

Gay? Fine by Lafayette.

FARINON, Oct. 27, 12:15pm – Students and faculty, more than 300 in number, gathered together on the Quad. Despite an early chill, many divested their jackets and layers to expose bright green t-shirts. But the words on the shirt provided more warmth than any coat; it was a message of tolerance and understanding: *Gay? Fine by me.*

Channel 69 news arrived to cover the event, and the rally began. “As many of you are aware, there is a perception of our college that is less than favorable, one that is tainted by intolerance and, perhaps, perpetuated by a lack of diversity,” began Dan Reynolds, President of QuEST, as he addressed the group.

“There is a general assumption on this campus that Lafayette is homophobic, and we enacted this t-shirt campaign in order to disprove this assumption. We wanted to send out a message: that any member of this community, regardless of sexual orientation, religion, gender, or race, has a right to feel comfortable and accepted. *Gay? Fine by me* is not a gay issue, it is an issue of basic human rights.”

There was electricity in the air – the crowd was ignited by a charge of enthusiasm and activity. The presence of over 300 students defied the alleged apathy and disinterest society ascribes to today’s youth. Among the assembly were representatives from nearly every organization – Greek life, sports teams, and faculty. They came from communities of all kinds, from all religions, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.



Rev. John Colatch speaks to the crowd.



More than 300 students rally on the Quad.

But for a moment all of these barriers seemed to dissolve. “We saw Lafayette as our college ought to be seen, as a community of respect,” announced Charles Felix, a participant of the event.

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After Reynolds’ speech, John Colatch, Director of Religious Life, wearing both his shirt and his chaplain’s collar, addressed the crowd, “There are a growing number of people from all faith traditions who are stepping up and lending their support in the quest for full rights for all people...I know the arguments against acceptance of GLBT persons by religious folks. I happen to disagree, strongly.”

Originally ordering 500 t-shirts, QuEST began handing them out on Monday. Each recipient of the shirt signed a petition boycotting homophobia. But the demand was more than they anticipated. By Tuesday every shirt had been distributed, and a lengthy waiting list began to accrue. Rush-ordering 150 more shirts, QuEST found that the number was still not enough to satisfy the number of requests. “It was awesome,” said Danielle Bero, Co-President of WORDS. By the end of the week, more than 25% of the student body had requested a shirt, joining a nation-wide campaign of 60,000 other people who agree that “Gay is fine by me.”

A megaphone crackled over the crowd: “As Helen Keller once expressed, ‘The greatest result of education is tolerance.’ And judging by the number of you participating, it would seem that Lafayette is fairly educated.” The crowd exploded into cheers and applause.

As the rally dispersed, a puzzled passerby accosted a girl in green, “Why are you wearing that shirt? Are you gay?” The student smiled, replying, “No. But I’m a proud supporter.”