Reasons To Be an Ally

This may be an issue you have been thinking about. Being an ally is more than just saying that you accept gay people. There are many reasons why you should be an ally. You should be an ally because:

- You believe that as humans, we should all have the same rights.
- You know that discriminating against someone because they look or act different is wrong.
- You think about what you say, and how it may negatively affect others.
- You are a good person who cares about people other than yourself.
- You cannot just stand by while someone is being bashed for being gay.
- You are straight, but not narrow minded.

In the history of our country many groups have had to fight for rights. Women fought for equality, African Americans fought for equality, and now homosexuals are fighting that same battle. You should be an ally because you believe in this fight, and want to do whatever you can to help. For your commitment, thank you. It truly means more than you may think.

What Exactly Is an Ally?

According to Chico State’s Web page, “Safe Zone’s purpose is to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on our campus and thereby make our campus a safer and freer environment for all members of our community. The Safe Zone project identifies individuals in the campus faculty, staff and student body to become safe zone allies. These people provide a safe haven, a listening ear, or an open accessibility for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) who are in need of advice or services from that individual. The Safe Zone program will provide training, information, and community resource identification to those who express I trust in becoming a Safe Zone Ally.”

http://www.csuchico.edu/pride/
People who are lesbian, gay or bisexual come in as many different shapes, colors and sizes as do people who are heterosexual. They belong to all ethnic and racial groups, and are members of all religious communities. They exhibit a wide range of ages, mental and physical capabilities. There is not one specific profile, nor a known cause determining sexual orientation. Some research indicates that sexual orientation is established between birth and age 3, but no one is sure what specifically causes particular orientations. Most lesbian, gay and bisexual people are comfortable with their own biological sex; they don't regard themselves as members of the opposite sex. Being lesbian, gay or bisexual is not the same as being transgender. There is no definable gay “lifestyle.” Similarly, there is no standard heterosexual lifestyle. Some people might like to think that a “normal” adult lifestyle is a heterosexual marriage with two children. Less than 7% of all family units in the U.S. consist of a mother, a father and two children living together. The most accurate generalization might be this: lesbian, gay and bisexual people are different from one another in the same ways that heterosexual people are different from one another.

*Excerpts from Youth Pride, Inc. in conjunction with The Campaign to End Homophobia.
Violence & Bullying

From a remark at school to a threatened beating, the LGBTQ population is faced with violence every day.

A study conducted by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) reported 4 out of 5 students are harassed every day because their appearance or perceived sexual orientation. Schools across the country are standing up against this fact through strict policies against harassment, supportive faculty, and students educating students on the LGBTQ population.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) advocates against LGBTQ violence by organizing and promoting anti-violence education. Please be proactive and locate a NCAVP nearest you to report violent behavior.

Stand up against harassment and bullying. It is up to you, as an ally, to stand against these vicious words and/or acts. Set an example for others to follow.

Life in the Closet: Testimony

“Don’t live your life in fear of rejection, just live your life.”

Life in the closet was a scary place. I felt alone, trapped by a secret I feared would ruin my reputation if it got out. I lived in constant fear, that I would be judged, taunted, mentally abused, and even physically hurt by closed-minded people. Going out on the town always made me anxious, because even though I wasn’t out looking for a fight, it seemed everywhere I turned, I heard someone say *fag*.

Coming out may be very difficult for friendships but it often results in increased closeness. It is vital to remain understanding, honest, and supportive when friends tell you that they are gay. An LGBTQ individual has often thought extensively before coming out to a friend, so it is important to understand their honesty despite the risks involved when disclosing this type of personal information. It is critical to understand that your LGBTQ friend is still the same person and that they are trusting you with highly sensitive and personal information. It is natural to have feelings surrounding your friends LGBTQ announcement, and it is wise to be honest. Coming out takes a lot of internal strength; therefore it is imperative to remain supportive. It would be helpful to ask questions or participate in LGBTQ events with your friend. If a friend comes out to you, they often regard you as a safe person to share this information with, so it is essential that you be understanding, honest, and supportive for your LGBTQ friend.