

GSA Newsarama
Volume 6, Issue 7
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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

Let's Hear It for the Freshman!

This semester, I've visited with a dozen or so Gay-Straight Alliances in South Central Wisconsin. Some of them had 5 members, and some had 35. While each GSA is unique in its mission, its meetings and its activities, I have noticed one common trend this year: the number of freshman involved with the GSA movement has exploded!

Training up-and-coming leaders is an essential part of running an effective club. So upperclassmen, here are 5 easy things you can do to harness the enthusiasm and new energy of your freshman members and start preparing them to lead the GSA when you graduate:

1. If your GSA has a leadership team, make sure a student from each grade is represented (eg. Senior Exec, Junior Exec, Sophomore Exec, Freshman Exec).
2. Designate one meeting as a "Freshman Forum": give them the opportunity to share why they joined GSA and what they would like to see the club work on.
3. If your GSA has a mission statement, take the time to review it every fall to see if new members have suggestions on how it could be changed or updated.
4. If your GSA has a display board somewhere, create a "Get to Know Your New GSAers" display with pictures, quotes and fun facts from new members.
5. Encourage a couple of underclassmen to attend GSA for Safe Schools Leadership Training Institute (LTI) in August.

****And freshman: don't let the upperclassmen run the show. It's YOUR club, too. Step up, make yourself heard, and show us what you got.****

Headlines

1. GSA for Safe Schools Activist Retreat – Applications Coming Soon

On Saturday, January 12th, GSA for Safe Schools is holding a day-long Activist Retreat in Madison, at First Baptist Church off of University Avenue.

The retreat will run from 10AM to 4PM and is designed for students who want to take their activism skills to the next level. It will be slightly less "workshopy" than our other conferences and will focus on two major topics:

In the morning we'll be really digging into 118.13, Wisconsin's pupil nondiscrimination law. We'll talk about who (and what) it covers, how to use it as a tool, and collectively brainstorm ways to make it really come alive in your school.

In the afternoon, we're going to discuss racism and how it intersects with the work we're doing in the GSA movement. Please come with an open heart and open mind as we talk about strategies for challenging racism and racist attitudes in our schools.

In just a few days we will be posting a sign-up form on our website for students interested in attending the retreat. There will be a couple of brief questions to answer, which will help us shape the event to best meet the needs and wants of those attending.

We'll send out another email as soon as that sign-up is up and running. Questions? Send Tim Michael an email at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org or call him at (608)661-4141.

2. Share Your Stories with GSA for Safe Schools

Yesterday, Brian J. and I took a little road trip to Milton to visit with the Gay-Straight Alliance. The students showed us the poster they had created for Ally Week, which is in October every year. The poster was on a piece of butcher paper, at least ten feet long, and was decorated with rainbow-colored people and words like "tolerance" and "acceptance" and "diversity". Students from the Milton GSA sat with the poster at lunch during Ally Week and invited students at their school to sign their name on the poster, declaring themselves allies to the LGBTQ community. Students who signed the poster were given a sucker and an "ally pledge card", which stated their commitment to safe and harassment-free schools for all students.

Great idea, huh?

If your GSA has a project that worked really well or an activity that everyone loved, please tell us about it. We here at GSA for Safe Schools are always looking for new and fun ideas to share with other groups. We share these ideas with new GSAs, teachers who are looking to create safer learning environments for LGBTQ and all students, and on our monthly conference calls with the National Association of GSA Networks. Just think: a project that you and your club created could help out a GSA in California that has run out of ideas.

Did your school create a display for World AIDS Day? Did you put together an awareness campaign for Transgender Day of Remembrance? Tell us about it! Send an email to Brian J. at brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org or Tim at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org. Or call us at (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.

3. Fundraising Opportunity with Madison Gay Hockey Association

Madison Gay Hockey Association (MGHA) is the premier LGBTQA ice hockey league in Wisconsin, providing an environment free of harassment and discrimination for members and friends of the queer community to play ice hockey and fulfill their athletic aspirations. MGHA is looking for GSAs and student clubs to run the concessions table at their games. Your GSA would be responsible for providing the food and the equipment (cups, napkins, something to heat water if you want to make hot chocolate), but you get to keep all the money you make. On average, GSAs have been making \$75 or more running the concessions.

There are 18 games total, and the season goes until the end of February. Most games start at 6:40, so your group would need to get there around 6:15 PM. All the games are on Sunday nights, and last about 3 hours.

So, if you and your GSA want to make some money (and watch Brian J. showing off on the ice), call Tim at 608.661.4141 or email him at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org to get on the schedule. Once you're scheduled for a game, Tim will discuss the details with you (where to go, what to bring, what NOT to bring, etc.).

4. Young Womyn's Empowerment Conference Planning Meeting in Milwaukee

Project Q of Milwaukee has begun planning for their Young Womyn's Empowerment Conference, and they are looking for female-identified youth and adults to help out with that process. They have already had two planning meetings, but the conference is not until May, so there is still a lot of time to get involved. You can help determine what the focus of this conference will be!

The next planning meeting for the YWEC will be on Friday, December 14th from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center (315 W. Court Street, Suite 101, Milwaukee).

Please contact Rachel Coles at Project Q for more information by calling (414) 292-3071 or by sending an email to rcoles@mkelgbt.org.

5. Winter Drag Wonderland at Harmony Café in Appleton

On Saturday, December 22nd, Harmony Café and the GLBT Partnership are hosting their “Winter Drag Wonderland” drag show. The show will feature performances by Suga Brown, Venus Love, and Raven, which will be followed by an amateur drag show and contest. Come dressed in drag and perform and be judged by the pros!

The events starts at 6PM, and the drag show starts at 6:30. At 7:30, there will be a Safer Sex Q & A session, and at 8PM the amateur drag show and contest will begin.

There is a suggested \$3.00 donation to attend, and the Harmony Café is located at 124 N. Oneida Street in Appleton. Questions? Call the GLBT Partnership at (920) 734-2233 or send an email to harmonycafe@gwicc.org.

6. Register for the MSCR Drill and Dance Team Festival in Madison

Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR) is sponsoring its sixth annual Drill and Dance Team Festival. This year's event will be held at the University of Wisconsin Union Theater at 800 Langdon Street on Monday, March 10th 2008 at 6:00p.m

This event is showcase and is open to all middle school, high school or multi-aged youth drill or dance teams from the Madison area. All skill levels and types of dance are welcome to register and participate.

This event has been designed to promote good sportsmanship and showcase a variety of talent. This is not a competition. This is an opportunity for teams of all skill levels and abilities to show off their hard work and to cheer for the hard work of others. Team members will receive tickets to be given out to friends and family. The festival will also be filmed and aired by MMSD Media Productions on MMSD Cable Channel 10.

It is the responsibility of the team's coach to register the team (as well as to monitor the appropriateness of the participants' music selection, movement and attire). The registration deadline is February 8th.

To register your team, contact Ian Hannah at (608) 204-3052.

7. Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin and Teens Like Us Present: Sex Talk

Do you feel like you need to brush up on your safer sex information? Do you have questions about getting tested, or using barriers, or just relationship stuff in general?

Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin and Teens Like Us are holding their next session of "Sex Talk" on Tuesday, December 11th from 5 to 8:30 P.M. This event is free and open to LGBTQ youth and straight allies aged 13 to 19. Sex Talk will take place at Briarpatch, which is located at 1955 Atwood Avenue in Madison.

For more information, send an email to tlupride@yahoo.com.

8. Celebrate New Year's Eve with Project Q in Milwaukee

Ring in the New Year early with Project Q! On Saturday, December 29th, Project Q will be celebrating in style with music, dancing, food and drink (nonalcoholic, of course!). This event is for youth ages 24 and younger.

The event will run from 6PM to 9PM at the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center (315 W. Court Street, Suite 101, Milwaukee). For questions about this event, please contact Warren Scherer at wscherer@mkelgbt.org.

Related Readings: News and Publications

9. WISC-TV Channel 3: School Safety the Law

Just before Thanksgiving, WISC-TV 3's Neil Heinen editorialized about the need for safe schools for all students, reminding everyone that discrimination and harassment against LGBT students is against the law. He even gave a shout out to GSA for Safe Schools. The editorial ran twice on Madison Channel 3, and you can watch the video by following this link:

<http://www.c3ktogo.com/?mgid=13096>

10. WLUK-TV Channel 11: UW Students Call for Gender Neutral Bathrooms

Students on the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay campus are pushing for the unisex bathrooms on campus to be renamed “gender neutral” bathrooms, which is more inclusive of transgender and gender nonconforming people. In this brief video clip, a few students on campus are asked how they feel about it:

<http://tinyurl.com/ypqhb5>

11. The Capital Times: Gay Marriage Ban Challenge OK

This past weekend, Teddi Hereid (activist extraordinaire and former president of the Mount Horeb GSA, SAGA), alerted me to an interesting development in a lawsuit that challenges the ban on same-sex marriage in Wisconsin. A University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh teacher has challenged the amendment, citing a section in the state constitution which says that voters must be allowed to vote on only one question at a time before amending the constitution. Since the referendum that was posed to voters last November essentially asked two questions, one about marriage, and one about anything “substantially similar”, a judge has allowed this lawsuit to proceed.

Does this mean that the amendment will be overturned? It’s hard to say. The next step is for the lawsuit to go to trial, and a trial date has not yet been set.

To read more about this development, follow this link:

http://www.madison.com/tct/mad/breaking_news/259398

12. The New York Times: Michigan Broadens Discrimination Protections

On November 21st, Jennifer Granholm, Governor of Michigan, outlawed discrimination for state employees based on gender identity or expression. In doing so, Michigan becomes the 13th state in the U.S. to ban discrimination against transgender and gender nonconforming state employees.

A full list of states that ban workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation and discrimination can be found on the Human Rights Campaign website (www.hrc.org): follow the “Issues” tab and then click on “Workplace”.

To read more about Governor Granholm’s order, follow this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/yszftq>
