

Gamma Beta Lambda-

Behrend's First Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Society

by Danette Parrett
The Collegian

* some names may have been changed to protect the anonymity of the people involved.

With the beginning of the the 1992-93 academic year there have been many changes at Behrend. There have been changes in the faculty and staff. There have been changes in the number of students. There have been buildings added and buildings renovated. There have also been new clubs and organizations created.

A new organization that has developed is Gamma Beta Lambda. This is a group of people joined together to support the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population on campus.

The organization

"We are the largest minority on campus and we are also the most discriminated against. You don't hear us complaining."

hasn't been registered with Student Activities yet, but as soon as they get a definite number of students they plan on registering. The group has six members already dedicated to the cause and twelve members that haven't officially joined yet.

The group stresses that because it is the gay, lesbian, and bisexual group, doesn't necessarily mean you have to be either gay, lesbian, or bisexual to join. Two members are straight, but also help provide support for the other members of the group.

The founders of the group, Dan, Jenn, and Paul, were brought together last year through the efforts of Louanne Barton. Barton had posted an advertisement for a gay, lesbian, and bisexual support group.

The three founders had called Barton only to find that there wasn't a support group.

Because of the number of students reported to be gay, lesbian, or bisexual on Behrend's campus, the founders knew there was a definite need for a support group. According to a poll generated through the Registrar's Office, there are 243 gay, lesbian or bisexual students in the minority population alone.

Going by the current statistics that 10% of the American population is either gay, lesbian, or bisexual, the group concluded that there are at least 250 students on the campus that the group could be targeted toward.

With 250 people in

start bringing other gay, lesbian and bisexual students out of the closet.

"We need to get the people out there. There's over 250 people out there. Where are they?" Jenn asked.

The group remains and has every intention of remaining completely anonymous. They have confidential meetings, strictly with the other members of the group. The meetings are not advertised, but are told to the members by other members. They have a phone support line that remains strictly confidential and is manned by one of the group's members. The support line number is 453-6232.

"[The members of the group] all know what is

number for more information is 455-0549.

Integrity- This is an Episcopalian based spiritual and support group that welcomes people for all faiths. Meetings are held the 2nd and 4th Sundays of the month at 7:00 pm, at St. Paul's Cathedral, 133 West 7th Street, Erie.

LGLV- League of Gay and Lesbian Voters- This is a group that deals with the legislative issues affecting the lesbian, gay and bisexual community; voter registration; lobbying; voters' guide; also social activities. For more information call 456-9833.

Men's Goffeehouse- A social alternative to the bar scene. An alcohol free and smoke-free

registered yet, they do not have a budget. However, they have been working with Chris Reber of the Office of Student Affairs in getting the group "Straight Talk" from main campus to have an open forum in the fall.

The group already sees the discrimination on campus.

Paul stated: "We are the largest minority on this campus and we are also the most discriminated against. You don't hear us complaining...We have the approval of everybody on campus, except the student body. As soon as we get over that, then we'll be set."

"Now that we're finally getting it going, we're finding a lot of people being supportive... It's a matter of getting through the hostility and fear among the students." Jenn said.

Behrend's gay, lesbian, and bisexual organization is here, and ready to go!

Gamma Beta Lambda

Call us at 453-6232 or write to our mailbox: #1054. Sue Daly at the Counseling and Advising Center can also help you contact us.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

this minority group, not only is the gay, lesbian and bisexual population the largest, but it is larger than all minority groups combined.

The founders chose the name Gamma Beta Lambda, because the initials- GBL, can stand for Gay, Bisexual, and Lesbians. Initially, they chose to advertise with the Greek letters to catch the attention of the student body. However, in the future they do not plan to use the Greek letters. They refer to themselves as GBL.

Now with the help of Sue Daly from the Counseling and Advising office, the group hopes to

like. [Being in the closet] affects everything. It affects your schoolwork, social life...There's some very serious ramifications." Dan said.

The group is only open to students at Behrend College. The group does attend meetings and events off campus to generate ideas for the future.

These are some of the groups the organization associates with:

Bridges- This is a newly formed organization whose goal is "to unite the Lesbian community through networking, providing resources, and building a positive sense of community." The phone

environment for gay men with a theme, topic, or activity planned each month.

Eric Gay/Lesbian Support Group- This is both a support group for gay men and lesbians and a group committed to raising the awareness of others of the implications of being gay/lesbian in our society. Meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 8:00 pm, 3rd floor of Old Main on the Mercyhurst campus.

Womynspace- This is a social alternative to the bar scene. Womynspace is an alcohol-free and smoke-free environment for lesbians.

Because GBL hasn't

On the university's support, Paul said, "Every step of the way I found that we have had excellent cooperation with the staff. They are willing to go out of their way for us."

The group has three main goals they are addressing. They are:

1) To provide support for the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population.

2) To sponsor activities for the population they are targeting.

3) To desensitize the people on campus and help them get used to gays, lesbians, and bisexuals.

As Dan said it, "We don't want to get anyone to point where they go around announcing themselves. We're not going to run around campus holding hands and kissing. We're realists. We'd just like to get people to be happier and feel better about themselves."