

# The Rainbow Party

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As a new parent, you discover pretty quickly that a young child won't learn much through lecture alone. Imagine citing the nutrition facts about Cheerios to your toddler to coax them into taking their first bite. Or picture trying to teach your baby what sound a cow makes by reading the bovine entry in Merriam-Webster's dictionary.

No, parents learn to make our little lessons exciting and memorable! We wave our arms, we make silly sounds and we sing songs. We try and try again to help our little ones reach that goal of picking up an "O" or making the "moo" sound. Through these amazing visuals and abundant practice, we find success. And we certainly don't stop there; we build on those little wins with each new lesson as our children grow.

I learned early on that with important social issues, like LGBTQ+ rights, I would need to teach my twin daughters in the same way. We'd have to teach these lessons through visual experiences, constant reinforcement and build upon each lesson in a developmentally-appropriate way as they become ready to understand more. My husband and I wanted to demonstrate the importance of inclusion by reinforcing what we tell the girls with our actions, believing an example is always the best teaching tool!

Our church home, St. Augustine of Canterbury in Oklahoma City, is a fully-inclusive church and actively welcomes LGBTQ+ persons to all levels of engagement and leadership. We seek out ways to share our love and support with the community. Our girls continually see and hear this and even get to participate.

When our girls were 4 years old, they marched in their first OKC Pride Parade with our church family. They walked with us down the full parade route, singing, dancing and



waving to the crowds. The daytime parade was a great opportunity for whole families to get involved, whether watching or walking!

Since the girls insisted on calling it the “Rainbow Party,” we used the incredibly vibrant visual of the parade to our advantage. We emphasized the importance of diversity and acceptance by pointing out how we needed to invite all kinds of different people to the rainbow party, just like we needed each different color to complete the rainbow. We reinforced the message they were hearing at home and at church to underscore how wonderful and unique each person could be and how everyone deserved to be treated with kindness, fairness and respect.

When the girls were 5, their children’s group at St. Augustine assembled Pride flags to pass out at the Edmond Pride festival and spent the day exploring the family-friendly event and listening to members of our church share a message of love and inclusion. The Edmond Pride festival, located at Hafer Park and centered around the main stage and children’s playground, was packed with children’s activities, food trucks, live music and booths of supportive community groups, including St. Augustine.

By actively participating in events like the OKC Pride Parade and the Edmond Pride festival, we’re giving the girls memories we can tie to future lessons and opportunities to learn more about the LGBTQ+ community we support.



We believe our job as parents is to build on these lessons and guide our children to become compassionate, informed allies for the LGBTQ+ community. We see this as a two-fold service. First, we want our girls to know that we’ll always be a soft place to land. As they grow up and discover their identities, we want them to know they’ll always be loved and supported no matter how they live or who they love. Second, we want to encourage them to fight all forms of discrimination. That includes standing up for their LGBTQ+ friends, their friends of color, their differently-abled friends and all other friends who also deserve an invitation to the rainbow party.

As our girls mature, we’ll keep reinforcing and building upon these initial lessons, educating them on issues of discrimination, and challenging them to help make our community and nation a more equitable place for all. Participation will be key to understanding these important lessons, so we’ll continue to include our children in Pride events and participate in celebrations of our differences, providing visual demonstrations of the lessons and discussions we have at home. After all, if a picture is worth a thousand words, a rainbow party is worth a million!

Read the article [online](#).