

Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) E-Newsletter

Topics:

A Note from the ED

GSAFE featured in "Our Lives," Madison's LGBTQA Magazine

Many Thanks to our Supporters

(check out photos of our holiday party on our web)

LGBTQ Youth and High Risk Behavior:

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Packets on HIV/AIDS Prevention sent to GSAs

"Youth Health Coalition Launched," written by Gary Hollander,
Executive Director of Diverse
and Resilient

Celebration of Leadership - Mark your calendars!

A Note from Executive Director Cindy Crane

"This is what I've been waiting for!" said a student at the end of our first retreat for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) students of color and their allies. Before the retreat this same student was somewhat distant and marginally involved with GSAFE. However, for this event he soared as a responsible organizer and presenter.

GSAFE's program staff, Brian Juchems and Tim Michael, worked with student planners to organize the retreat. Both student and adult organizers agreed that the turn-out was small but the day made an impact on the students who attended. The one-day retreat was a beginning in creating safer spaces for LGBTQ students of color who often need to navigate where to find their support and niche.

Ah, the gift of realizing those barriers to our thriving and finding a niche. I think that is a lot of what GSAFE is about. Brian and Tim work with student planners to organize all events. Together they assist other youth in finding their power as leaders in building up their GSAs and influencing schools to be safer. Once students find their niche it's often easier for them to broaden their horizons in having a sense of place in their communities, especially if they find supportive staff in their schools.

We appreciate all of the teachers and school administrators who refuse to turn a blind eye to LGBTQ students being harassed. However, we know there

is still a lot of work to be done for LGBTQ youth to know they have a place and to thrive. We look forward to working more closely with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction to lead trainings on LGBTQ issues and school safety for school professionals in 2008. We are confident in the direct and also the ripple effects that responsible adult and student leaders will have on school settings.

Thank you to all of you for supporting our efforts in working with students and improving school professionals' understanding of LGBTQ issues and school safety. We are excited about 2008 and our community of people of all ages who care about the youth!

Be well,

Cindy

p.s. If you are a high school student or work with high school students, please go to our website to check out the upcoming Activist Retreat: www.gsaforsafeschools.org

“Our Lives” Features GSAFE

Beginning the new year, we're pleased that one of our recent scholarship recipients is on the cover of the January/February issue of “Our Lives” and that our organization is highlighted in the magazine. We'll soon have copies available in our office. For other pick-up locations go to www.ourlivesmadison.com

The GSAFE board and staff want to thank you for your support. Who are we?

GSAFE Board:

Bonnie Augusta, Madison Metropolitan School District
Mary Fulton, Meriter Hospital
Linda Halsey, UW Foundation
Dennis Johnson, AMCORE Bank
Jennifer Pressman, Purple Moon Foundation
Angela Prestil, CUNA Credit Union National Association
Marilyn Rhodes, UW Foundation
Drew Rittel, 4-Lakes Driver Training
Jon Sorenson, UW Foundation
James Tye, The Verve
Anne Wilder, National Center for Outreach (Public Broadcasting)

GSAFE Staff:

Cindy Crane, Executive Director

Brian Juchems, Program Director;
Timothy Michael, Program Assistant

On behalf of the GSAFE board and staff, thank you to everyone who donated via our Safe Schools Campaign, Stretch Club, Community Shares, Celebration of Leadership, Ironman (Colleen Capper), and the Walk/Run/Eat in 2007. Our Safe Schools Campaign is still on! There are many ways to donate, and each gift is significant in supporting our movement.

We also thank the Madison Metropolitan School District for supporting our Bystanders to Allies (B2A) program to address bullying in middle schools. And we thank the agencies and founding partners that make our work possible: The Brico Fund; The New Harvest Foundation; the Evjue Foundation; Diverse and Resilient; The Milwaukee Foundation (Wisconsin AIDS Fund); By Youth for Youth, Dane County Youth Commission; and Community Shares.

Please go to our website at www.gsaforsafeschools.org to see some great photos of the holiday party and the walk/run/eat, upcoming events for youth, and to learn more about what you support by donating to GSAFE. Also please consider us in your estate planning.

LGBTQ Youth and High Risk Behavior

YRBS: Because there is so little data on LGBTQ students and high risk behavior, Diverse & Resilient in Milwaukee initiated a Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), used by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, with several questions related to high risk behavior in relationship to high school students being LGBT added to it. GSAFE has made the survey available to several GSAs. We also look forward to seeing results from the 2007 YRBS put distributed to high schools by the Wisconsin Department of Pulic Instruction.

HIV/AIDS Prevention Packets: In November we also sent out packets of information on testing and HIV/AIDS prevention to 80 GSAs. The packets included some basic information on HIV/AIDS and HIV testing, and a discussion guide created specifically for GSAs by Craig Adamski from Teens Like Us.

There's a New Coalition in Town (actually in the state): We are very excited about a new coalition that was initiated as a result of a year long program that several people who work with LGBTQ youth participated in through the UW Medical School. The program was called Healthier Wisconsin and included groups of people with a variety of concerns related to health from around the state. Our group focused on LGBTQ youth, and two of the

members of our group, Gary Hollander and Mark O'Neil are taking the lead in forming the new statewide coalition, as reported in the article below.

Youth Health Coalition Launched

By Executive Director of Diverse & Resilient Gary Hollander, Ph.D. -

Posted on: 12/29/2007

On December 10, 2007 the Wisconsin LGBT Youth Health Coalition met for the first time at Milwaukee's Urban Ecology Center. The purpose of this coalition is to increase the knowledge, awareness, resources, and capacity to promote health and wellness behaviors and to prevent and reduce risk behaviors among LGBT youth in Wisconsin.

A planning team of committed and experienced professionals in the field had worked hard for several months to prepare for the implementation of the Wisconsin LGBT Youth Health Coalition and developed the draft goals and objectives which follow.

Goals & Objectives:

- * Develop a new body that positively influences its members and member organizations
- * Conduct two semi-annual meetings of the coalition to review project progress, data analysis, and development of conceptual framework for health promotion interventions with youth
- * Completion of a needs assessment on LGBT youth health issues
- * Development and review of biannual Wisconsin LGBT Youth Health Status Report
- * Provide a foundation of current evidence-based information that supports improvement of LGBT youth health

"It is rewarding to see existing efforts culminate in a group of energized people addressing LGBT youth health," stated Molly Herrmann, a program officer for Wisconsin's AIDS/ HIV Program.

Participants in the inaugural meeting identified many emerging youth health issues. These included poor adult mentoring and future focus, various health disparities (nutrition, exercise, sexual risk, unsupervised hormone use, and tobacco and alcohol use), inadequate health care and mental health care, homelessness, and intimate partner violence and stranger violence. It was further noted that these issues are complicated by inequality in education, paucity of safe social venues, continued anti-gay stigma, poorly prepared social service, education and health providers, and insufficient data.

Cindy Crane, Executive Director of GSA for Safe Schools noted, "We have surveys that reveal how high school students who are harassed for being

LGBT feel their safety and ability to achieve threatened. However, the lack of data on LGBT students in relationship to high risk behavior is striking."

Participants also agreed that many LGBT youth are thriving. They have good family and community mentors, achieve academic success, provide positive peer support, and good models of public health.

More than twenty people attended the first coalition meeting, traveling from Green Bay, Appleton, La Crosse, Madison, and Milwaukee. They have committed to the Coalition's efforts for the next two years, beginning with an analysis of the 2007 Wisconsin Youth Risk Behavior Survey which, for the first time, included information on youth with same-sex sexual experiences. The Coalition will also develop the 2008 LGBT Youth Health Status Report.

"I am excited to have a comprehensive group of people from across the state that will review data and then share that important information with others; it is also great to have a diverse group of adults thinking well of the LGBT young people in our communities," says Mark O'Neil, Diverse and Resilient's Director of Youth Services.

Support for the Wisconsin LGBT Youth Health Coalition comes from The Wisconsin Partnership Program of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. Dr. Kathy Oriel, M.D. is academic partner in this project. The Coalition also enjoys the support of members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Development Advisory Council.

For more information on Coalition development and membership, please contact Mark O'Neil at 414-390-0444 or through the Diverse and Resilient website: www.diverseandresilient.org

Mark your Calendars:

Celebration of Leadership will be on Saturday, May 17, 2008 at the Monona Terrace. Come alone, with friends, close family members, all of your second cousins, pirates, or as pirates. Last year we had a table of people dressed as pirates. Hey, be creative!

Cindy Crane
Executive Director
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