



**Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) Update
February 2009**

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1. You are invited to our Midwinter Soirée on February 24th !

Come and enjoy hors d'oeuvres, fine beverages, and good company. We want to thank you for your support of GSAFE and get fired up about our Celebration of Leadership. The event will provide a time to mingle and relax in the warm, spacious home of one of our generous board members.

Mark your calendars

Tuesday, February 24, 5-8 p.m.

Home of Jon Sorenson and David Bedri

4214 Wanetah Trail

Madison, WI

(off of Seminole Highway, first right just past the main entrance to the University Arboretum).

Who could possibly resist the Garlic Toast Crostini of one of our board members?!

See you there!

2. Letter from the Executive Director - Cindy Crane

Unrelated to my work at GSAFE, I was asked to give a talk on the **celebration of love** to an LGBTQ group on **Valentine’s Day**. I appreciated and accepted the invitation though as a single person found the request amusing. However, I became more comfortable with the invitation when I reflected on how love for same sex couples is always about more than relationships; it’s about identity realized and owned out of resistance. Since I usually have some kind of relationship with resistance, I guess I can venture forth to the event on Saturday, but you can still let out a chortle or two.

It’s heartening to see examples of resistance in celebrations of sexual minority people locally in some communities and in the national news. Recently Teens Like Us, a community-based LGBTQ organization in Madison, held a Valentine’s dance for sexual minority youth and their allies. As open as

Madison is for many (not all) LGBTQ youth, the dance resisted a culture that still does not promise the futures of all those youth will include the right to legally marry. We applaud Teens Like Us for providing settings in which sexual minority youth are supported and can thrive socially within a society where anti-gay language and other forms of harassment of LGBTQ youth still flourish. The resistance is to the subtle and blatant messages that LGBTQ youth are less than first class citizens and to the internalized homophobia nurtured by those messages.

Fair Wisconsin, our statewide LGBT Advocacy organization, has expanded our education about the long list of benefits legally married couples have but that same sex couples cannot obtain. There is another invisible list of benefits still missing; every one of you could name some of those. One example that comes to mind is the benefit of being able to break the silence about domestic abuse without the abused experiencing failure in showing the world that same sex relationships work. For sexual minority adults and youth, the topic of abuse between partners seems to be taboo. Is it that we have too much to uphold after finally gaining some acceptance? All must be good, beautiful and normal. For those thinking we have to prove ourselves as LGBTQ people at the expense of our well being, I wish you resistance to that message.

In our state and country it is still an act of resistance for a group such as Teens Like Us to hold a Valentine's dance. For sexual minority people of all ages to celebrate their love continues to be a clear act of courage. One of our GSAFE board members sent me a hyperlink to a great video of same sex couples celebrating their love and countering California's Proposition 8, which along with prohibiting same sex marriage, threatens to divorce same sex couples already married. Please take a gander.

<http://www.couragecampaign.org/Divorce>

And from the single staff members on Bedford Street: Have a Happy Valentine's Day (in resistance)!

Be well,

Cindy

3. Welcome to Interns Abby and Jahna

Welcome to our interns, Abby Churchill and Jahna Lundberg, from the UW-Madison's Department of Gender and Women's Studies.

Jahna is putting on her Sherlock Holmes hat searching for any hidden GSAs around the state, assisting with our upcoming statewide GSA conference, and engaging with a whole variety of program activities with the program staff.

Abby has her eyes on the past helping GSAFE to continue with our history project. She also is wearing her Sherlock Holmes hat searching for space for a 2010 statewide conference GSAFE is planning for school professionals, and she is also delving into other projects with the executive director.

4. Congratulations to School Board on Strategic Planning (Brian J. was there)

Congratulations to Arlene Silveira, president of the Board of Education of the Madison Metropolitan School District, the rest of the board and Superintendent Dan Nerad for completing the beginning of their strategic planning process that involved an intensive three-day meeting with about 60 people from the community. Our very own Brian Juchems, GSAFE’s program director was involved in the process.

5. Contact your CESA or School District about a Training with GSAFE

Contact your Cooperative Education Service Agency (CESA) or school district, and ask them to request a training on LGBTQ issues and school safety from Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools: 608-661-4141.

6. Celebration of Leadership – Mark your Calendars for May 16th

Celebrate the activism and courage of student and adult leaders at our 13th annual Celebration of Leadership Awards Banquet!

Place: Monona Terrace

Date: May 16, 2008

Cost: \$65 per individual tickets; \$55 per person at a table of eight or more; \$25 per middle school and high school student

Exact time to be announced.

Tell a high school senior to apply now for a scholarship now! Go to www.gsaforsafeschools.org for more details. Information about nominating the educator of the year award and community activist award will be available soon.

7. GSA for Safe Schools Spring Conference will be held on Saturday, March 7th.

If you know an interested youth, please encourage him or her to check out the conference. We have made some decisions about workshop topics, so here are just a few of the workshops that will be available:

- Effective Leadership
- Laws that Affect LGBT People (Marriage, Adoption, Employment, etc.)
- Stereotypes on TV and in the Movies (LGBT, Sex, Race, etc.)
- Starting an Anti-Slur Task Force
- Coming Out
- Bisexuality
- GSA Games
- Transgender Issues
- Privacy Issues & Your Rights on the Web

Hey Advisors! We would like to offer a few workshops for you as well, so let us know if there is something in particular you would like to learn about, and let us know if you have any interest in sharing your skills or areas of expertise with your colleagues.

The registration form for the Spring GSA Conference can be downloaded at www.gsaforsafeschools.org.

If you have any questions about the spring conference, send an email to timmm@gsaforsafeschools.org or brianj@gsaforsafeschools.org.

8. **Staff Picks for the News (Tim's picks)**

GSAFE Program Assistant Tim Michael says, "Take a look at this:"

LA Times – School Can Expel Lesbian Students, Court Rules

The rights of LGBT students who attend private schools are different than the rights of those who attend public schools. In a recent court case that clearly demonstrates this fact, a private school in California that expelled two students for being in a lesbian relationship was supported by the courts in its actions.

Read the details here: <http://tinyurl.com/c2tm6t>

ACLU.org – New Web Campaign, Tell-Three.org, Encourages People to Talk about What it Means to Be LGBT

Before he was assassinated, Harvey Milk spoke of the importance of "coming out" in the fight for gay rights. A new campaign, sponsored by a number of national LGBT advocacy organizations, is carrying on Milk's idea. With resources on how to come out, who you should (and who you should not) come out to, and the reasoning behind it, Tell-Three.org is encouraging LGBT people and their allies to talk about what it means to be LGBT with at least 3 people.

Read more here: <http://tinyurl.com/dcd02k>

When will schools learn that they're going to have to pay thousands (and sometimes hundreds of thousands) of dollars in legal fees to LOSE these battles?

http://www.aclufll.org/news_events/index.cfm?action=viewRelease

<http://www.aclufll.org/news_events/index.cfm?action=viewRelease&emailAlertID=3699> &emailAlertID=3699

This article from the "New York Times" is about a student who was suspended for three days for complaining about her teacher on Facebook, and encouraging others to post their own "feelings of hatred. Freedom of speech or not? What do you think?

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/08/us/08cyberbully.html?_r=1

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/08/us/08cyberbully.html?_r=1&ref=education> &ref=education

9. **Thank you to our Donors**

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR INDIVIDUAL DONORS! Every donation makes a difference. We also thank the **Madison Metropolitan School District** for supporting our Bystanders to Allies (B2A) program to address bullying in middle schools. We appreciate the **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction** for helping to fund trainings we lead for CESAs and school districts.

We thank the **agencies and founding partners** that make all of our work possible:

The Brico Fund

The New Harvest Foundation

Diverse and Resilient

Dane County Prevention

By Youth For Youth

We continue to thank the **sponsors of our special project to bring the exhibition "Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945"** to Madison and to provide programming around the exhibit:

- o Alliant Energy Foundation
- o By Youth For Youth
- o Dane County Cultural Affairs Commission
- o Madison Arts Commission
- o Mosse Fund for LGBT History
- o The New Harvest Foundation
- o The Philanthrofund Foundation
- o William Wartmann

Gold Sponsors for our 2008 Celebration of Leadership

- o Thrivent Financial for Lutherans
- o Alliant Energy
- o CUNA Mutual Group
- o AMCORE Bank
- o William Wartmann
- o Cohen-Leddy & Grossberg-Ziemke Families

Ways to donate:

- Online: <https://app.etapestry.com/hosted/CommunitySharesofWisconsin/OnlineGiving.html>
Under Gift Information scroll down to Gay Straight Alliance for Safe School
- Checks may be mailed to GSA for Safe Schools, #1, Madison, WI 53703 Remember to include
- Call in a payment by credit card: 608-661-4141
- Also remember GSAFE in your estate planning.

10. Who else is Celebrating in the Community? New Harvest Foundation and OutReach

OUTREACH, Madison's LGBTQ community center will hold a Mardi Gras party on Saturday, February 21st from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the OutReach office in the Gateway Mall at 600 Williamson St., Ste. P-1. Please call the OutReach office for more details: 608-255-8582

NEW HARVEST FOUNDATION will hold its 25th Annual Dinner Dance on Saturday, February 28th from 5:30 p.m. – 11 p.m. at the Concourse Hotel at 1 West Dayton St. in Madison. \$60 per individual or \$400 for a table of eight or more. Comedienne Karen Williams and music by DJ Nick Nice will spice up the night. Please call NHF at 608-256-4204 for more information.

11. Meet the GSAFE Board of Directors and Staff

Board of Directors : GSA for Safe Schools Board of Directors represents a cross-section of our community and includes educators, teachers, philanthropists, representatives of other agencies, and professional experts.

Anne Wilder (Chair), National Center for Outreach (Public Broadcasting)

Bonnie Augusta (Treasurer), Madison Metropolitan School District

Drew Rittel (Secretary), 4-Lakes Driver Training

Vaunce Ashby, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Linda Halsey, UW Foundation

Dennis Johnson, AMCORE Bank

Jennifer Pressman, Consultant to Charitable Foundations

Angela Prestil, CUNA Credit Union National Association

Ellen Pryor, Madison West High School

Marilyn Rhodes, UW Foundation

Jon Sorenson, UW Foundation

James Tye, Madison Verve

GSAFE Staff:

Cindy Crane, Executive Director

Brian Juchems, Program Director;

Timothy Michael, Program Assistant

Interns: Abby Churchill and Jahna Lundberg