

Pandora at Kaleidoscope presents: *Suicide Awareness Through the Life of Pan*

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On Saturday Feb. 21 Kaleidoscope, a community LGBT and allies youth group founded in 2013, held an event at "The Spot" in Voorhees Town Center that opened the doors to a story about suicide, abuse, and sexual orientation. Kaleidoscope brings students of the LGBT and Ally community to lead meetings at "The Spot" every third Saturday of the month to share their interests, stories, and concerns, and overall discover who they are.

This particular Saturday was different because Kaleidoscope had Pandora Scooter come to the stage and share her story about a girl named Pan. Scooter is a nationally toured Spoken Word artist from New Brunswick. Kaleidoscope and Scooter met at the 2014 annual GSA Forum at Lenape High School when the spoken word artist performed her piece "I AM ENOUGH!" which states that the people of the world do not have to be more than who they already are because they are enough.

"I was really moved by her performance. I don't think anyone else is doing this," said 27-year-old Angelica Vedol of Kaleidoscope when asked about her first impression of Scooter.

Scooter's performance revealed the life of a young teenage girl, Pan, who dealt with anxiety attacks brought on by her mother, her father's rejection of her sexuality, her own rejection of her sexuality, and rejection of herself. With all of this being added, Scooter made a point to discuss suicide. With Pan attempting suicide three times, Scooter discussed how difficult it can be for kids of all ages to talk about their thoughts of taking their own lives for fear of immediate judgment. "Taking my life," is a phrase Scooter said she prefers over suicide, since she feels the term suicide is already so heavy and full. Suicide was stated in 2013 as America's 10th leading cause of death for, in 2013, someone died from suicide every 12.8 minutes--as stated by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

The Spot was decked out in a flat screen TV, snack bar, pool table, dart board, and stage for all the teens of Kaleidoscope to take advantage of. People were chatting while awaiting Scooter to take over the atmosphere as they began filling the seats. Scooter came out and before the crowd could get settled, she began breathing rhythmically, heavily, and slowly. This was the beginning of her one-woman-show named after her spoken word piece, "I AM ENOUGH!"

"You are stupid," then, "you are ugly," then, "no, love," then, "unwanted," then "you are not enough," all play on an individual audio loop before all playing at once. Disturbing the audience, Scooter spoke over the repeating words, "Ping-pongs in the brain. No one to say I love you. Unwanted by those assigned to love me."

Scooter goes on and talks about Pan, a young child of the 80's and the 90's, who *was* unloved by those assigned to love her and the child left alone to begin unloving herself. Feeling like a drifter in her own house, the only way to escape her mother's abuse was in her sleep. Pan's mother would shame her by calling her stupid, creating the question in her head, "Where was the love?"

"I was 4-years-old and because it wasn't obvious, I asked her, "Mommy, do you love me?"...she said no." was Pan's experience. From that point on, stupid played on in young Pan's head as a constant reminder of what her mother thought of her and what she began to think of herself. Even just breathing caused Pan to yell "failure!" in her head. The audience was quite silent and fixated on the stage. "Who do you think is going to love you if your mother doesn't love you? You think you will? You won't," cried Pan with total dejection.

Everyone needs multiple people to confide in. If you put all you feel into one person, when they leave you will fall apart. To keep from falling apart, the drama continued, Pan's eccentric guidance counselor by the name of Betty Spencer came into the picture. With a feathered scarf and a jazzy, sing-along tune, Spencer came to life in Scooter's theatrical introduction to help Pan face her life, while also becoming a large component in it.

Breaking multiple bones jumping off a local bridge, Pan was finally sent to a mental institution. In adulthood, Pan found herself suppressing her sexuality, marrying a man with whom she had a child. Having all-gay friends, Pan eventually admitted that she was gay to herself and her world, and after going to therapy, began loving herself.

After the show, many people were moved, holding little cardboard boxes that Scooter passed out as gifts. Inside the boxes were little mirrors. Now, Scooter said that everyone should look at themselves and see themselves as enough.

"It was an experimental way to reach out to kids because when [Pandora] first started she began breathing, and although it was awkward or whatever, it got you ready for what she had to say," said a 19-year-old, audience member from Monmouth County when asked about what he thought of Scooter's performance.

Many of the audience members were impressed with Scooter's openness about suicide and how everyone should all stick together and continue talking about their lives. As one Kaleidoscope member said, "It's really great that people talk about this stuff; it can really help people going through similar issues." In fact, when asked about why she created the performance, Scooter said, "Four years ago I realized the elements of homophobia and bullying--I was ready."

In addition to that response, Scooter also said that the beginning of the show is the hardest because it is so heavy. However, when asked what the hardest part of the performance was to deliver, Scooter said it was when Pan asked her mother if she loved her and she said no, also saying that it's all hard because it's based on what happens in life.

On Scooter's website, [www.pandorascooter.com](http://www.pandorascooter.com), you can find further information about the spoken word artist and about her tour dates all over the nation.