

Letters to the Editor

Let's Take Ourselves More Seriously

In last week's issue of *The Defender* there was an article published "St. Mike's 'Likes' New Marketing Materials." As a member of the St. Michael's community, I, for one, do not like it.

Assistant Director of marketing, Mallory Wood is quoted as saying "What is cohesive between the material and the video is the informal tone." Which begs the question, how informal is too informal before the school looks unprofessional?

I agree, the majority of those who are familiar with the college, including myself, call it by its endearing nickname, St. Mike's. However, is this how we want our college publicly marketed?

Our college is named after St. Michael the Archangel which comes with a certain level of respect. According to the Catholic Church, St. Michael the Archangel is responsible for warding off the devil. In that accord, Saint Michael is most often depicted with one foot restraining the devil and sword in hand. *Not* as a cartoon kicking a soccer ball, not riding a snowboard, not flying through the air with a toolbox in hand. It does not seem fitting to portray an archangel this way.

The new images, fonts, and language used seem all too casual for wanting to promote a serious educational institution. The juxtaposition of the recently updated St. Michael's logo next to "I like St. Mike's" on the college's new "ilike" page conveys a conflicting message. The former promotes prestige while the latter seems juvenile. The font used reflects that of someone doodling in their notebook. Phrases such as "killer view" and the cutesy slogan don't really mesh with the high academic standard St. Michael's strives to uphold.

I appreciate the effort that has gone into the new marketing strategy. It's

nice to see recent students on the website and in the view books. The videos themselves provide apt descriptions of what St. Michael's College has to offer.

However, the presentation leaves something to be desired. In our effort to be different from our neighbors, we border on being unprofessional. We are a college that boasts some of the most prominent accolades such as having a Phi Beta Kappa chapter on campus, being named one of the best colleges in America by the Princeton Review, professors being selected as "Vermont Professor of the Year," being awarded highly competitive research grants and many more.

Do childish portrayals of St. Michael and the use of slang properly represent those accomplishments? I don't think so. Let's treat St. Michael's with the respect it deserves. People would take us a lot more seriously if there wasn't a cartoon angel flying through the pages of view books or ushering us through promotion videos.

-Sue Bourque, '11

Dear Editor:

Today I accidentally came upon your web page. Taking a break from work, I read a few of the articles posted. I found the editorial "Light the Night" by Sam Merrill very interesting. Back in 1976-1977, I wrote an editorial about the same subject in the school newspaper, *The Michaelman*. I believe I titled it "Moonshine" because it wasn't enough. And it was for the same reason – a female student had been assaulted on her way back to her dorm coming from the library. I was a little shocked that the lighting on campus still has not been completely addressed. In the mean time, do what we did; we started a student escort service so that any female student could call for a male student to escort her at night on the campus grounds. Good luck.

-John Acton, '77

Gay Youth Suicides: A Troubling Trend

In the past couple of weeks there have been multiple suicides among gay youth across the country. Tyler Clementi, an 18-year-old freshman at Rutgers University, jumped off the George Washington Bridge after his roommate secretly broadcast a private kiss between him and another male student over the internet.

Raymond Chase, a 19-year-old gay student at Johnson and Wales, hung himself in his dorm. In Texas, 13-year-old Asher Brown shot himself after being tormented with anti-gay bullying. In Minnesota, 13-year-old Seth Walsh hung himself in his backyard, and in Indiana, 15-year-old Billy Lucas killed himself after being tormented about his sexual identity.

All of these youth were gay, or perceived to be gay by their classmates, and unfortunately their stories are not unique. Nine out of 10 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender teens have reported being bullied, and these students are four times more likely to commit suicide than their heterosexual peers. Cyber bullying compounds the problem because now bullying takes place over the Internet for the whole world to see.

Last week, Campus Pride released "2010 State of Higher Education for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender People," a study of over 5,000 college students, faculty and staff. In that report 23 percent of the people who identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual have reported experiencing harassment at their college. An even larger number, 39 percent of transgendered students, faculty and staff, have reported experiencing harassment. These numbers are alarming.

There are some LGBT students at St. Michael's College who have come out to others, but there are also students who are struggling with their sexuality. They have been taught throughout their lives that being gay is somehow wrong. They've heard jokes and comments like "that is so gay" and they've heard someone being called a "fag." They've heard comments in the classroom, in

the dorms and in the locker room that have made it impossible to tell anyone what they are going through. What may seem like a harmless joke or comment to someone may end up being all that it takes for someone else to take their own life. Regardless of whether or not these comments are meant to be malicious or not, it doesn't matter. We must all take responsibility for the words and actions we choose and realize what the potential consequences may be.

The SMC community has a responsibility to all students to provide a safe place to live and learn. There are resources on campus for LGBT students including the Res Life staff, Health Services, Common Ground and the personal counselors. They do a very good job helping our students in need, but the responsibility to make our students feel safe is not theirs alone. All of us can help make these students feel safe. We can all refrain from the hurtful language and confront bullying when we see it. We all have to take responsibility to make sure that one of our students does not end up being the focus of a tragic news story.

-Mark Litchfield, St. Michael's Staff and Common Ground Advisor

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