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Section: Editorial Page

Pride weekend walk makes a mother's day

Amy Morgan

It was a bittersweet mother's moment. I saw the contentment in my son Abram's face. Felt the ease of his stride as he walked beside me. The joy in his eyes was unmistakable.

"You know," he said to me with a mischievous smile, "statistically, one in 10 people here is straight."

"Count me as one of them," I said, which earned me a quick hug.

Like most mothers I want my son to be content wherever he is. In today's world it's not easy to be an out and proud 17-year-old gay man, but he's trying -- and as we walked along Bidwell Parkway one Pride weekend, he was truly in his element.

Abe's one of the fortunate ones. Most importantly, he's comfortable with himself. Beyond that, he has a family that accepts him, a core group of friends who have been nothing but supportive and a community, school and otherwise, that dealt with his coming out publicly last Oct. 11 (National Coming Out Day) with an attitude that conveyed he was still "just Abe" and his being gay didn't change anything.

Bittersweet, because frankly there shouldn't be any reason for me to write this. People would laugh at me for saying he's comfortable with being heterosexual or straight. Why wouldn't his family, friends and community "support" him? I vacillated between being grateful for Pride weekend and sad it was necessary as an event.

I learn more about "his world" with every passing day. Yes, there is an element to Pride weekend that can be garish and bold. And I understand that -- given that the gay community is constantly barraged with the polar opposite of its image as the societal norm. My definition of pride has changed, and continues to change, the more I see Abe come into his own.

Abe's expression of pride since coming out has been one of quiet dignity. With quiet persistence, he wears a rainbow wristband and necklace. He initiated a satellite meeting place for gay and transgender youths on Grand

Island. He educates his peers in recognizing both blatant and subversive forms of discrimination that happen every day to members of the gay community. And through it all, he's never stopped being the kind, insightful, intelligent and humorous young man that everyone knows as "just Abe."

We walked the grassy middle of Bidwell Parkway, working our way through couples, families and groups. They laughed, held hands and swayed to the music with arms wrapped around each other's waists. Abe was awash in the normalcy of it all. In the out of it all.

At one booth, a woman held a dowel with rainbow-colored silk ribbons streaming from it. Abe asked where she'd bought it and she told him they were given away during the parade (we unfortunately missed that). As he thanked her and turned away, she handed it to him and explained that her son already had one. It was the highlight of his day.

At another booth, we spoke with two gentlemen from Gay and Lesbian Educators about his plans to become a teacher. Neither of them was out at work, but they hoped the path would be easier for Abe in years to come. I could see Abe had a heavy heart that they still had to keep part of themselves hidden.

As we walked to the car, Abe thanked me for coming and told me he was proud of me. Coming from him, someone who's redefined the word for me, it was high praise indeed -- and the highlight of my day.

Amy Morgan lives in Grand Island, where she appreciates pride more than ever.

---- INDEX REFERENCES ---

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