

GSA Newsarama
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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

LTI Graduates Shake Some Social Change!

This year, the theme for GSA for Safe Schools' Leadership Training Institute (LTI) was "Shake Some Social Change". LTI was only a month ago, but we're

already hearing reports of students shaking things up in their schools. Here are two quick stories:

Robin is a junior at Brookfield Central High School who had been told repeatedly that she could not start a Gay-Straight Alliance at her high school. This fall, however, things went a little differently. I'll let her tell you in her own words:

"In the first week of school, I talked to an administrator and mentioned that I wanted to accomplish the task of starting a successful GSA at Brookfield Central. He then said that he would meet with me later on. I arrived later that week for the meeting with him, LTI binder in hand. His reasoning for possibly not allowing the club was that it's not educational and should be done outside of school grounds. I explained to him that by law, if there is one non-educational, extra curricular club at Brookfield Central, all [within reason] must be accepted to form. (I used the example of chess club.) After talking about that for a while, he stood up, shook my hand, and congratulated me on my power of persuasion. I wanted to get a feel for how successful this club was really going to be, so I had a petition going around school for people who would support the club. Over 150 people signed. Not to say that they will all join, but, at least I know that we will have support from our classmates. I can't wait for our first meeting to kick off next week...I thank everyone at LTI for giving me the support and encouragement to come back to Brookfield and SHAKE SOME SOCIAL CHANGE!"

Justin is a junior at Whitefish Bay High School. His school has had a GSA for a number of years, but he feels that it could be doing MORE. Here are just a few things that he has in the works:

"I decided to start with a school climate survey, because in past years GSA's efforts have been very scattered and nothing was very productive. Doing such a survey would provide valuable information on how and what GSA could and should be doing to make the school a better place. This year we are going to be participating in all the GLSEN days of action, as well as coordinating with other diversity groups to create other activities and to accomplish common goals. So far we have an Ally's Week Movie Night planned, the school climate survey, a Diversity Assembly, a teacher training, and we've been putting up the nifty "Safe Space" stickers for teachers who would like them. My advisor, Ms. Cook, is behind us 110%, which makes all the difference. The one quote that really inspired me to head up the GSA is, 'Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm,' by Ralph Waldo Emerson. That quote has had a nice impact with my Officers, because with everything we do, we do it with enthusiasm!"

These are just two examples of some great organizing that is happening to make schools safer for LGBT students and their allies, and we would love to hear more. Keep us in the loop of what's going on in your school – we're all part of the same movement!

Headlines

1. Register Your GSA or Club with GSA for Safe Schools

Every fall we try to update our list of contacts as best as possible, so we are asking GSAs and similar clubs to officially “register” through our website. Even if you registered with us last year, sign up again. Any information you can share with us (current advisor, school name, name of club) is extremely helpful in sending out updates and resources.

And just to make things more exciting, we’re offering a little incentive: Any group that registers through our website will be entered into a drawing to win \$50 for their GSA or club. Please note: Each club will only be entered into the drawing once, so having all thirty members of your GSA register will not increase your odds of winning. The drawing will take place at the end of October.

To register, follow this link: http://www.gsaforsafeschools.org/gsa_register.html

2. Build Your Team for the GSA for Safe Schools Walk/Run/Eat

Has your GSA created a team for the GSA for Safe Schools Walk/Run/Eat? Are you Team Captain material? We think you are.

To make it easier to build your team we're knocking \$5 off registration for each person who signs up for your team (that's just \$10 for students who register before October 6th). Be creative! Come up with a theme and attend the Walk/Run/Eat in costume, if you like. Just make sure you're wearing something you can safely walk, run, or eat in.

And for those groups who are looking for an extra challenge, we are offering a fundraising incentive. Any club or group of students (registered as a team) that collectively raises \$500 in pledges will be given a \$50 gift card to the bowling alley, restaurant, craft store, movie theater (you get the idea) of their choice. If a club raises \$1,000 in pledges, they will receive TWO \$50 gift cards.

In order to take part in the challenge, each group must appoint one student to be the Team Captain. If you are interested in being a Team Captain for your school or club, email Tim at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org and he'll send you everything you need.

More information about the Walk/Run/Eat, including registration and pledge tracking forms, can be found at www.gsaforsafeschools.org.

And while you're there, don't forget to nominate someone to be an Honorary Course Marshal for the event!

3. Become a Student Planner with GSA for Safe Schools

GSAFE student planners are a diverse group of youth leaders from GSAs and other student clubs who are able to attend regular meetings in Madison.

As a Student Planner you will partner with GSAFE staff to plan and develop student programming (eg, conferences, rallies, etc.) that advance the priorities identified by past and current planners. Planning meetings are usually Thursday evenings and last about 90 minutes. During the school year meetings are usually weekly although there are usually some weeks off between projects.

While planning programs for your peers as a Student Planner you will learn skills to become a stronger activist and work towards creating a safer climate at your school for LGBTQ youth and straight allies. You will get support around mounting a campaign, event planning or starting a GSA club on your campus.

As a student planner you will have regular opportunities to

1. Help plan and run a youth led conference or present workshops at local conferences.
1. Plan and lead trainings and workshops at local conferences and events.
2. Network with other student activists in the South Central Wisconsin region.
3. Get peer and staff support and feedback on your ongoing campaign, action or event.
4. Give input on GSAFE programs, policies and curriculum development.

In addition you may have an opportunity to

1. Discuss emerging trends in the LGBTQ and greater social justice movement.
2. Provide occasional technical assistance to other GSAs.
3. Serve as a student contact for GSAFE when the media comes calling for interviews.

Requirements

1. Willingness to commit to serving as a Student Planner for one year.
2. Committed to creating change for LGBTQ youth and fighting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in schools.
3. Interested in developing and suggesting ideas to strengthen GSA for Safe Schools.
5. A student in a public or private middle or high school in Wisconsin.

For more info contact Tim (tim@gsaforsafeschools.org) or Brian J. (brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org) or call 608.661.4141.

Related Readings: Resources and Opportunities

GSA Newsarama is a publication of GSA for Safe Schools (GSAFE). Events, resources, and news items listed under the "Related Readings" sections of GSA Newsarama are not sponsored by GSAFE and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of GSAFE.

4. New Club in Town: Young Queer Sports Club

Are you LGBT or Q?

Are you a HIGH SCHOOLER?

Have you always wanted to know what was so cool about organized sports anyways? Then we want you for Young Queer Sports Club! YQSC, created by Miles Walser and Isabel Medina (two really, really cool Madison West seniors), is an organization that seeks to provide all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (queer) youth with a safe and accepting place to explore their athleticism through group-oriented sports and activities. Our goal is to have a 10-12 week indoor soccer program this winter. No experience is necessary, but willingness to participate is essential.

If you're interested, e-mail youngqueersportsclub@yahoo.com with your full name, address, e-mail, and the best phone number to reach you at.

Check out our MySpace at www.myspace.com/yqsc and make sure you join our Facebook group, "young queer sports club".

NOTE:

YQSC is absolutely drug, alcohol, tobacco, drama, and harassment free.

5. Join the National Youth Review Board for NYAC

The National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) is pleased to invite you to become a national leader! NYAC is looking to expand the National Youth Review Board to review and support the National Transgender Education Project funded through a cooperative effort with Project Q, the youth development program of the Milwaukee Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center.

Under this cooperative agreement, NYAC is addressing the lack of understanding many transgender youth face, as well as working to increase transgender inclusion and safety in LGB spaces. This involves the development of a modular curriculum that addresses not only the diversity of the transgender community, but also the regional differences and diversity of the national target audience of LGBTQ (questioning) youth for the educational curriculum.

The Youth Review Board serves as a review panel for materials and become peer leaders by developing an understanding of the educational needs of their local and regional communities, as well as promoting and/or presenting the curriculum at their sponsoring agencies. The primary function of new members will be to help train others and disseminate a national transgender curriculum.

To achieve broader diversity on the board, priority consideration will be given to applicants who self-identify as trans female, MTF or other trans feminine identifications. Priority consideration will also be given to people of color and applicants 20 years of age and younger.

Other Eligibility requirements for council membership include:

- Age 13-24
- Self-identification as LGBTQ or ally
- Current involvement in LGBTQ youth advocacy/education efforts of sponsoring agency
- Interest in transgender issues and advocacy (not necessarily in-depth knowledge or experience)
- Leadership and communication skills; creativity
- Demonstrated training and public speaking skills

For questions or to find out how to apply, call 1-800-541-6922, x16 or email iwebster@nyacyouth.org.

6. LGBT Students of Color! Speak Out!

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) is looking for students to be part of a study about the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students of color. You can help GLSEN inform education policymakers and the public about what's really going on in our nation's schools.

If you...

- ...attend a U.S. high school,
- ...are a person of color,
- ...are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and
- ...would like more information about participating...

...please contact Elizabeth Diaz, Research Associate, at ediaz@glsen.org or at (212)727-0135 x8051. All participants will be compensated for their time. Note: Permission from a parent or guardian is required to participate.

7. Girls' Group for Sexual Assault and Substance Abuse

The Rape Crisis Center and Briarpatch are collaborating to offer a 10-week group for girls (ages 13 to 18) who have been sexually assaulted and who are also dealing with alcohol and other drug abuse (AODA) issues or other risky behaviors. We will be using a curriculum which focuses on building skills in the areas of emotion regulation, problem solving, interpersonal effectiveness, and distress tolerance.

Tuesdays, 5:00-6:30 PM, beginning 10/16/07
Briarpatch - 1955 Atwood Avenue

Facilitators: Kathleen Hodgkins, MSSW
Angela Schueffner, BA

CALL: Kathleen Hodgkins at 251-5126 for information or to schedule an intake.

8. Coming Out Service at St. John's Lutheran Church

On Thursday, October 11, St. John's Lutheran Church in Madison is holding a special candle-lit and multi-media worship service in recognition of National Coming Out Day. This service, which will take place at 7:00 P.M., is intended to be a time for reconciliation, affirmation, and unity in support of our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender brothers and sisters in Christ and their families and allies. Modeled around the ancient worship form of Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending, the service will be enhanced with readings, reflective music, projected images, video, prayer, and time for meditation.

All are welcome!

Related Readings: News and Publications

9. The Chronicle Herald: "I've Stood Around Too Long"

Two high school seniors in Canada recently showed the world what an ally can do to make their school a better place: A new student had shown up at Central Rural Kings High School in a pink shirt, which prompted teasing and threats from a group of bullies. David Shepherd and Travis Price decided to do something about it. They spread the word, and the next week almost half the student body showed up in pink in support of the student who had been harassed.

The two are gaining international attention for their organizing efforts and leadership. To read the full story, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/35jrpf>

10. GLSEN Releases Research Brief Showing Benefits of Gay-Straight Alliances

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) recently sent out a research brief that highlights the positive impact Gay-Straight Alliances have on school communities. The brief has four major findings:

1. The presence of GSAs may help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending a message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated.
2. Having a GSA may also make schools more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.
3. GSAs may help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievements and experiences in school.
4. Most students lack access to GSAs or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies.

For more information on this research brief, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/3yrrhj>

11. The New York Times: Film with Same-Sex Parents Splits School District

A school district in New Jersey is up in arms over a video that was shown to students that discusses different types of families, including one with same-sex parents. While some parents are not sure why there is such an uproar, others are saying that would have like to have the option to removed their children from the discussion. The school board ultimately decided to ban the film, which many argue violates the states anti-discrimination laws. To read more about it, visit: <http://tinyurl.com/32d2aw>
