

NEWS RELEASE

Oct. 1, 2010

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PTC rolls out *Safe Zone* program

PINE CITY, Minn. – Pine Technical College is serving its largest enrollment in college history, and in recognition of an increasingly diverse student population and *National Coming Out Day*, Oct. 11, the college is implementing *Safe Zone*. The Safe Zone program is designed to support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) students and employees.

“While it’s easier for other minority individuals to identify role models and mentors, the invisibility of sexual orientation makes it very difficult for GLBT students to find support and information,” explains Nancy Mach, Pine Technical College Dean of Student Affairs. “One goal of the Safe Zone program is to make it easier for GLBT students to identify people and offices on campus where they can safely turn – where they will be welcome and not judged,” Mach explains.

Two major components of the Safe Zone program are symbols that participating PTC staff and faculty members will post visibly in their workspaces and a scheduled “Ally Training” they will undergo Oct. 27. The symbol allows the campus community to easily identify participating program members and know they can speak freely with these individuals about issues, including sexual orientation and gender identity, which may affect their academic success or job satisfaction. The symbol also indicates staff or faculty members who have participated in Ally Training and have an understanding and sensitivity toward GLBT issues.

The Safe Zone program at PTC and its components were developed by PTC’s Diversity Committee. Penny Hudlow, PTC Director of Human Resources and Diversity Committee Co-Chair says participating in the Safe Zone program is voluntary.

“Since an outcome of the Safe Zone program is to improve the campus climate for GLBT individuals, participants should be willing to challenge homophobic and heterosexist comments or behaviors in an educational and informative manner,” Hudlow explains.

PTC administrators say they are proud of its increasingly culturally diverse population and support cultural diversity in every way possible.

“Safe Zone is one way to say all sexual orientations and gender representations are part of the campus culture, and they are acknowledged and supported,” says Joan Bloemendaal-Gruett, Dean of Academic Affairs. “It provides a visible network of volunteers for students. Plus, our Safe Zone volunteers portray a campus committed to providing an environment in which every student is free to thrive on an academic,



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professional and personal level within a community based on respect and dignity,” Bloemendaal-Gruett adds.

For more information about the Safe Zone program at PTC, call 320-629-5173.

Image: PTC’s Safe Zone symbol.



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