

GSA Newsarama
Volume 8, Issue 9
January 8th, 2010

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

LTI Grads Testify in Support of the Healthy Youth Act

We love to hear about Wisconsin students speaking out and advocating for their right to bias-free and comprehensive education. Especially when some of the students speaking out are graduates of Leadership Training Institute (LTI), our four-day summer activist camp.

Currently, the Wisconsin legislature is considering a bill dubbed “The Healthy Youth Act”. The Healthy Youth Act requires schools that teach sex education to do so in a responsible, comprehensive manner that includes information about abstinence and birth control to prevent teen pregnancies and STDs. According to Planned Parenthood, “Comprehensive and medically accurate sex education gives teens the tools they need to stay healthy and make smart decisions now and in the future.”

This fall, a couple of our LTI grads took it upon themselves to testify on behalf of the Healthy Youth Act. Maria Peeples of Appleton East High School tells her story here:

“I recently traveled to the capitol to speak to the [Senate] Education Committee about mandating comprehensive sexual education in Wisconsin schools. The bill sets out a list of guidelines that human growth and development classes would be required to follow IF they choose to teach a sex ed unit of some sort. This includes accurate and age-appropriate information about human sexuality, including contraceptives. I felt it was important to go and speak because it's important for our legislators to hear what the young people have to say about this issue. They hear a lot from many others on the topic, including teachers, parents, and community members. However this bill most greatly affects students and young people in Wisconsin. The experience was very exciting. The best part was getting a chance to deliver my testimony and be questioned by the senators. I believe the worst part for me was having to hear arguments given by opponents that I knew I could refute if given the chance. Overall, it was an awesome experience and I'm so glad that I went.”

Maria goes on to say, “I know that speaking up about what you believe in can be a scary thing. As young people, sometimes our opinions can be pushed aside or left unheard. But the only way that we can be heard is to speak up. I would encourage all young people who have something to say to have the courage to talk. It doesn't take testifying before the Senate; sometimes it's as easy as raising your hand in class or calling your government officials about an important issue. Traveling to our state's capitol to speak on this issue was a really important thing for me to do. It gave me confidence and strengthened both my political beliefs and personal values. I had so much fun and hope that I get to do it again sometime in the future!”

Well said, Maria. Thanks for speaking out!

Another one of our LTI grads, Brandon Ross Wenger, also had a chance to speak. He was featured in this week's edition of the Cap Times.

"Some of us are out in the cold," said the Monroe High School student. "I can't get married. People grow up in so many different environments that it is not fair or realistic to think everyone will make the same decision."

After the hearings, Planned Parenthood contacted us to commend Brandon on his testimony. "[Brandon] has been a tremendous advocate for the Healthy Youth Act and for responsible sex ed overall. Not only did he testify at both legislative hearings on the bill (and recruited friends who waited with him for hours to do so), but he is also a fabulous spokesperson on the bill."

Thank you again, Brandon and Maria. And thanks to everyone else who spoke out in favor of the Healthy Youth Act.

To read the Capital Time's coverage* on this story, follow this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/yadjkm5>

*Unfortunately, the article has been shortened in the online version and does not contain Brandon's quote. However, it can be found in the print version.

Headlines

1. Apply for the GSA for Safe Schools 2010 Scholarship

Are you a graduating senior? Have you made change?
Then apply for the 2010 GSAFE Youth Scholarship!

Deadline February 22, 2010

The Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) Youth Scholarship awards four high school seniors \$1000 each. The recipients of these awards will have demonstrated a commitment to promoting respect for all, especially in a school setting, with an emphasis on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues (LGBT). This scholarship is open to all Wisconsin high school seniors, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

Requirements for the Youth Scholarship

- Graduating High School Senior
- Resident of Wisconsin
- Completion of attached application
- Two letters of recommendation. One recommendation must be written by a member of your school staff
- If awarded scholarship: Attendance at GSA for Safe Schools Celebration of Leadership Awards Ceremony in Madison on May 8, 2009.

Application Deadline:

All applications must be received by February 22, 2010 and will be kept confidential.

Announcement: April 2009

Submission of the Scholarship Application:

Application can be submitted electronically as a Word attachment or as a hard copy that is hand-delivered, mailed or faxed to the office of: GSA for Safe Schools 301 S. Bedford Street #1 Madison, WI 53703

Application materials are attached to this email and will be posted at www.gsaforsafeschools.org shortly.

2. Register for the Lt. Governor's Conference on LGBT Youth

Registration is officially open for "Engaged and Empowered: The Lieutenant Governor's Conference on LGBT Youth." To be held on the UW-Oshkosh campus on Friday, March 5th, this conference is open to anyone who is interested in the safety and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth. Specifically, the conference will benefit educators, administrators, school counselors, social workers, healthcare professionals, parents and students.

Paul Wesselmann, experienced speaker on LGBT issues to students and teachers and owner of The Ripples Project, will keynote the conference. Participants will have the opportunity to attend workshops on topics such as preventing and addressing bullying in schools, LGBT youth experiencing homelessness, supporting transgender and gender non-conforming youth, and the intersections of race, class, sexual orientation and gender identity.

"We are excited to hold a conference with significant partners giving the unified message that it is important to understand and address LGBT youth issues," says Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools Executive Director Cindy Crane

The evening before the conference, there will be a free community screening of Straightlaced, an award-winning film by Groundspark that takes a look at how societal pressures around gender and sexuality confine American teens. Featuring interviews from more than 50 young people, the film demonstrates how gender role expectations and homophobia are interwoven, and illustrates the different ways that these expectations connect with culture, race, and class.

Registration forms can be found on the front page of the GSA for Safe Schools website at www.gsaforsafeschools.org. There is a different registration form for students and adults, and at this point we will be capping registration for high school student to three per school.

If you have questions about the Lt. Governor's Conference, email Tim Michael at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org or call (608)661-4141.

3. Free Screening of "Straightlaced" on March 4th in Oshkosh

GSA for Safe Schools is pleased to announce a FREE public screening of "Straightlaced", a new film from Groundspark. The screening is scheduled for Thursday, March 4th at 7:00 pm at the Halsey Science Center (South Halsey Room 106) on the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh Campus.

This free screening is sponsored by CESA 6, Harmony Cafe GLBT Services, Oshkosh Area School District, PFLAG-Oshkosh, UW-Oshkosh LGBTQ Resource Center, Diverse & Resilient, and Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools.

Constant pressure to act a certain way, confronting messages about body image, silencing emotions and feelings and making incorrect assumptions about peers are just some of the complex issues brought to light in "Straightlaced".

Filmed in the same intimate styles as *That's a Family* and *Let's Get Real*, the heart of "Straightlaced" is candid interviews with more than 50 teens from diverse backgrounds.

"Straightlaced" is directed by Academy Award winning filmmaker Debra Chasnoff and is the latest documentary film production from Groundspark's highly acclaimed Respect For All Project. The film will be coupled with a student panel and discussion.

"Straightlaced", which features unscripted high school youth from around the country speaking candidly about harmful pressures caused by rigid gender roles and homophobia is surprisingly uplifting and entertaining. From girls who dumb

down so they don't intimidate boys, to boys who are sexually active just to prove they aren't gay, to non-conforming teens who face relentless bullying, the students in "Straightlaced" show how gender expectations are having unhealthy and often dangerous impact on the lives of today's teens.

Go to www.groundspark.org/straightlaced for more information on this great film.

For more information on the Lt. Governor's Conference on LGBT Youth go to www.gsaforsafeschools.org and download a registration flier.

4. Upcoming "Days of Action"

The spring semester is almost upon us, and it can be a really busy time for GSAs and other student clubs. Each month, there is a different "day of action" that students can organize in their school. Here is a brief overview:

JANUARY

- ★ Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Organizing Weekend – January 15th to 18th, 2010

For many years now, the National Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) has been encouraging students to collaborate with other groups to organize events around the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday. Last year, GLSEN National dedicated asked organizers to remember the work of Bayard Rustin and continue his tradition of reaching out to different communities to galvanize a movement comprised of people of different races, ethnicities, religious beliefs, ages, and abilities.

To download free resources on planning events for Dr. MLK Jr. Organizing Weekend, visit:

<http://www.dayofsilence.org/mlk.html>

FEBRUARY

- ★ TransAction! – February 26th, 2010

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network, in collaboration with other national partners, has introduced a new day of action: TransAction Day. This is a day for education and celebration of transgender and gender non-conforming people and experiences; a day to begin having dialogues about gender and to advocate for inclusive schools for all, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

For great TransAction! resources, visit:
<http://www.dayofsilence.org/transaction.html>

MARCH

Wisconsin LGBT Day of History – March 2nd

Did you know that Wisconsin was the first state in the country to pass a law banning discrimination against LGB people? Republican Governor Lee Dreyfus signed the bill into law on March 2nd, 1983. For that reason, GSA for Safe Schools encourages GSAs and schools to organize events at the beginning of March to shine a spotlight on LGBT history.

To learn more about LGBT history in Wisconsin and the United States, visit:
www.gsaforsafeschools.org/lgbt_history.html

APRIL

★ Day of Silence – April 16th, 2010

The Day of Silence is a student-led day of action on which those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment -- in effect, the silencing -- experienced by LGBT students and their allies. Day of Silence has been around for more than ten years, and has become one of the largest student-lead days of action in the country.

Many great ideas on how you can organize a Day of Silence (or something similar) in your school can found at www.dayofsilence.org. You can also download an informational sheet of frequently asked questions about the Day of Silence (great for school administrators!) on the resources page of the GSA for Safe Schools website at www.gsaforsafeschools.org.

For a list of these days of action and more, download the “Ready-Made Events” document on the resources page of GSA for Safe Schools’ website.

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.

5. Point Foundation Scholarship Available

Point Foundation is the nation's largest scholarship-granting organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students of merit. Individuals enrolled in either an undergraduate or graduate program, beginning or continuing in the fall of 2010, are eligible to apply.

Point Foundation (Point) provides financial support through multi-year scholarships, leadership training, mentoring and hope to LGBTQ students who are marginalized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. The organization provides its scholars with the financial ability to attend the nation's foremost higher educational institutions and its donors and mentors with the rare satisfaction of directly investing their resources and time in future generations of leaders.

Point Foundation believes in enabling these individuals who endure the daily harassment and abandonment of family, friends, educational institutions and communities with the opportunity of higher education. Through Point's scholarship, the organization empowers its scholars and gives them the support and encouragement to excel both academically and personally.

Who qualifies for a Point Scholarship?

Applicants should visit Point's website to review current Point Scholars' biographies and assess the type of scholars that are generally selected. Applicants do not need straight A's to apply, yet Point is looking for individuals who have proven leadership skills, excellent scholastic achievements, and want to make a difference in the world. All applicants are evaluated on the totality of their situation including academic accomplishments, financial, leadership within extra-curricular and career-related activities, personal circumstances and goals for the future.

To learn more or to apply, visit <http://www.pointfoundation.org/scholarships.html>

6. PFLAG National Scholarship Program

PFLAG National (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) scholarships are now available! Scholarship levels range from \$1,000 to \$5,000, with numerous recipients at each level.

To be eligible, one must:

- Be a graduating senior entering higher education for the first time in 2010
- Self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or a straight ally

- Demonstrate an interest in service to the LGBT community
- Have applied to an accredited higher education institution

Applicants will need to submit the following:

- A complete application form
- A one-page essay
- A high school transcript
- One letter of reference
- A completed release form

Send your application materials in one packet to:

PFLAG National
1726 M St. NW, Ste. 400
Washington, D.C. 20036

You may also submit your application and essay online. To learn more about the PFLAG National Scholarships, or to apply online, visit: www.pflag.org.

Application deadline is March 12, 2010.

7. Volunteer for the MBLGTACC

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. Join the 2010 Dane County Youth Service Day Committee

Calling Youth Looking to Make a Difference in Dane County! Recruitment has started for the 2010 Youth Service Day Committee. Youth on this committee plan and coordinate Global Youth Service Day, a full weekend of youth-led volunteer projects to promote service learning and year-long volunteer activity.

Members serving on this committee:

- Create promotional materials to publicize activities such as posters, advertisements, and a professional TV commercial with Charter Communications!
- Communicate with local, state and federal elected officials to promote and participate in Youth Service Day activities.
- Contact agencies and potential participants to assist with project coordination.
- Coordinate, plan, and staff YSD celebration.
- Serve as community contacts with interested youth and youth groups.

This group is open to all middle and high school-aged youth. Meetings will be held Tuesday nights, 5:30-7:00, January 26th-April 20th. Youth Service Day will be held April 23-25th.

For more information and a volunteer interest form please contact Nicholas Wagner, United Way of Dane County Volunteer Coordinator, nwagner@uwdc.org or 246-5487.

Dane County's 2010 Global Youth Service Day is a partnership of United Way of Dane County, Urban League of Greater Madison, the Dane County Youth Commission, and Youth Service America; with sponsorship from State Farm and Charter Communications.

Related Readings: News and Publications

9. NCTEquality.org – Amanda Simpson Appointed to Department of Commerce

Last week, President Obama appointed openly transgender woman Amanda Simpson to be a Senior Technical Advisor to the Department of Commerce. Simpson has an outstanding resume, and yet she has already become the focus of transphobic jokes and conservative outrage.

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/ycne6w2>

10. NY Times – Portugal Parliament Votes to Permit Gay Marriage

Less than 30 years after it decriminalized homosexuality, the parliament of Portugal has passed a bill that would create marriage equality for same-sex couples. Portugal, a predominantly Catholic country, will be the sixth in the European Union to grant gay couples full access to marriage.

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/yavllvj>

11. MSNBC.com – New Jersey Senate Defeats Gay Marriage Bill

As was expected (but not hoped for), a bill that would grant equal marriage to same-sex couples in New Jersey was defeated in the Senate yesterday. Proponents of marriage equality will be taking the case back up with the New

Jersey Supreme Court next, arguing that the civil unions granted a few years back have not given gay and lesbian couples in the state the same rights.

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/y9nktvl>

12. ACLU.org – A Fairer Federal Workplace for Transgender Employees

Through the Office of Personnel Management, the Obama administration now lists gender identity among the classes protected by Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Policies. Hopefully these changes will soon be followed by a successful passage of ENDA, the Employee Non-Discrimination Act.

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/ybc7wn4>
