



MAY DAY!

ACUTELY AWARE THAT HER GAY FRIENDS AND FAMILY STILL FACE INEQUALITY IN MODERN SOCIETY, A HIGHLY MOTIVATED MELBURNIAN, ANGIE GREENE, TOOK ACTION. MOVE IN MAY WAS A DAY OF SPORT AND SUPPORT FOR THE LGBTI COMMUNITY, ATTRACTING FOOTBALL HEROES, TV STARS, POLITICIANS AND HUNDREDS OF REGULAR FOLKS. MATTHEW MYERS WAS THERE, AND FILES THIS REPORT. PHOTOGRAPHY WARREN KNOWER.

This year, Crown Princess Mary addressed the IDAHOT Forum in Denmark, London City Hall raised the rainbow flag, Genoa turned its fountains pink, Cuba had a street parade, Pakistan a panel discussion, Albania a bike (P)ride and Argentina danced a special tango. It all happened on International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), held on May 17.

But while celebrations are big in Europe and Latin America, this internationally recognised day hasn't struck a chord with Australians. This year, across the nation school children held cake sales, while some government departments in some states made an effort to raise awareness. Hardly the stuff to invigorate public awareness. Perhaps the day needs to be adapted in a way that's relevant to Australians, and perhaps we've seen the first steps in that direction with the event Move In May, which happened in Melbourne this year.



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How do you attract the attention of Aussies to such a day? You enlist the help of Australian Rules footy players for a start! Angie Greene, Move In May, organiser did just that and the event took place on Sunday May 22 with a fun run around the famous Tan (Botanical Gardens) track, followed by a celebration of food and music.

"I was inspired to create Move In May because of IDAHOT, which is such an important and symbolic day in our history," says Angie. "I've seen it being heavily celebrated in Europe and parts of America, but couldn't understand why there was no significant large-scale event to support it here in Australia.

"We wanted to create an event that was for all people – regardless of sexuality or gender. In my experience, the straight community, which I'm part of, needs to do a lot more in terms of actively showing their support for equality and inclusion. We do not gain equality without all people, from all communities coming together."

Angie comes from something of a sporting dynasty.



Molly, Matt Myers and Angie Greene.



Her brother Steven and father Russell have played AFL football for Hawthorn, while her grandfather, legendary tennis player Frank Sedgman, won 22 grand slam titles. On top of that her godfather is music industry legend Ian "Molly" Meldrum.

"I have two older brothers – one is gay and one is straight. My godfather is gay and I have many LGBTIQA friends. These loved ones are my inspiration for creating Move In May because the fact that it's nearly 2017 and we are still being defined by our sexuality or gender is outrageous. I detest the fact that I have certain privileges over the people that I love, purely because I'm straight. That's not okay, and

it needs to change!"

Hundreds of people turned out for the first Move In May – young, old, gay, straight, bi, transgender, and from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. All proudly stepping forward, literally, for the LGBTI community in a show of respect and strength. And among them were footy players Matt Spangher, Chris Judd, Brock McLean, Brendon Goddard and Trent Cotchin, and *Neighbours* stars Scott McGregor, Olympia Valance and Rhys Ulich, who are Move In May Ambassadors.

With the day's message of equality and inclusion, it was no surprise to see Australian Equality Party Leader, Jason Tuazon-McCheyne, Greens candidate Jason Ball



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and, of course, Molly Meldrum there, too. Rowena Allen, the Victorian Commissioner For Gender And Sexuality, also attended and, we should note, that Victoria is the only state to have such an office.

“A lot of people assume that I secured AFL Ambassadors due to my family connections, which is not true,” says Angie. “The people that I know through my family are Chris Judd and Molly Meldrum. But I researched other potential ambassadors by seeing who had expressed their support for the LGBTIQA community and who I saw as being role models. I made contact through websites, through managers, social media... any way I could. Having said this, I take the role of the ambassadors seriously. There have been some high profile people who, after meeting with them, I realised would not be a good fit and left it at that.”

Some of Angie’s motivation for initiating Move In May is deeply personal. “I’m 29-years-old and have lost four friends to suicide – all male. Men are twice more likely to suicide than women and when we add the LGBTIQA people into the equation, this community is four to five times more likely to suicide than their heterosexual counterparts. In fact, 14 percent are more likely to attempt suicide, with the trans community being 50 percent more likely to attempt. These statistics are heartbreaking, terrifying and it needs to change.”

Sadly, since the first Move In May event took place, we’ve seen one of the worst LGBTI hate crimes of recent years in the horrific attack on Orlando’s Pulse nightclub in June. Angie, along with the rest of us, found it hard to make sense of the attack.

“There is simply no way that I can explain how I reacted to the news of Orlando. I have never felt so sad, so confused, so anxious and so angry all at once. And



Ruby and Jack Dacy.



then I saw how much love, support and compassion was shown afterwards and it filled my heart with love and hope. It is an indescribable feeling.

“I really believe and hope that Move In May will be even stronger next year. The aftermath of Orlando showed the world that evil will not override love, and now more than ever, communities need to come together and stand up for equality and inclusion.”

While Move In May is planned to become an annual event coinciding with IDAHOT Day, Stand Up Events is the larger association set up by Angie to address homophobia and other issues on a wider ongoing level.

“Stand Up Events in a not-for-profit incorporated association that is dedicated to challenging homophobia in sport and in life,” says Angie. “Our main goal is to implement our customised preventative programs into junior sporting codes in rural and metropolitan areas. We are working towards these programs to make them impactful and measurable, and we want to teach our youth that derogatory language and behaviour is simply not okay. We want to breed a more equal and inclusive environment for everyone.”

For participants jogging around the park, volunteers and ambassadors – and those who just happened to be looking on – all agree there was a special sense of community and humility that made Move In May a success.

“There was a vibrant, friendly atmosphere with people from all types of communities coming together,” says Angie. “The message that we are, simply, all the same. I genuinely cannot wait for Move In May 2017!”

Given the recent tragedy in Orlando, now more than ever, we need to look after each other, ourselves, and continue to raise LGBTI awareness in the hope of making positive change.

MORE Registrations for Move In May 2017 open next February. For more, and to watch the ‘moving’ video featuring music by Ruby & Jack Dacy visit standupevents.com.au

If you feel you are in need of help regarding issues raised in this story, contact Beyondblue.org.au. Tel: 1300 22 4636 or lifeline.org.au Tel: 131114



Matt Spangher.

MATT SPANGHER, AFL PLAYER FOR HAWTHORN:

"I have a personal connection – my sister is gay and I'm really lucky that I have a family that is completely accepting. We love her and her partner more than anything, but unfortunately that's not the reality for everyone, and I've seen some of her friends go through some hard times. But I think that public opinion is changing and Move In May is a step in the right direction."



Rhys Uhlich and Scott McGregor (right).

SCOTT MCGREGOR, ACTOR:

"If you look at marriage equality in Australia, I think it's ridiculous that we just haven't got there yet. But I think it's inevitable, and being a part of Move In May helps push for these sorts of things to happen. I love being a part of it and the support it has received is just awesome. I think it'll grow and grow. Not long ago, we had a gay storyline on Neighbours, which was great and positive, and I really think we should be much further along than we currently are."



Steven Greene and Chris Judd (right).

CHRIS JUDD, FORMER CARLTON FOOTBALL CLUB CAPTAIN:

"I've been great friends with Angie Green's brother Steven for years and I could see how passionate she was about Move In May and Stand Up Events. My wife Bec and I both have friends that are in same-sex relationships and I think it's a good time to be having these conversations. Move In May is quite unique, but it's also very colourful and a lot of fun."



Brock McLean (left) and Jason Ball.

BROCK MCLEAN, FORMER CARLTON FOOTBALLER:

"Any cause that plans to raise awareness and helps to eliminate homophobia and discrimination is something I'm always interested in and passionate about. My sister is gay and I have some close gay friends. That's why I started speaking out against homophobia. The most important things in my life are family and friends. I just want to see them treated the same as every other human being. There's a lot of potential for growth with Move In May and I have no doubt that we'll see Move In May days Australia wide!"