

OSSCC

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www.oregonsafeschools.org

SUPPORT SAFE SCHOOLS

Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition

Summer 2008

Number 6

NEWSLETTER PURPOSE

In an effort to keep Coalition members and allies informed, OSSCC presents this newsletter to summarize our activities of 2007-08.

Edited by Joy Wallace,
OSSCC Board Chair

BIGGER NUMBERS, AGAIN

For the third straight year, OSSCC increased its membership from 74 to 91 members—51 organizations and 40 individuals—a 23-percent increase. The total membership contributions also increased for the third year, from \$1,354 in 2005-06 to \$2,050 last year to \$2,830 this year.

And the trifecta was completed with the average contribution increasing by \$9.30 from last year. The Board Directors worked diligently to produce these positive results.

If you or your organization are not a member, contact us for a membership brochure (503-232-4556 or www.oregonsafeschool.org).

2007-08 OSSCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joy Wallace, Chair
Jessica Lee, Vice Chair
Theresa Molter, Secretary
Lisa Gnull, Corresponding
Secretary
Ray Johnson, Treasurer
Joyce Liljeholm
Ron Bloodworth
Sally Stevens

WEBSITE

Visit the OSSCC website for information about the organization, such as membership, Bylaws, resources to create safer schools, Safe Schools Training and GSA Network.

www.oregonsafeschools.org

7TH ANNUAL SAFE SCHOOLS TRAINING IN PORTLAND

Continuing the rotation system of holding the Annual Oregon Safe Schools Training in different parts of the state, OSSCC will hold the seventh version in November in the Portland metro area.

The Training will focus on assisting youth/adult teams to learn strategies to educate their communities about LGBTQ issues. Team members will have the opportunity to:

- 1) Increase knowledge about LGBTQ issues and resources.
- 2) Identify effective ways for youth and adults to work together.
- 3) Network with teams from other Oregon communities.
- 4) Develop a project to address the health and safety needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth.

OSSCC continues to sponsor this event due to the positive responses from the participants. Last year's ratings at the Bend event averaged a 4.25 score or above on a six-point scale, with six being high, for the myriad activities. Some of the comments by the participants about the best part of the Training were: "Meeting new people," "How to improve GSA at my school," "The youth and adults working together," "Finally putting together our projects" and "Listening to the information to use in the future."

Although awareness for LGBTQ youth has increased exponentially, and 80 Gay-Straight Alliance clubs now exist in Oregon schools, too many sexual minority youth are still being harassed and marginalized in Oregon communities. The Training is geared to assist with strengthening the resolve of youth so they can cope with harassment and intimidation.

Projects developed by the groups have included developing and sponsoring a sexual minority climate survey or Day of Silence and presenting awareness assemblies. Beginning with the first Training in 2001, 53 schools and organizations in Oregon and SW Washington have now attended.

Application information will be sent in September but to assure your receiving the application, send your email contact information to: info@oregonsafeschools.org or 503-232-4556, or PO Box 80604, Portland, OR 97280. Information can also be found at www.oregonsafeschools.org.

IRS GRANTS 501(c)(3) STATUS TO OSSCC

It finally happened! After a long process of collecting and organizing materials, submitting them to the Internal Revenue Service, being requested to submit more information including some Bylaws revisions and making many phone calls, we finally got our tax exempt status from the IRS just before April 15, 2008!

A special thanks goes to Jackie Wheatly, a pro bono accountant, who guided the Resource Development Committee of Joy Wallace, Ray Johnson, Sally Stevens and Dick Walker through the process.

THANK YOU PRIDE FOUNDATION!

Once again, the Pride Foundation in Seattle is supporting OSSCC's work with the Gay Straight Network through grants received this fiscal year from Pride Foundation Columbia Basin (for work with Morrow, Umatilla, Union and Wallowa counties), \$5,000, and Pride Foundation (for work with Oregon coast communities), \$2,000.

Pride Foundation originally funded OSSCC's Gay Straight Network project in 2005 to support the first GSA Summit, which was held at Willamette University. In collaboration with GLSEN, the second GSA Summit was held in the Spring of 2007, also at Willamette University. A third Summit will be convened May 10 at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Information is available at www.oregongsa.org.

PORTLAND GAY MEN'S CHORUS, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AND OSSCC

In early May, an interesting partnership greatly benefited OSSCC. The Portland Gay Men's Chorus reserved space at the First Congregational United Church of Christ (UCC) in downtown Portland for their Spring concert. Joyce Liljeholm, an OSSCC founder and member of the First Congregational UCC, was contacted and she offered the rental fee for the church as a contribution to OSSCC.

In addition to the financial benefit resulting from this event, OSSCC had an information table at the entrance to the concert and an opportunity to give a short introduction to OSSCC during the concert. Board members and partners were also ushers during the concert. Thank you Portland Gay Men's Chorus and First Congregational UCC for your support.

OREGON GSA NETWORK SUPPORTS SCHOOLS

The Oregon Gay Straight Alliance Network reaches out to serve schools in Oregon and Clark County, Washington. GLSEN Oregon, and PFLAG Oregon State Council have partnered with OSSCC to identify at least 80 GSAs in the region. An e-mail list of advisors and youth leaders has been created, as well as a website (www.oregongsa.org) and a MySpace page, accessible through the website. Periodic conference calls are held to include various state regions in program planning.

Assisted by grants from the Pride Foundation, the Oregon GSA Network Planning team has done outreach visits to Bend, Newport, and Pendleton. Equity Foundation funds are being used to sponsor a GSA Network training in Southern Oregon. These events offer support for educating school and community leaders about the needs of GLBTQ youth. They also offer skills and resources for starting a GSA and sustaining a GSA with meaningful activities

3RD ANNUAL GSA SUMMIT HELD MAY 10 IN EUGENE

This year's GSA Summit was held at Knight Law School on the U of O campus on May 10. The Network's local partner was the Thurston HS GSA. Youth leaders and advisors enjoyed networking with their counterparts from across the state. Underclassmen received inspiration and encouragement from seniors, to take up leadership of their GSAs in the fall.

WHAT IS NAGN?

NAGN stands for the National Association of GSA Networks. Oregon GSA Network is one of the founding members of the NAGN. Monthly conference calls are held for problem solving and sharing of new programs and resources. The third annual NAGN conference will be held in Chicago in August. Oregon's own Kira Moyer-Sims, sponsored by OSSCC, was one of two youth speakers at the 2007 conference in Albuquerque.

OSSCC REACHES OUT TO SCHOOLS AND RELATED ORGANIZATIONS

OSSCC offers education to a variety of school and community professionals. Board members present workshops and staff information tables at events for health teachers, school nurses, school psychologists and community faith leaders. OSSCC recently presented a workshop at the Beaverton School District 2007 Diversity Summit.

The needs of GLBTQ youth were also interjected into the discussions held at the White House-sponsored regional "Helping America's Youth" conference. OSSCC sends a representative to a number of community coalitions including the Health Kids Learn Better Coalition and the Coalition Against Hate Crimes. If you want our assistance, please contact us.

HEARTSTRONG SPEAKS TO OSSCC BOARD

HeartStrong Founder and Executive Director, Marc Adams, spoke to the OSSCC Board at its regular monthly board meeting on March 19. HeartStrong was founded in 1998 for the purpose of offering help to GLBT students in religiously-based educational institutions. Since then, the HeartStrong Outreach Team has driven over 363,000 miles in the United States and Canada during the past 10 years, hosting educational forums to raise awareness regarding faith-based bullying of GLBT students at religious schools and reaching out to those who need support.

Adams, a gay fundamentalist Baptist preacher's son and former fundamentalist himself, knows personally the journey many GLBT persons take when enrolled at religious educational institutions. "I attended these types of school from 5th grade through high school graduation and I attended Jerry Falwell's Liberty University for three years," said Adams.

Most people aware of OSSCC's work think of it within the public school arena, but Adams' presentation underscored the need and the particular challenges faced by GLBT students attending religious schools. According to the HeartStrong Web site (www.HeartStrong.org), the U.S. Department of Education estimates there are 7.5 million students attending religious educational institutions in the United States.

"All of us who share this history (religious-based education) must join hands so we can help to empower those who are still struggling to survive. Those of us who have survived these institutions and who have come to love ourselves in spite of