

GSA Newsarama
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Read GSA Newsarama online at www.GSAforSafeSchools.org. Visit our website to download past issues of Newsarama in clean, easy-to-read PDF format.

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

Donate Your Facebook Status to the Wisconsin School Climate Survey

GSA for Safe Schools is making one last big push for respondents to our Wisconsin School Climate Survey. Are you a Facebook user? Will you let us borrow your status update for a few hours to help spread the word about the survey?

Here's how it will work:

1. If you haven't already done so, PLEASE fill out the survey yourself at <http://tinyurl.com/wischoolclimatesurvey09>
2. Log onto Facebook and change your status to this: "I just filled out the Wisconsin School Climate Survey and think you should too! Are you a middle school or high school student in Wisconsin who wants schools to be safe for LGBT students and their allies? Fill out the survey today at <http://tinyurl.com/wischoolclimatesurvey09> and then copy and paste this as your status. It only takes 20 minutes!"
3. Watch as your Facebook friends jump on the bandwagon and fill out the survey themselves!

The survey is completely anonymous and takes between 20 and 30 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about anti-LGBT language you hear at school, experiences you've had with harassment and bullying, whether or not LGBT issues are taught in the classroom at your school, and where you go to find support.

We know that the survey is a little long, but the information we're gathering will be extremely helpful in approaching administrators and decision makers in advocating for more inclusive school policies and curricula. Please don't start it unless you have time to finish it – we can't use information gathered from incomplete surveys.

Please fill out the survey today at: <http://tinyurl.com/wischoolclimatesurvey09>

If you have any questions about the Wisconsin School Climate Survey, send an email to Brian J. at brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org or Tim at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org.

Headlines

1. December 1st is World AIDS Day

Tomorrow is World AIDS Day, a day that encourages us to educate ourselves and others about the impact that HIV/AIDS has on the global community. Many schools and GSAs organize events to commemorate World AIDS Day, but there are plenty of things

that you, as an individual, can do to show your support and create awareness about HIV/AIDS.

Here are just a few (okay, ten) things you can do:

- Wear a red ribbon on your coat, shirt, or bag tomorrow.
- Make a bunch of red ribbons and give them to your friends and family to wear.
- Create fliers with HIV/AIDS statistics and post them on the bathroom stalls at school.
- Make a donation to a local organization that provides support to people with HIV/AIDS.
- Replace your Facebook status with information about the AIDS pandemic.
- Ask a teacher if you can post HIV/AIDS stats by country on a world map in their room.
- Write HIV/AIDS statistics on your hands or arms. Show them to people.
- Purchase a (RED) product, found at places such as Starbucks, Gap, and Target.
- Ask your friends if they can name two places that provide free HIV tests in the area.
- Educate yourself about HIV/AIDS by going to www.worldaidsday.org.

If you or your school group does something to commemorate World AIDS Day on December 1st, we would love to hear about it.

You can also download the “Teaching It Back” resource on the GSA for Safe Schools website, which shares ideas for talking about HIV/AIDS with your GSA. Download it here: http://www.gsaforsafeschools.org/docs/TeachingItBack_Handout.pdf

2. Bring the Anti-Slur Task Force to Your School

Are you tired of people being careless with their language and using slurs at your school? We all know that the phrases “that’s so gay” and “that’s retarded” are said over and over again in the hallways, but what about other slurs? Do you hear language that targets women, or people of color, or certain faith traditions?

GSA for Safe Schools’ student planning team has spent the past few months thinking about how to address slurs at school, and would like to share their knowledge and ideas with you. If you’re located in Dane County, the “Anti-Slur Task Force” would love to pay

a visit to your school and train you on how to run a campaign that challenges hurtful language.

Would you like the Anti-Slur Task Force to come to your school? Email Brian J. at brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org or call him at (608)661-4141.

Related Readings: Events 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. AIDS Memorial Quilt Will Be on Display in Madison this Week

Founded in 1987, The AIDS Memorial Quilt is a poignant memorial, a powerful tool for use in preventing new HIV infections, and the largest ongoing community arts project in the world.



Each "block" (or section) of The AIDS Memorial Quilt measures approximately twelve feet square, and a typical block consists of eight individual three foot by six foot panels sewn together. Virtually every one of the more than 40,000 colorful panels that make up the Quilt memorializes the life of a person lost to AIDS.

As the epidemic continues claiming lives around the world and here in the United States, the Quilt continues to grow and to reach more communities with its messages of remembrance, awareness and hope.

A section of the AIDS Memorial Quilt will be on display at the Overture Center for the Arts in Madison this week, on Wednesday the 2nd from 11AM to 10PM and Thursday the 3rd from 10AM to 10PM.

The viewing of the Quilt is made possible by the UW Health HIV/AIDS Comprehensive Care Program.

To learn more about the AIDS Memorial Quilt or to see where else it can be view, visit

4. Nominate Someone for PFund's "The Power of One"

Recognize and thank your friend, colleague or family member who has made a significant contribution to the LGBT and allied communities by nominating him or her for the PFund Power of One award. The award is designed to recognize individuals who work to improve the quality of life for LGBT communities through efforts such as volunteering, activism and leadership.

Nomination deadline is December 15, 2009

The award recipient will be celebrated and honored at PFund's Cabaret on May 8. To further honor the recipient, PFund awards a \$1,000 grant to a non-profit organization of the recipient's choice.

Simply complete the nomination form available online at <http://pfundonline.org/powerofone.html>

If you need more information, contact Alfonso, at 612.870.1806 or awenker@PFundOnline.org

5. Unified for Equality March in Madison this Saturday

"March on Madison," an action by Madison-based grassroots group Unified for Equality, is scheduled for Saturday, December 5th at the Wisconsin State Capitol. A rally will follow the march.

This action is meant to call public and legislative attention to the outcome of a hearing earlier this month in the Wisconsin Supreme Court, brought to challenge the language of the so-called gay-marriage ban enacted in 2006 in Wisconsin.

The challenge in the Court responded to a problem: The ban contained two actions in a single voting-item. The first item banned marriage itself; the second banned "anything substantially similar."

Bill McConkey, who brought the challenge in the Court, was challenging the constitutionality of the language used on the ballot. The vote's language prevented voters from voting yes or no on marriage and voting separately on "anything substantially similar." The Court has until July to make a decision on the case.

Unified for Equality represents the views of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) community toward equal rights at the state and federal levels. Coalition groups include Madison Area Transgender Association; MATC Pride Alliance; the Madison Branches of the International Socialist Organization; LGBTI Equality Now at UW-Madison; OutReach/OutThere of Madison; P.E.A.C.E. at UW-Whitewater and others. Support from the community is welcomed and encouraged.

Among the demands of Unified for Equality are equal protection in all matters governed by civil law in all 50 states, the overturning of the state same-sex marriage ban in Wisconsin, the granting of national anti-discrimination rights via 14th Amendment and an executive order to overturn "Don't Ask Don't Tell".

The LGBT community lacks everyday rights in addition to the marriage right and refuses to accept the status quo any longer. Unified for Equality works without pause to attain the rights guaranteed to us by the 14th Amendment, but not extended to us as a group. We now demand, not request, equal rights for every citizen under the law and the Constitution of the United States of America.

The march begins at the UW-Madison Library Mall at 12 p.m., and ends at Capitol Square, where a rally will further demonstrate unity and solidarity and will show Wisconsin and the Court that other Wisconsin residents care about this issue and want the ban thrown out.

For more information, contact Unified for Equality at unifiedforequality@gmail.com or Charlene Hanson at 608-239-0313.

6. GLSEN National Announces New Safe Space Kit

Designed to help educators create a safe space for LGBT youth in schools, the NEW Safe Space Kit features the Guide to Being an Ally to LGBT Students. This guide provides concrete strategies for supporting LGBT students, educating about anti-LGBT bias and advocating for changes in your school.

A free version of the Safe Space Kit can be downloaded on GLSEN's website at <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1641.html>.

You can also purchase a full-color version of the Safe Space Kit from the GLSEN Store at <http://www.glsenstore.org/educators.html>.

7. The MBLGTACC in February Seeks Volunteers

I'm sending a message out for a great opportunity to help with MBLGTACC, the Midwest Bisexual Lesbian Gay Transgender Ally College Conference!

I'm Sky Belcourt, your Volunteer Chair and overall organizer! This year for MBLGTACC we're going to need a lot of volunteers to make this huge conference happen. I'm sending out requests for people to volunteer to help throughout the year as well as the weekend of the conference, the weekend of February 19th.

There will be multiple opportunities throughout the year for volunteers to work on various tasks that we'll need help on, as well as committees that will need (wo)manpower to sail this big gay ship smoothly. Additionally, we will need a LOT of people working the weekend of the event. As an extra incentive, those who are working will have their registration fee waived, so it's a great idea to help out!

If you're interested in joining our legion of volunteers, send me an email at Volunteer.mblgtacc@gmail.com to be added to the listserv so you'll be in the know with how to get involved.

Remember, this is a GREAT resume builder! And if you work the weekend of the conference, you'll have a waived registration fee (70\$!!)

And PLEASE send an email to Volunteer.MBLGTACC@gmail.com if you'd like to have E-Mail reminders sent out to you! Especially if you do not check Facebook that often. :)

We're also looking for people to serve on various committees, such as Programming (Deciding what programs and workshops will happen), Publication (Making the booklet for the conference), as well as a few others, e-mail me/Message me for more info!

Official Website: <http://lgbt.wisc.edu/mblgtacc/>

Volunteer Facebook Group:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=142889913339#/group.php?gid=142889913339&ref=ts>

8. Legacy Essay Contest

This one is for high school juniors and seniors:

The Legacy Essay Contest is about revealing the legacy of the Civil Rights Movement in contemporary personal experience and current events. It is about comparing the experiences of the Civil Rights generation with those of the younger generation today in order to clarify the lessons for achieving genuine racial equity.

ESSAY SUBJECT: What are the legacy and lessons of the Civil Rights Movement?

HOW TO QUALIFY: Must be currently enrolled as a high school junior or senior in the United States and submissions must be through a certified high school teacher.

ESSAY LENGTH: No more than 1,000 words

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: December 15, 2009

DATE FOR ANNOUNCEMENT OF WINNERS: February 1, 2010

PRIZES: The winner to receive a \$3,000 cash award and a laptop computer; the five finalists to receive a \$500 cash award and a laptop computer each. The winner and five finalists to be honored in a Capitol Hill awards ceremony in February.

SUBMISSION PROCESS: Submissions must be made by a certified high school teacher. Each high school teacher is responsible for selecting the best essay from their classes, and there can only be one submission per teacher.

JUDGING PROCESS: The top ten essays will be selected by educators from around the country and then submitted to a distinguished board of ten judges for the winning essay and five finalists to be chosen.

GUIDELINES: The essays are to be based on current events, personal experiences, and the experiences of friends and relations and include fully cited references to at least two books (fiction and nonfiction) and at least three newspaper/magazine articles. Additional interdisciplinary sources (e.g., music, dance, and film) are encouraged. The essays should compare the experiences of the Civil Rights generation with those of today's generation to illuminate the evolution of race relations in America and what this evolution teaches us about who we are as a people and a nation and how best to address racial disparity. The judges will be looking for clarity of ideas and for fresh insight into the American racial divide.

The Civil Rights Movement believed that we all benefit from a truly diverse society that supports equal opportunity. All students, from all races and ethnicities, are strongly encouraged to submit essays for this contest.

OBJECTIVES: The aim of the Legacy Essay Contest is to encourage an appreciation among America's youth for the relevance of history in understanding today's challenges and to clarify the core principles and values of our democracy.

To learn more, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/yglrjcc>

Related Readings: News and Publications

9. Human Rights Campaign – Support Those Who Support Us

Ready or not, the holiday season is officially upon us. The Human Rights Campaign encourages people to keep the LGBT community in mind while you shop, and support the organizations that are doing good things to support their LGBT employees, consumers, and community members.

To read who's on HRC's "naughty and nice" list this year, click here:
<http://www.hrc.org/13824.htm>

10. CNN.com – Demonstrators Demand Justice in Puerto Rico Gay Teen's Slaying

Activists in Puerto Rico are asking that the murder of 19 year-old Jorge Steven Lopez Mercado be treated as a hate crime under the federal hate crimes law. Martinez Matos admitted to committing the brutal murder, but has claimed that he was defending himself.

Read the full story here: <http://tinyurl.com/ygsexbm>
