

Large turnout for Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia

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The Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia was recognized and celebrated in Antigonish May 13 with a rally, reading of the official proclamation by Mayor Carl Chisholm and a conversation café, facilitated by youth leaders and community members, at St. James United Church hall.

The day is recognized worldwide as a "celebration of sexual and gender diversities."

Marie Brunelle, human rights and equity advisor at StFX, said organizers were very happy with the way the day turned out especially considering it was put together rather quickly.

"We started organizing only recently - two weeks ago - and it was really an organic cooperation between the campus and community," Brunelle said, noting it was different individuals and groups coming together to have the activities happen.

"Thirty to 40 young people from the high school, community members at large, people from campus, it was really a

mix," she said of the participation.

Many met at a StFX entrance on St. Ninian Street and proceeded to march down to Antigonish Town Hall where words from emcee Jenn Laudadio, a speech by Andrew Murray, music by the Wandering Menstruals and the proclamation reading by Chisholm, were featured.

Laudadio noted Antigonish town council as being "a constant ally of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or questioning) community members in our town" pointing out the mayor has signed and read the proclamation since 2010.

Brunelle noted the significance of having activities downtown and at town hall.

"It was important for us to be on Main Street, in front of town hall, to officially have the town acknowledged this as an important event to celebrate every year," she said. "Saying out-loud, there is a space for you here, we welcome you ... I think it's great."

Murray noted how he was greatly supported by commu-



Participants march down Main Street recognizing May 13 as the Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia. The rally/march was just one of the activities on the day. PHOTO: Richard MacKenzie

nity members years ago after being assaulted by a couple of males as he made an evening walk one February. He recalled a rally held in his support.

"It didn't occur to me this was a gay bashing or, more importantly, a hate crime," he said.

"I mentioned it to two people ... a rally was created on my behalf. I didn't know I had allies, I didn't know a lot of the people

who showed up ... I was totally overwhelmed, felt comforted, supported, and it greatly eased the pain I went through."

Murray added while much has been accomplished, a lot of work still needs to be done and that he sees the turnout and activities on the day as working towards that goal.

Many from the group then met at the church hall for

conversation and a light lunch. Brunelle said, again, it was pleasing to have the diversity in the audience providing different perspectives.

"Young and older people at each table and it was interesting to hear their experiences, the challenges, whether in the high school or in the larger society," she said. "It was a great discussion."