



Student Assembly Pays Tribute To Orlando Victims In Recent Massacre With Blood Drive

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ALBANY -- Approximately 31 blood donors laid down to stand in solidarity with the LGBT+/MOGII community in several weeks after the deadliest shooting in the nation's history.

"This event was an incredible success," said Marc Cohen, SUNY Student Assembly President and SUNY Trustee. "We had dozens of students, faculty, and community members come out and say with a loud and clear voice, 'we stand with the LGBT+/MOGII community. I'm proud to be part of a system that greatly values diversity, equity, and inclusion.'"

In coordination with the American Red Cross, SUNY Student Assembly sponsored a blood drive last Wednesday dedicated to the 50 victims of the Pulse nightclub shooting earlier this month. The amount of blood donated during the event could save up to 93 lives.

"I am delighted to be working with the SUNY Student Assembly on a blood drive in memory of the Orlando shooting victims," said Steven Leary, senior account manager at the American Red Cross Blood Services. "Giving blood and helping to save someone's life is a great way to pay tribute to the those who lost their lives in the Orlando tragedy and to keep their memories alive."

"Our hearts and prayers are with the victims' loved ones, and we stand with members of our LGBT community as we recommit ourselves to diversity, inclusion, tolerance, and nonviolence," said University at Albany President Robert Jones. "This effort is just one way to support those in need."

Matthew Krush, recent graduate student from University at Albany, was encouraged to give blood for the first time at a Red Cross blood drive sponsored by the SUNY Student Assembly.

"It was a good first time to do it," said Krush. "I stand behind this."

Alex George, Student Assembly state operated campuses representative and Oswego undergraduate student drove over two hours from Syracuse to attend the event.

"I felt that it was important to show my support not only for this organization, but for the victims of the horrible tragedy in Orlando," said George. "It was worth the drive from Syracuse to be apart of a great event like this."

While demonstrating solidarity with the LGBT+/MOGII community, the event also raised awareness for blood donor equality. In the aftermath of the Orlando shooting, under the FDA regulations, many gay men and women who had sexual interaction with gay men in the last year were prohibited from giving blood.

"When the tragedy at Pulse Orlando occurred, our own LGBT+/MOGII community didn't have the ability to donate and help during a time of extreme need," said Student Assembly Vice President Bridget Doyle. "We will continue elevating the voice of the MOGII community and fighting for equity in all aspects of life."



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“The science is there to support and allow for equal blood donation,” said Cohen. “How sad is it that people were turned away from donating blood to support their loved ones because of who they choose to love? It’s time for a change, and the Student Assembly is glad to help in leading the charge.”

In October 2014, the Student Assembly passed a resolution which called for local and national governments to support blood donor equality. Last year, the FDA updated their blood donation policy for the first time in nearly three decades. Since the policy change, those restricted under the previous lifetime ban are now allowed to donate blood a year after their last sexual encounter.

“The FDA regulations change does not solve this problem,” said Student Assembly Chief of Staff Nick Simons. “This is a fight that will continue as there is much more work to be done and the students of our system are committed to doing this work.”

While continuing to fight for blood donor equality, the Student Assembly has made other strides for LGBT+/MOGII students in the SUNY system. In the last year, the organization pushed gender neutral language within Student Assembly documents and passed a resolution advocating for greater gender inclusivity on SUNY campuses.

Last week, showing solidarity with the LGBT+/MOGII community, Cohen and SUNY Chancellor Nancy Zimpher lead 300 students in the university system in the New York City Pride March.

About the Student Assembly of the State University of New York

The Student Assembly of the State University of New York (SUNY SA) is an organization comprised of student leaders elected by their peers from across SUNY’s 64 campuses. Empowering students throughout the state, the SUNY SA is committed to student life and ensuring the representation of its members on the state and national level as well as throughout the SUNY system.

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