



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release:

May 2, 2011
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Gay Alumni of Evangelical College Speak Up and Reach Out

LGBTQ Alumni of Wheaton College Deliver Message of Support to Students

Wheaton, IL— For some alumni of Evangelical Christian Wheaton College, the school was pushing the envelope when it held its first male-female dance in 2003. Today, it's the LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning) alumni from the alma mater of Billy Graham and “rogue pastor” Rob Bell [quote taken from recent Time magazine article] who are speaking out. They’ve organized a group called OneWheaton and are offering acceptance for LGBTQ students as an alternative to the school’s official position against homosexual behavior.

About 30 alumni handed letters to students as they came out of a chapel session on the suburban Chicago campus last Friday. The letter is addressed to current students as a response to the Evangelical Christian school’s recent educational series on “Sexuality and Wholeness,” and is signed by over 200 alumni identified as LGBTQ or allies. Organizers aimed to deliver a message of hope and support to LGBTQ students before classes let out for the summer.

The letter assures LGBTQ students that they “are not tragic,” and states “as people of integrity we must affirm the full humanity and dignity of every human being regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.” The letter provides an email address for students who want to speak with someone or need resources and can be read in its entirety at www.onewheaton.com.

Despite the presence of campus security, 2008 graduate Jessica Friesen said the letters were distributed peacefully and were warmly received. “The students I spoke with were genuinely appreciative we were there and were very respectful. For our purposes, it couldn’t have gone any better than it did.”

The alumni group also launched a website, Facebook fan page and Twitter feed. Website manager and 2004 graduate Matthew Gore said the website www.onewheaton.com temporarily crashed Saturday night due to the over 16,000 hits it received. “There was no way we could have predicted the overwhelming response we’ve gotten. It’s truly amazing,” he said. Group organizers say they’ve received hundreds of emails, almost all of them positive. As a result, over 300 additional signatures from LGBTQ and supportive alumni have been added to the letter featured on the group’s website.

Wheaton College is admired in the Evangelical community for its leadership and tough academic standards. President Dr. Philip Ryken did respond in an internal email to the campus community, acknowledging the pain LGBTQ students may feel but maintaining the stance that “Scripture condemns . . . homosexual behavior and all other sexual relations outside the bounds of marriage between a man and woman.”

The launching of “OneWheaton” follows stories of similar alumni movements at other Christian schools such as Harding University in Arkansas, Westmont College in California, and Baylor University in Texas.

OneWheaton is composed of Wheaton College alumni and exists to reassure LGBTQ and questioning students and their friends that it gets better. For more information visit www.onewheaton.com