

GSA Newsarama
Volume 5, Issue 11
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This newsletter is created by Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools to keep students, school professionals and other community members up to date on the issues, events and news items that may be of interest to those working within Wisconsin schools, communities, gay-straight alliances and similar clubs. If you are no longer interested in receiving this update, simply reply to this email requesting that your name be removed from the list. Please include your current school, or previous school if you have graduated or are no longer in school.

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Feature

Take It Apart: GSA for Safe Schools Seeks Student Planners for Upcoming Programming

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools is searching for dedicated middle school and high school students who would like to participate in the planning and implementation of our new project: Take It Apart. The goal of Take It Apart is to increase awareness about the ongoing impact of race and racism on youth in our school communities and to increase the ability and commitment of youth to actively challenge the racism and racist attitudes that create unsafe schools.

We're currently looking for students from the Madison and surrounding areas to help plan an early May meet-up for students of color, and a fall retreat to teach people how to actively resist racism.

Student planners would need to be available for 3 to 4 meetings prior to the beginning of May, as well as occasional meetings throughout summer. If you are interested in helping GSA for Safe Schools with the planning of this ongoing project, please contact Brian Juchems at (608) 661-4141 or email him at brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org. Please also let us know if you are interested in participating but have concerns about transportation.

Headlines

1. Day of Silence Four Weeks Away!

On Wednesday, April 18th, thousands of students all across the country will be participating in the 11th Annual Day of Silence to "speak out" against the anti-LGBT harassment and discrimination that exists in our schools. This event is sponsored by GLSEN National (the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) and is endorsed by GSA for Safe Schools.

In addition to the activities being organized in schools throughout Wisconsin, there will be a Breaking the Silence rally in Madison that afternoon. Anyone interested in taking part in the rally is welcome to join us! Students will begin gathering (still silent!) in Library Mall at the bottom of State Street at 3PM. At 4:45, Day of Silence participants will march up State Street to the Capitol Building. At 5PM, the Breaking the Silence rally will begin.

Last year's rally featured an "open mic" forum for students to voice their frustrations with the unfair treatment of LGBT people. This year, however, we are requesting that anyone who wishes to speak at the rally register with GSA for Safe Schools. The rally will go until 5:30, so we are asking that everyone limit their speech to under two minutes, so that anyone who wants to speak out will have the opportunity to do so. If you have questions, or would like to sign up to speak at the Breaking the Silence rally, please call Tim Michael at (608) 661-4141 or email him at timm@gsaforsafeschools.org

In case your school has not done so, GLSEN National would like to get a count of how many schools are participating in Day of Silence this year. You can officially register your school or club at <http://www.dayofsilence.org/content/getinvolved.html>.

You can also download buttons and tags for your personal website to help spread the word about Day of Silence! This can also be done through GLSEN's website at <http://www.dayofsilence.org/content/buttons.html>.

2. 2007 Leadership Training Institute (LTI) Applications Now Available!

From August 18th through 20th of 2007, Wisconsin high school students have the opportunity to attend GSA for Safe Schools' Leadership Training Institute, or LTI. LTI is a 3-day retreat at which students who are working to challenge homophobia and discrimination in their schools have the opportunity to develop their leadership and activist skills. Here is what a few past participants have said about LTI:

"You will love it! It will CHANGE your life."

"Oh my God it is the best thing ever and if you don't go you're missing out on a life-changing experience. GO!"

"You will meet awesome cool people...and have fun in the process."

General applications for LTI are now available and will be posted on our website to download by the end of the week. Completed applications and registration materials are due by noon on Friday, April 27th.

If you have any questions about LTI, please contact Brian Juchems at (608) 661-4141 or brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org.

Related Readings: Scholarships and Opportunities

GSA Newsarama is a publication of GSA for Safe Schools. Events, resources, and news items listed under "Related Readings" are not sponsored or written by GSA for Safe Schools, and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of said organization.

3. GLSEN National Seeks Next Team of Jump-Start Student Leaders

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network is currently searching for middle school and high school students to join next year's Jump-Start National Student Leadership Team. Jump-Start students are chosen to be "peer educators" and work with GLSEN National to support student organizing in schools around LGBT issues. They represent various regions across the country, and receive training on strategic action planning, coalition building, leadership skills, and up-to-date information on safe school policy and legislation. If you have leadership experience or would like to gain more, you can apply for the position at www.GLSEN.org/JSapplication. In addition to filling out a brief application, all applicants must provide a recommendation form. Applications are due May 1st. If you have further questions you may contact GLSEN's Director of Student Organizing, Benny Vasquez at bvasquez@glsen.org.

4. Scholarships Available for LBTQ Latina Youth: Deadline is March 31st

Amigas Latinas, a support, education and advocacy organization for Latina lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning women seeks candidates for its annual Latina Les/bi/trans/queer Youth Scholarship Fund. Current high school seniors, who are of Latina heritage, identify as lesbian, bisexual, transgender or queer and who are actively promoting understanding and acceptance of LGBTQ people in their school and/or community can apply for a scholarship for college expenses to be awarded this Spring.

Up to six scholarships (\$500 - \$2,000) will be awarded and include the final scholarships to be given in honor of Aixa Diaz, a founding member of Amigas who brought vision and commitment to the Latina community through her organizing efforts and knowledge and encouragement to Latino children through her dedication as a teacher. The deadline for submission is March 31, 2007. To receive an application, send an email to info@amigaslatinas.org.

5. 2 Degrees Coffee Shop Seeks Performers for “Free & Queer”, An All-Ages Amateur Drag Show on April 13th

The Madkings and 2 Degrees Coffee Shop are putting on an all-ages, amateur drag show at A Room of One’s Own bookstore in Madison on April 13th entitled “Free & Queer”. They are still currently looking for performers for the event. For more information or to sign up to perform, you can contact Gretchen Treu at gltreu@wisc.edu, or call the bookstore at (608) 257-7888.

6. Betty Franklin-Hammonds Scholarship Opportunity

The Urban League of Greater Madison would like to announce that applications are now available for the Betty Franklin-Hammonds Scholarship. The Betty Franklin-Hammonds Scholarship Fund was created to honor one of Madison's most dynamic and visionary leaders. The Betty Franklin-Hammonds Scholarship rewards the accomplishments of African-American graduating seniors seeking to further their education beyond high school, with special attention given to those who have faced particular economic and/or social obstacles on their journey to educational advancement. This scholarship is also used to help support adults from low-to-moderate income homes, who are seeking to improve their lives through higher education.

Two scholarships worth \$1,250 each are available for a high school senior and a returning adult student. Applications are due April 9th, 2007, with winners announced at the Urban League's annual fundraiser, Spring Into Jazz, on May 11th. Applications are available from the Urban League at 151 E. Gorham St. in Madison. For more information call Amy Good at (608) 251-8500 x34 or email agood@ulgm.org.

7. Young Womynz Empowerment Conference in Milwaukee April 27th – 29th

Project Q of Milwaukee is looking for lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning and straight allied female-identified youth (ages 24 and under) to attend a weekend retreat from April 27th through the 29th. At the retreat you will have the opportunity to raise your own awareness and participate in educational activities in a supportive and empowering environment. The registration fee is \$25, but scholarships are available upon request. Space is limited, so reserve your spot by contacting Maureen (Mo) White at (414) 223-3220 x114 or by emailing mo@projectq.org.

They are also still seeking youth and adult volunteers! More information about the conference may be found at www.projectq.org.

8. LEAGUE Foundation Scholarship Opportunity

LEAGUE at AT&T is the country's first and largest Gay Employee Business Resource Group. The LEAGUE Foundation has been helping LGBT-identified students attend institutions of higher learning since 1996. Last year one of the scholarships, The Matthew Shepard Scholarship, was awarded to a student from Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. LEAGUE will be accepting applications until April 27th, 2007. To learn more about the scholarships that are available through LEAGUE or to download an application please visit: <http://www.league-att.org/foundation/>

9. Hearings Scheduled on Governor's Proposed Budget

The Joint Committee on Finance will be holding four more hearings across the state to get input from citizens on Governor Doyle's proposed budget, which includes his request to provide fair and equal benefits to all state employees. This is a great opportunity to share our stories of how domestic partner benefits will improve the lives of LGBT people in Wisconsin.

Attend a hearing in a city near you!

March 27th: Chippewa Falls, WI. 12PM to 5PM in the Chippewa Falls County Courthouse Assembly Room, Lower Level, Rooms 1 & 3

April 4th: Prairie du Chien, WI. 12PM to 5PM in the Prairie du Chien High School Auditorium

April 11th: Rhinelander, WI. 12PM to 5PM in the Nicolet College Learning Resource Center Theater

April 12th: Green Bay, WI. 10AM to 4PM in the National Railroad Museum Lenfestey Center

For more information, please contact Ryan Robison at (202) 216-1558.

Related Readings: News

10. GSA Network News: Passing on the Baton: How to Transfer Leadership in Your GSA

In their March 7th newsletter, the Gay-Straight Alliance Network of California featured four great tips that seniors can use to help ensure that their GSA or club lasts after they've graduated:

"The end of the school year is quickly approaching, and soon we will bid goodbye to another year gone by. Given this imminent change, one of the most common dilemmas facing any GSA is the question of leadership succession: how does one make sure that the club continues on smoothly once there is a change (e.g. graduation) in leadership? Listed below are a few tips that might be worth keeping in mind when your club is getting ready for a transition in leadership.

1. RECRUIT MANY UNDERCLASSMEN MEMBERS. If you start your GSA in your senior year and have only seniors in the GSA, chances are it'll be very hard for it to continue forward once you all have graduated. If your school has a club rush week or something comparable, try recruiting as many freshmen and sophomores as possible; that way, once the seniors in the club have graduated, there will still be people left to run the club.

2. START TRAINING EARLY. Rather than or in addition to assigning all tasks to the club officers, have a younger member help him/her/hir out. That way, the younger member will get much more "on-the-job" experience which will make the transition much smoother once the seniors have graduated. (Plus, the job will get done quicker!) Another suggestion is to have a younger member co-facilitate a meeting, or to help organize an agenda. The more members you are able to train in the day-to-day tasks of the GSA (i.e., drafting an agenda, fundraising, facilitating), the easier the transition will be once you've moved on.

3. GET HELP FROM YOUR ADVISOR. A good, compassionate advisor is an invaluable source of wisdom and support - don't be afraid to ask for their help! Sometimes it may feel overwhelming to have to juggle your academic responsibilities, nascent social life, and budding personal relationships; this is normal, and to be expected. Please ask your advisor for guidance and support around issues and skills (e.g., logistics) that you may not know how to transfer to a younger member.

4. WRITE A GUIDEBOOK. In the situation that your GSA has absolutely no underclassmen in it, don't despair. One thing you may consider doing is to write a short guidebook on the club that would detail how the club is run; this way, when the next group of students (and there will definitely be some) wants to restart or reorganize the club, they'll have a good sense of how the club ran before and will make it easier for them. Make sure to include things like information around your club's finances, the current advisor's contact information, your contact information (if they have questions), the club's

organizational structure, etc. The more detailed you are, the better!

It's normal to feel apprehensive about change when you've worked so hard to establish something. But if you take these steps (and feel free to add to them, too!) you'll be planting a seed for your GSA to continue once you've moved on and for our movement for equality to continue forward.”

11. New York Times: Utah Sets Rigorous Rules for School Clubs, and Gay Ones May Be Target

Next month, a 17-page law will go into effect that details the guidelines and regulations for non-curricular clubs in Utah’s schools. Many argue that this law is intended to hinder the formation of gay-straight alliances, since it outlaws any clubs that go against “the boundaries of socially appropriate behavior.”

The Federal Equal Access Act protects gay-straight alliances in a school that allows other non-curricular clubs, but some are worried that the specific wording of this new law will create the legal loophole that would empower school administrators to treat GSAs differently. You can read the full article at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/17/education/17utah.html?_r=2&ref=education&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

12. NCTE: Federal Hate Crimes Bill Reintroduced

On March 20th, Rep. John Conyers (D-MI) reintroduced the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2007 (LLEHCPA) into the House of Representatives. The National Center for Transgender Equality (NCTE), along with 210 other organizations, applauds this bill, which would provide local law enforcement agencies the tools and support they need to combat bias-motivated crimes on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, race, religion, color and national origin.

Despite the frequent and extreme levels of violence often wielded against transgender people, these types of crimes are not tracked or addressed as hate crimes because “gender identity” is not included in current federal laws. LLEHCPA would enable authorities to collect this type of vital information.

An identical bill was passed in the House and Senate in 2005 by a strong majority, but was effectively eliminated in a conference committee. Nearly every law enforcement agency in the country has endorsed this bill. Please

show your support for the LLEHCPA by signing this online petition created by the National Center for Transgender Equality:
<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/nctequality>.

13. Sun Sentinel: Judge: Gay-Straight Alliance Discrimination Lawsuit Against School Board Can Continue

The battle over a gay-straight alliance in Okeechobee, Florida continues as a U.S. District Court Judge ruled that the lawsuit against the Okeechobee school board for refusing to recognize the club may continue. The lawyer for the school board argues that the GSA is a “sex-based” club, and the school board is within their right to ban discussions of sex inside the school walls. To read the latest development of this ongoing saga, click here:
<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/southflorida/sfl-318gaysuit,0,7177219.story?coll=sfla-home-headlines>

14. News Press: Gay Protections Enter Anti-Bullying Debate

A proposed bill to ban bullying in Florida schools has come under scrutiny for not being inclusive enough. The bill, which specifically outlaws harassment based on sex, religion and race, make no mention of anti-LGBT bullying. Several Florida students have spoken out against this omission and were reportedly told by one lawmaker that gay people need psychological treatment.

The bill was named after a 15-year old Florida youth who killed himself after being repeatedly harassed over the internet for two years by another student who accused him of being gay and a “stalker”. To read more about this story, follow this link: <http://www.news-press.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070314/NEWS0120/703140403/1119/NEWS0120>

15. The Fresno Bee: Schools Grapple With “So Gay” Use

A school in California that is trying to curb the use of the word “gay” in a derogatory manner is being criticized for being inconsistent. According to the article, one student was suspended for saying “that’s so gay” on the playground during a soccer game. His mother was not upset about the punishment, but was confused when another student was only sent to the principal’s office for calling another student “gay”. The school is saying that

they will determine the punishment on a case-by-case basis. You can read the full story here: <http://www.fresnobee.com/270/story/34627.html>.

16. MSNBC.com: 'That's So Gay' Prompts A Lawsuit

In a related story, another set of parents are suing a California school for punishing their daughter for using a phrase "which enjoys widespread currency in youth culture". The student, Rebekah Rice, was being teased for her Mormon upbringing when she used "that's so gay" as a retort. The incident occurred back in 2002, and when Rice testified, she claimed she was only using the phrase to mean "stupid...silly...or dumb."

Rice's parents claim that the school is creating a double-standard, since they were not fighting in the same manner to protect their daughter from faith-based teasing. To read the rest of this article, click here:

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/17388702/?GT1=9145>
