially my dad."

Benavides said he told his mom over the Christmas holidays three years ago. At the time she was a little upset, but she has come to terms with it and is now very supportive.

"My whole family is really supportive, but my dad really surprised me," Benavides said. "I thought he would take it harder than my mom, but he accepted it immediately."

Benavides said the hardest thing about coming out for him was that there are no adult role models that are openly gay.

"This is a cultural group without an adult support system," Benavides said, "and when you're coming out, you think you are the only one in the world. It's really lonely."

Benavides said that when he realized he was gay, he was afraid he would start wanting to wear dresses or become very effeminate.

"People have pre-conceived ideas of what gay people are like," Benavides said. "They recognize the stereotypical people because that is what they expect to see. I was no different."

Benavides said the most important thing National Coming Out Week can accomplish is breaking down the pre-conceived ideas about homosexuals and letting people know that they really do know someone gay.

"I came out because I wanted other gay people to know that they aren't the only ones out here," Benavides said, "and that they aren't going to turn into someone else just because they can accept who they are."



Catherine Utsler/Special to THE BATTALION

Three wheeling ... Aggie style

A group of students found themselves in a predicament when one of the wheels came off the car they were riding in. While the owner of the car went to get help, **Josh Pillow** (right), a sophomore management major from Houston, and **Joe Gomez**, a junior mechanical engineering major also from Houston, stayed with the stranded vehicle.

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