Last September alone, the suicides of at least four gay teens made headlines. No doubt there were more that didn’t make the papers and news sites. During the same month, the LGBT advocacy group Campus Pride conducted a nationwide survey of 5,000 gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered college students, faculty, and staff. A quarter of them said they had been harassed for their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Dan Savage, a columnist at Seattle’s alternative weekly The Stranger, chose the moment to launch the video series “It Gets Better” with a video of him and his partner talking about the pain of growing up gay and about the point at which their lives got better.

Savage’s site, which invites all people to share their stories, has more than 5,000 videos, posted by members of the LGBT community and straight supporters, and has had millions of visitors.

Inspired by Savage’s project, Bostonia and BU Today invited members of BU’s LGBT community to share their own experiences.

Joe Solmonese (COM’87), president of Human Rights Campaign, the country’s largest LGBT civil rights organization, calls this a “tipping-point moment,” one in which the United States is “poised to really make some very significant strides in matters of LGBT equality.”

“Unfortunately, in those tipping-point moments there’s the greatest resistance,” he says. “We see people empowered to be out and open about who they are and then we see the measures of violence and bullying all of a sudden in a more significant way.”

Solmonese says he appreciates Savage’s project. Growing up in Attleboro, Mass., a place he calls “not diverse or worldly,” he was harassed, teased, and called names for being gay. At BU, he says, he was impressed by the diversity of the University’s student body: “Even though I wasn’t out while I was in school,” Solmonese says, “BU did instill in me that sense that I could do anything I wanted to do and be anything I wanted to be.”

Leslie Friday

Liz Douglass, Marsh Chapel associate for LGBTQ students, is one of many students, faculty, and staff in BU’s LGBT community who talk about coming out and living openly gay in a series of videos for Bostonia and BU Today.

WEB EXTRA
Watch videos of students, faculty, and staff in BU’s LGBT community sharing their stories at bu.edu/bostonia.

MED’s First Student Residence

CITY OFFICIALS, trustees, donors, administrators, and School of Medicine faculty and students gathered in October for the MED Student Residence groundbreaking: (from left) Ashraf Dahod, Joe Fallon, Sherry Leventhal, Shamim Dahod (CGS’76, CAS’78, MED’87), President Robert A. Brown, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino (Hon.’01), MED Dean Karen Antman, and Catherine Spina (CAS’04, MED’05,’15). Scheduled to open in June 2012 at 815 Albany St., the residence will provide affordable housing for students who may face up to $170,000 in bills for their medical school education. The $38 million, nine-story complex will feature 104 two-bedroom apartments and retail and common space on the first floor. A fundraising campaign has raised $11 million of its $20 million target, to be used in part to keep the rents in the new building as low as $800 for some units. The University will also borrow money through tax-exempt, fixed-rate bonds. The school enrolls approximately 175 first-year medical students each year.