

http://www.bgdailynews.com/news/wku-students-plan-local-march-for-our-lives-event/article_7dac64f6-7ab8-5916-baa9-522485ae78f8.html

WKU students plan local 'March for Our Lives' event

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com 49 min ago

When thousands of students rally Saturday in Washington, D.C., for the national March for Our Lives event, local students will gather in downtown Bowling Green for their own demonstration.

Western Kentucky University students are organizing a march that will begin at 11 a.m. at Cherry Hall at WKU. Participants will then travel to Fountain Square Park, where speakers will highlight the need for changing the nation's gun laws.

"We really just want to make our community safer," said Murphy Burke, a WKU senior from Des Moines, Iowa.

Burke said the event's goal is to promote safety.

"This isn't a march to prove that all guns are bad," she said, calling for what she described as common-sense gun laws that "make sure that guns aren't falling into the wrong hands."

Those measures include raising the age to buy a gun to 21, she said.

Burke said the event is meant to show lawmakers there's a consensus for gun reform. Several speakers are lined up to explain how gun violence affects people of color and those in the LGBTQ community, she said.

Among them is Jeremy McFarland, a local activist for queer rights. Queer is a reclaimed term for people who are not heterosexual or whose gender identity doesn't correspond with their birth sex.

McFarland said he'll speak at the rally from a queer perspective and discuss how gun violence works against queer people. Speaking generally, he said queer people are more likely to be victims of suicide or domestic violence.

"Common-sense gun legislation is one step toward healing a culture that is often so unwelcoming and challenging for queer people to exist in," he said.

Other speakers include Veronica Reed with Black Lives Matter and the Rev. John C. Lee Jr. of Mount Zion Baptist Church.

Haley Parker-Rinehart of the gun reform group Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America will also speak at the local event.

When Rinehart's son was 4 years old, he accidentally shot himself in the head. He survived and is now 20 years old, but Rinehart said he still experiences anxiety attacks that can be triggered by something as commonplace as television programs.

Every time Rinehart sees another school shooting on the news, her mind goes to the long-term mental health issues students will face.



“It’s a very real thing that these kids are going to suffer from,” she said.

When it comes to gun reforms, Rinehart said she opposes arming teachers because of the chance for accidental shootings. She said law enforcement could also be confused about who the bad guy is in a crisis situation.

She said there needs to be more oversight of gun sales between private citizens facilitated by sites like Facebook. She also called for more thorough background checks that account for a person’s mental health history. High-capacity magazines and bump stocks, which are gun modifications that enable a weapon to be fully automatic, should also be banned, she said.

Rinehart said she’s marching to support students who are stepping up to take action following fecklessness from adults.

“I’m marching with the students because they have finally found their voice,” she said.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

– Follow education reporter Aaron Mudd on Twitter @BGDN_edbeat or visit bgdailynews.com.

Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.