



BARTRAM NASON • IDS

In response to protests last week, Bloomington United volunteers Abby Dumes, right, and sister Hannah, left, distribute posters to local businesses, including Juliana Parra of Burmese Gem.

Protesting the protest

Bloomington United takes to the streets in response to anti-gay demonstrations

Ryota Kashiwa

Indiana Daily Student

Supporters from Bloomington United; Gay, Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) Student Support Services; the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance (FMLA); and other organizations protested against the "hateful messages" from the protesters who came to town for two anti-gay demonstrations last week.

Friday afternoon's protesters gathered at Bloomington Bagel, 113 N. Dunn St., to inform people of the beliefs of the community and gain support from businesses around downtown. Supporters took to the streets

with signs and baskets. Some were wearing a T-shirt that said, "No Hate."

The latest protest along Kirkwood Avenue was in response to the "Call to Repentance" group that held the anti-gay protests. The group, based from the Old Paths Baptist Church in Campbellsburg, Ind., came to Bloomington to denounce homosexuals and abortion. Both Monday's and Wednesday's protests were tension-filled but not violent. One arrest was made in last Monday's demonstration.

Rabbi Mira Wasserman from Bloomington United was determined to maintain the culture of Bloomington and challenge the opposing ideas.

"We try to counteract the hateful message of outsider protesters," Wasserman said.

Josh Stein, assistant director of the Helene G. Simon Hillel Center, also explained the goal of the protest.

"It's to counteract the pictures, activities and hatred and promote tolerance," Stein said. "I want to make a difference if I can and help Bloomington remain safe and secure."

Stein noted the significance of sustaining the environment of Bloomington.

"It is important to recognize the diversity in the community and embrace it instead of

PROTEST: Community responds to demonstrations

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

seeing it as a threat," Stein said.

Adam Bowling, Library Coordinator of GLBT, doesn't understand how the protesters from last week gain their reasoning.

"I don't understand (why) God is teaching hate," Bowling said. "(Their) preaching is missing the point. Spirituality helps bring us together and bring everyone to unite.

"We're trying to show Bloomington is a place of acceptance."

Approximately 30 supporters participated in this demonstration. One of the advocates, Patrick Kinsman, expressed his wonders about hatred of sexual minorities and abortions.

"Whatever God or Gods people believe in, how do you know God hates gay people or abortions," Kinsman said. "Who gets to segregate? It's almost like an accuracy issue."

Protesters felt they had a productive day, as Stein said Friday's response was very productive in countering the messages from the group and getting the community active against hate speech.

"I want to make a difference if I can and help Bloomington remain safe and secure."

Josh Stein

Assistant director at the Hillel Center

"(Businesses) were all receptive," Stein said. "They were very appreciative that we're there."

Stein also said there were no violent activities outside.

Vintage Warehouse, 401 E. 4th St., was one of the many businesses that agreed to take a sign. One of Vintage's employees, Heather Price, understands that people have the right to free speech, but people should present their issue in a better way.

"Negative protests should be allowed, but their tone and the picture should be different," Price said. "But it's important to combat the nasty tone of the previous hate rally."

There's also a sign at Anyetsang's Little Tibet, 415 E. 4th Street Thupten Anyetsang, an owner of the Tibetan restaurant, argued the idea of human rights.

"People should not hate each other no matter what color, race or beliefs," Anyetsang said.

"Also we should not hate those who protested (on Monday and Wednesday) either, but they must be peaceful and respectful."

Anyetsang added a simple message that he feels everyone can use in their lives.

"People should live by compassion and not hate."

Contact staff reporter Ryota Kashiwa at region@idsnews.com or 855-0760.



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Bloomington residents Sarah Deckert, left, and Carmen Patterson, right, embrace to the ire of conservative protesters in People's Park Wednesday afternoon.