Gender issues

Transgender speaker advocates for LGBT rights

By Sophie Clark

STAFF WRITER

Before activist Ryan Sallans was born, his grandfa-
ther claimed he could predict the gender of a baby by
dropping a needle over the mother’s palm. The gen-
er was determined by which way the needle swung.
When dropped over Sallans’ mother’s palm, the ne-
dle predicted a boy. But Sallans was born a female.
His story began with growing up in Aurora, NE,
by the name of Kim Sallans. As a child, Sallans never
liked her name.

“I had a sense of being male since age two and a
half,” said Sallans, who spoke at Westside Nov. 14
about transgender issues.

At age 6, Sallans began feeling depressed about her
body. She realized she didn’t feel like a girl. She wanted
to fit in with her brother and dad instead of her moth-
er and sister. She didn’t tell anyone about her feelings,
because she felt like no one would accept her.

“At age 6 I remember thinking, ‘I have to live with
this for the rest of my life and I don’t know if I can do
it,’” Sallans said.

Sallans remembers puberty as a horrible experi-
ense. Kim Sallans disliked everything about her body.
She developed an eating disorder over time because
she wanted to look like a boy. Anorexia almost killed
her.

Six months of therapy and a trip to the bookstore
changed Sallans’ life for the better. After discovering
a book about transexuality at age 25, Sallans realized
that her body was wrong.

“You have to tell your parents,” Sallans says.

“Parents would be a challenge. My parents would be
supportive of him. But Sallans knew telling his
father anything would be a challenge.

Six months of therapy and a trip to the bookstore
changed Sallans’ life for the better. After discovering
a book about transexuality at age 25, Sallans realized
that her body was wrong.

“You have to tell your parents,” Sallans says.

“Parents would be a challenge. My parents would be
supportive of him. But Sallans knew telling his
father anything would be a challenge.

After participating in a Kids Against Hunger spon-
ored event called the Million Meal March, sopho-
more Max Slosburg wanted to found a school club to
help fight hunger.

“I thought it was really cool,” Max said. “I liked how
people could help in just by doing something easy.”

Max asked his older sister, senior Kate Slosburg, if
she’d be interested in being a co-president of the club.
Once she agreed, the next step was to find a teacher
co-sponsor. The Slosburgs asked Family and Consumer
Science instructor Landon McCormick if he would be
interested, and he accepted.

“We had about 10 students that signed up to be
in the club,” Kate said. “But we didn’t enroll members.”

The club members have weekly meetings every
Tuesday morning, when they assign businessmen to
ask for donations, and plan packing events. Their first
packing event was on Dec. 14, from 8 a.m. to noon.

“Our packing event went really well,” Max said.

“We had about 10 students there and we ended up packing
2,400 meals in about an hour and a half. Everybody
was helpful and fun.

“Our packing event went really well,” Max said.

“We had about 10 students there and we ended up packing
2,400 meals in about an hour and a half. Everybody
was helpful and fun.

“Right now we are figuring out where the food will
go,” Max said. “Originally, it was going to go to the West-
side Food Bank, but they told us they don’t want it.

“The Dec. 2 packing event was a small one of 10
people because it was the first one the club members
organized themselves.

“Just seeing how well our last packing event went
made us want to hold many more,” Kate said. “I hope-
fully we’ll open it up to people who aren’t in the club
too. But the cost increases because it requires more
money to pay for all of the supplies.”

Packing is expensive; it pays for enough snacks to
feed one family. Nebraska Furniture Mart has been a
big contributor to the club. The club has also
gotten 10 shirts to its members to help pay for packing
events.

“A lot of the business owners that we receive donations
from are the ones that people have connections with,”
Kate said.

The school club donates money through the or-
ganization Kids Against Hunger, who then sends the
components of the meal in both amounts back to the
school club.

“Then the club packs the counselors that have children
and vegetables in it,” Kate said. “You just add water to
it.”

While the idea of working with a brother or sister
might not appeal to some people, the club finds it
helpful and fun.

For both siblings, the most fulfilling part of being a
part of the club is helping out people who are in need.
Everyone can help: high school students and people in
the community can donate, and when the packing
events get bigger, they can pack themselves.

“There’s so much high school kids can do,” Kate
said.