

Steinbach Pride March for Equality

July 15th, 2017

Hello Neighbours! So good to be here with all of you - . . .

First, thank-you to Steinbach Pride for inviting *Steinbach Neighbours for Community* to be part of this event.

WE DO NOT WALK ALONE. We live and work and play together – supporting each other in many ways.

Thanks also to Steinbach Pride for choosing the theme – NEIGHBOURS – that’s what this is all about! . . .

being neighbours, building relationships, building a community where ALL are welcomed, respected, accepted for who they are, no matter what gender, orientation, race, socio-economic status, religion.

Steinbach Neighbours for Community was formed to do just that – to work towards creating a safe, welcoming community for all. *Steinbach Neighbours* is a diverse group of friends and neighbours who **care**, who want to promote understanding and acceptance of the diversity present within our community, specifically the acceptance and understanding of the wide range of sexual orientations, gender identity, and gender expression.

We plan to continue to facilitate conversations, offer opportunities to share stories, as it is so important for people to feel heard, to feel that their voice, their story, their reality matters!

We hope to provide insight and education as we continue to walk together, to seek better understanding and full acceptance of LGBTTQI* people in our community, and beyond.

And this community and area is awesome, wonderfully diverse, and so much richer and more complete because of that diversity. With diversity come differences. But those differences should not divide us! Instead, let us see the beauty in all people of every gender, orientation, race and religion.

Let us come together in our diversity & find common ground in the VALUES we want to live by, and be known for! Let our love and public witness reach across these differences – transcend them!

Steinbach is already known for many of these traits, these values – love, care, compassion, reaching out to each other and beyond.

We are known for our welcome and special programs for new immigrants.

We are known for welcoming refugee families into our communities.

We are known for our charitable giving!

We are known for our cars!! Our pool!

Can we be known for our love and acceptance of LGBTTQI people ---- those from our own families, our friends, our neighbours?*

A lot has changed in the 28 years we have lived here; a lot has changed in the past 2 years! But there is much more work to be done to create a safe, hospitable place, a place of justice, a place of love and equality for ALL people.

Our dream would be

- for sexual orientation to become a non-issue!
- for Steinbach to become a community that celebrates diversity, that respects and accepts, loves and reaches out across our differences, that welcomes all, no matter what sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, no matter what race or religion
- a community known for its values and the way it lives out those values every day

Steinbach Neighbours for Community will continue to walk with others to create **that** kind of community.

I close with the words of Karen Toole from her book *Reflections* – from an article written for the Winnipeg Free Press in January, 2000.

“When it comes right down to it . . . what matters is the unique energy we name as life.

What matters is how we use our days, how we use our gifts, how we find the fullness of human identity – mind, body, and soul - in the time we have in this realm of existence.”

Gay Boese

Steinbach Neighbours for Community, chair