



GSA for Safe Schools Update

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What's gender got to do with it? by Cindy Crane, Executive Director

A woman who was born with both male and female external sex organs, and who identified as female, talked to her religious leader about her biological condition. She explained to him the meaning of being intersex, which includes people who are born with ambiguous genitalia, internal sexual organs, or sex chromosomes. In her case being intersex meant being born with the outward anatomy of both sexes. After a lengthy discussion, the religious leader asked her not to worship with their community any longer. He told her that she wasn't natural.

She responded, "But I was born this way."

This is a story I heard relayed by Sharon Preves, a professor at Hamline University and author of [Intersex and Identity](#), at a conference I attended in 2004. The story moved me on several levels. However, I was most struck by how there can be extreme reactions to sexual ambiguity even in situations in which the ambiguity is clearly revealed physically at birth.

Preves discussed the controversy in the medical community over how to advise parents of babies born with male and female external sex organs. There was a time in history in which doctors strongly encouraged these parents to surgically have part of their children's external sexual anatomy removed. Preves showed a video of interviews with adults who had unwanted genital surgeries as infants, and who ended up identifying as the gender opposite of the one that matched the sex they were assigned. A lot of pain and rage emerged during the interviews.

Preves says that the argument for risky and expensive medical procedures to create sexually unambiguous children is to save them from stigmatization and trauma. However, she believes that the actual reason for these surgeries is to "maintain social order for the institutions and adults

that surround that child.” She also says, “Distinctions between male and female bodies are more a continuum than a dichotomy.”

I think of the many stories of strong reactions to students not fitting into male-female dichotomies in schools. A lot of anti-gay language is aimed not only at students who openly identify as being gay, lesbian, and bisexual, but students whose appearance and/or identity do not fit gender stereotypes. Sexual orientation is often confused with how well one fits into the gender dichotomy.

Heterosexual students who identify as being the gender that matches their biological sex can be bullied with anti-gay language because of their appearance not fitting gender stereotypes. Transgender youths who openly identify as the gender that socially doesn't match their overt biological sex can face a lot of harassment also with anti-gay language attached to it. Intersex students must face invisibility and misunderstanding, reinforced by anti-gay language as well.

We are thankful that there are many good teachers, GSAs, and student leaders who are raising the consciousness about gender and orientation continuums of people around them and making schools safer. But we still have a long way to go in our movement.

As we work together to shine light on our own biases and the biases that students face in schools, let us be kind to ourselves and to one another living in our own continuums.

Be well,

Cindy

Leadership Training Institute will be held August 18-20

“Shake out some social change! Take your organizing skills to the next step!”

says, Brian J. He also wrote all the words below, well, except for what he quotes:

There are still a limited number of spaces available for students wishing to attend our August 18-20, 2007 Leadership Training Institute (LTI) for the first time. Preference will be given to students from communities and schools not currently represented in the LTI class of 2007. You don't already have to be a leader in your club or school to apply – we want to help you develop these skills!

“You will love it! It will change your life.” - Emma

“LTI is an amazing growth and learning experience that you will never forget. It was the greatest experience of my life!” – D.

This is our BIG DEAL leadership event for student organizers. The mission of LTI is to provide students with opportunities to find their power to spark change in schools in sustainable and healthy ways by organizing their peers to advocate for safe learning environments for all students including LGBTQ youth and their allies. Specific goals for participants include helping them to:

- Network with other student and adult organizers across the state.
- Develop and practice their skills as leaders and organizers.
- Learn how to hold their schools accountable for the safety of all students.
- Understand how to be inclusive of transgender students and people in their organizing.

- Better understand the interconnectedness of heterosexism, racism, sexism, etc. and build a commitment to multi-issue organizing.
- Gain accurate information about HIV and other STI prevention strategies.

Download an application from our website: www.gsaforsafeschools.org or give Brian J. a call: 608-661-4141.

GSA for Safe Schools Walk/Run/Eat...Join the Movement

Mark your calendars for Saturday, October 13th for our Walk/Run/Eat community event. Choose to walk just over one mile, run a 5 K, or if you are in a wheel chair wheel the course. Afterwards we will have great food catered by Queen Anne's Catering, music, and more. Many thanks to Queen Anne's Catering for donating their resources and time to this event.

Registration will begin at 8:30 a.m. At 9:45 we'll have our short keynote speech along with some quick recognitions of our honorary course marshals and GSAs represented. The walk, run, or wheeling will begin at 10:00.

We are still working on the exact location and route for the event and will let you know as soon as we know; we are close to finalizing the location.

Tim Michael, program assistant, is the main super organizer, along with more folks we'll tell you about later, for this event. In the next couple of weeks he will have pledge cards ready for anyone who would be interested in getting pledges to help raise funds to support GSAFE. Please contact Tim with any questions at tim@gsaforsafeschools.org or give him a call: 661-4141

What is our name anyway? Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools? GSA for Safe Schools? GSAFE?

Yes to all of the above. Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools and its shortened version, GSA for Safe Schools, are what we use officially. GSAFE is a less official name, a sort of nickname, we use for the sake of brevity. The board and staff ended up preferring GSAFE over the acronym, GSASS. Sorry to those who were starting to get attached to GSASS. You may still say GSASS in the privacy of your homes.

More Events

OutReach Banquet on July 20th

Our very own Brian Juchems, program director, will be honored as Man of the Year by OutReach. Other wonderful award recipients are David Clarenbach, Petrovnia Charles, Leanna Ware, Madison Gay Hockey Association, and Mark Steward.

Tickets are \$60 individual, \$110 pair, \$25 limited income/student up through the end of the day on Monday by calling OutReach directly (255.8582).

Forward Forum will interview all the award recipients starting on Sunday at 7 pm on 1670 AM.

Pride Weekend on July 21st and 22nd at Brittingham Park – A note from Tim

The Magic Picnic is from noon to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday on Sunday (Saturday there is a \$5 admission fee, Sunday is free). If anyone wants to volunteer for a two-hour shift to work the GSAFE table, we would be glad to have you. In addition to handing out information about GSAFE, we'll also be administering temporary tattoos to young children visiting the family stage. All of this is sponsored/provided by Kessler's Diamonds, who are also donating their table space to us. Thank you, friends at Kesslers.

On Sunday, we have a reserved a spot in the Pride Parade. If people want to help decorate signs and banners, we'll be meeting at the GSAFE office at 9:30 that morning. If you would simply like to show up and march with us (you can feel free to make your own signs at home, too!), you can meet us in the GSAFE parking lot in between 10:30 and 11 AM. At 11 AM we have to walk over to Proudfit Street to line up with the rest of the parade people.

Contact Tim Michael for more info: timm@gsaforsafeschools.org

Fiesta Hispana on Saturday, July 28th at Warner Park

The event is organized by Centro Hispano and runs from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Nos Vemos en el parque.

Erin and her fagbug are coming to Madison on August 10th! Mark your calendars. The time of day and exact location to be announced.

On April 18, 2007, Erin Davies left her Albany apartment for work. When she reached her street-parked VW Beetle, she found the car tagged with homophobic slurs. Erin's immediate reactions were the usual shock and hurt. But what Erin did after that was anything but typical.

Erin says, "On the 11th annual National Day of Silence (April 18, 2007), I was faced with an unfortunate tragedy, being victim to a hate crime. Because of sporting a rainbow sticker on my VW Beetle, my car was vandalized in red spray paint with the words "fAg" and "u r gay" placed all over the hood and driver side of my car. Despite immediate shock and embarrassment, I've decided to embrace what happened and keep driving my car as it is in order to bring more public awareness to the blatant homophobia that exists in our society.

To drive my fagbug on a cross country trip and take it to as many diverse communities as possible. I will be gathering feedback for my fagbug documentary which will teach us about the intolerance that exists in our society. The goal is to get at least one million people to add fagbug rainbow stickers to their cars so that no one else will be targeted like I was again. Until that happens, my car will stay as is!"

Alix Olson, GSAFE supporter and member of STAJOH, is a main organizer bringing the fagbug to Madison. The August 10th fagbug event will be co-sponsored by STAJOH, OutReach, and Gay-Straight Alliance for Safe Schools.

9th Latino Health Fair at the Madison Labor Temple on August 18th

This year's fair will be focused on sexuality and will be completely in Spanish. GSAFE will have a table at the event to let youth, parents and grandparents know about our organization and school safety issues. For more information contact Patricia Tellez-Giron, LHC Chair at 263-3111 or Shiva Bidar-Sielaff, LHC Vice Chair at 265-7424.

There's a New Rag in Town

“Our Lives,” Madison’s new LGBT magazine for Dane County and beyond just had its debut. Thank you to Patrick Farabaugh, founder and publisher, for donating free ad space to GSAFE for the first issue. The eight-issues focused small magazine lifts up the lives of LGBTQ” people in our community. Check out www.ourlivesmadison.com for locations to pick an issue up at no cost and for more information.

AMA Adds Trans-Inclusive Policies - June 29, 2007

The National Center for Transgender Equality applauds the American Medical Association for its vote earlier this week to amend its nondiscrimination policies to include transgender people. AMA nondiscrimination policies already include sexual orientation.

The new policies address a wide range of contexts, including discrimination against patients, medical students and physicians as well as insurance policy.

Of particular note, the AMA policies call for an end to the discriminatory insurance policies that trans people often face-policies that disallow coverage for transition related care, sex specific care and even exclude all care for some trans people.

Mara Keisling, Executive Director of the NCTE, called the new AMA policies "a great step in moving the American healthcare system in a direction of more fairness for transgender people."

To read the full text of the recently passed amendment, click on the following link and choose "Report 11" www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/17621.html.