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Queer Wedding ceremony pushes for equality

By Jeffrey Roman
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Equality is a term that has been garnering much attention recently. With Sean Penn winning Best Male Actor for his role in "Milk" during the Academy Awards, and Gov. Jon S. Corzine pushing harder to make gays and lesbians eligible for marriage in New Jersey, equality seems to be at the forefront of society today.

Last Thursday, the College was also taking part in the push for equality with PRISM's annual Queer Wedding, held in the Allen Drawing Room.

Pride, strength in numbers and love were the themes that captured the feeling in the air throughout the night, and it was evident that the voices of those in attendance were heard with the support they showed for PRISM's initiatives.

The night's event, themed "Two Hearts, One Love," brought people together for a joyous celebration that focused on love as a whole, expressed as a general feeling between any two people who want to spend their lives together because of a connection. It also tried to raise awareness for the issue of marriage equality in New Jersey. Currently, New Jersey offers gay and lesbian couples civil unions.

During her welcoming address, Heather Lemley, president of PRISM, talked about her thoughts for marriage equality and how sooner or later, there will be no boundaries when it comes to tying the knot with a partner.

"Eventually, there will be no stares, because there will be nothing out of the ordinary to stare at," Lemley said.

The four couples that participated in the event were Lemley and Emily Carpenter, sophomore music education major; Juls Bergman, senior secondary education and English major, and Hannah Knight, sophomore special education and psychology major; Michael Miragliotta, residence director at the College, and Bill Fritsch, his partner; and Rachel Rosenberg, sophomore psychology major, and a friend from another university.

The Rev. Lisa Caton, reverend of the Canterbury House, the Episcopal Church at the College, took part in the marriage ceremony portion of the evening. Caton conducted a sermon and performed the rights for the symbolic ceremony.

"I think it was a wonderful event," the Rev. Caton said. "It was an honor to be part of it."

PRISM invited the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus out to the event to provide the music for the evening. The Chorus sang "Walk Hand in Hand" while the couples walked down the aisle. Thomas Myers, assistant conductor for the chorus, was thrilled to be participating.

"We're really pleased to be part of the ceremony. We don't interact with students often so we were pleased to be invited," Myers said.

The symbolic ceremony also featured five performances by students from the College. Katie Tedesco, sophomore women and gender studies major, told a coming out story, both humorous and uplifting. Elizabeth Ehret, sophomore music performance major, sang the song "So in Love" from the show Kiss Me Kate, in a performance filled with emotion, bringing the interval of applause to an unprecedented height.

Other guest speakers included Dr. Carol Bresnahan, provost and executive vice president at the College, and **Michelle Stecker, adjunct professor of history at the College as well as board member of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Stecker, who is also an attorney, provided sign-up sheets that will provide support for the bill for marriage equality in New Jersey. The sheets will be mailed directly to the state.**

Brenda Kish, PRISM vice president, was overwhelmed by the night's turnout.

"We are so close to getting marriage equality so we needed the push," Kish said. "Just looking at the amount of people (here) â€¦ I don't have words right now."