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**Out in Ohio: Breaking the Silence through Persuasive Column Writing**

Through a series of columns published in Findlay, Ohio's local newspaper, *The Courier*, the capstone project aimed to change the rhetoric and focus of the "gay rights" conversation. In Findlay, as on the national stage, the "issue" is discussed in terms of laws and rights, and morals and norms, but the conversation rarely focuses on the individual. The columns told the "coming out" story of one community member and addressed the unique barriers to the dialogue in Findlay. The project operated with the assertion that in small town America celebrities and politicians won't change the conversation and achieve tolerance, but the individuals in a community can. The publications solicited feedback from locals and ultimately engaged hundreds of community members in the conversation.