**Students Participate in National Day of Silence**

By Willow Hart, PGTV News, Prince George High School, Prince George, VA

The halls may seem more quiet on Friday, April 15th as students stand together to raise awareness for LGBT discrimination.

Gay Straight Alliance members are participating in the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network Day of Silence. Students that choose to participate will stay silent and carry around a card that tells why they are staying silent.

“National Day of Silence is mainly to draw attention to any type of misgivings or rude things that happen to people who aren’t necessarily straight,” junior and GSA spokesperson Justin Daniels said. “That doesn’t encompass any general sexuality it’s just drawing attention to any particular person who may be mistreated.”

GLSEN, an organization developed to ensure a safe atmosphere in schools, began the National Day of Silence in 1990. High schools and college campuses are given the ability to participate in this event because of their First Amendment rights.

“Anyone can participate, we are kind of running it like an in-school field trip so kids can get a field trip form from me, get their teachers to sign it and then I will put them on a list to go out to teachers,” GSA sponsor Catherine Beasley said.

GSA received shirts and cards for the students to possess during the day to bring more awareness to their cause.

“The kids basically choose to be silent during the day and they have a card that they can hand out with the information about what the Day of Silence is, why they are participating, and what other people can do to support it,” Beasley said.

Some students may still take part in academic discussion, while remaining silent outside of the classroom. Others may choose to stay inactive on social media for the day.

“It doesn’t necessarily affect the school day,” Beasley said. “The people who participate choose to be silent and they tell their teachers that they want to be silent, but if they are in class and they need to speak to participate then they can.”

An average person speaks about 20,000 words a day, so making the transition may be difficult for some students.

“I have never actually been able to stay silent for a day so I’m really curious to see if I’m actually going to be able to do it,” junior and GSA Co-President Fayeth Smith said. “But it is something I feel very strongly for and about so I think I am going to be able to do it.”

While these students are choosing to stay silent, those who are not participating are encouraged to consider the adversity people in the LGBT community face when they are harassed, bullied, and called derogatory names.

“It is supposed to resemble people calling us names for being what we are and so we call it the Day of Silence so we don’t let it affect us,” Smith said.

While the country has taken steps to become more LGBT tolerate, people still face harsh discrimination about their sexuality, therefore producing the cause for this national event.

“When I first came out about being bisexual when I was in the eighth grade, I got bullied really heavily for it,” Smith said. “My school didn’t really have a club like this but I am happy that this school does.”

The silence that the participating members will put forth symbolizes the silence that is caused by LGBT discrimination.

“People should not let their voices be taken,” Smith said. “No matter how small they think it is.”