

OSSCC

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SUPPORT SAFE SCHOOLS

Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition

Spring 2009

Number 7

NEWSLETTER PURPOSE

To keep Coalition members and allies informed, OSSCC presents this newsletter to summarize 2008-2009 activities
Edited by Joy Wallace,
Board Chair

NUMBERS STAY UP

For the fourth straight year, OSSCC was able to increase its membership, slightly, from 98 members to 102—48 organizations and 54 individuals. The total represents 16 new members.

In spite of the dire economic times, the total membership contributions also increased again from \$1,354 in 2005-06 to \$3,125 this year.

The Board of Directors worked diligently to produce these positive results. If you or your organization are not one of our supporters, be sure to contact us for a membership brochure 503-232-4556 or www.oregonsafeschools.org.

2008-09 OSSCC BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Joy Wallace, Chair
Jessica Lee, Vice Chair &
Temporary Secretary
Ray Johnson, Treasurer
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WEBSITE

Visit the OSSCC website for information about the organization, membership, Bylaws, resources to create safer schools, Safe Schools Training and Oregon GSA Network.
www.oregonsafeschools.org

8TH ANNUAL SAFE SCHOOLS TRAINING IN EUGENE

Continuing the rotation system of holding the Annual Oregon Safe Schools Training in different parts of the state, OSSCC will hold the eighth version on October 23-24 in Eugene. 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.

Although awareness for LGBTQ youth has increased exponentially, and 86 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, a Day of Silence, organizing a GSA and presenting awareness assemblies.

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

QUEERCORE YOUTH AWARDS

The Equity Foundation and the Pride Foundation teamed up this year to recognize outstanding queer youth and allies. OSSCC is proud that two of our Oregon GSA Network leaders were selected for recognition. Aaron Kratzer, from Canby High School, and Sabra Chandiwalla, from Franklin High School, Portland, were recognized for their hard work, at both their local high schools and for their leadership in statewide efforts to support GSAs and make our schools safer for all youth. Congratulations, Aaron and Sabra!

OREGON GSA NETWORK NEWS

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 105 GSAs in the state. An e-mail list of advisors and youth leaders has been created, as well as a website (www.oregongsa.org), a MySpace page, and a Facebook page accessible through the website. Periodic conference calls are held to include various state regions in program planning.

The GSA Network sponsors Night of Noise (following the Day of Silence in April), as well as the Annual GSA Network Summit in the Spring so that GSA representatives can meet one another and benefit from networking.

4TH ANNUAL GSA SUMMIT HELD MAY 9 IN CORVALLIS

The 4th Annual GSA Network Summit was held at Oregon State University on May 9. Over 70 youth came from as far as Astoria and Ashland to participate in educational workshops, leadership training, networking, and community building. Secretary of State Kate Brown delivered the keynote speech, and Planned Parenthood Southwest OR's Teen Theater performed an interactive youth empowerment theater piece. The Summit Planning Committee included youth from 11 area schools, who are all looking forward to continuing their involvement in the Oregon GSA Network.

REPORTS FROM SAFE SCHOOLS TRAINING TEAMS

Each youth/adult team that attends the OSSCC's Oregon Safe Schools Training creates a plan for activities to implement during the school year. As encouragement, if the team submits a progress report by May 1, the team is rewarded with a mini-grant to use to support further activities. Below are reports from three teams.

Pendleton High School: Following the Training, courageous students spoke to their student government and administrators, and gained official recognition of our GSA Club. No sooner had we geared up for the Day of Silence, than we were shut down by community complaints about our 'disruptive' nature. Fortunately, ACLU Oregon provided pro bono legal support, supplemented by a strong letter from OSSCC, and the GSA was back in business.

South Medford High School: In October, the GSA had a Halloween party and invited all students and staff. There was a HUGE turnout for the party with music, food and dancing. In February, we had a very clever fundraiser in which students purchased Crush soda for their 'crush'. This was financially successful, as well as fun.

In March, Emily Jensen, the daughter of one of the GSA club advisers, gave an insightful and eye opening talk about "How to be a great GLBTQ ally." The three main points were: correcting anti-GLBTQ language; avoiding assumptions about someone's sexual orientation or sexual identity; and being politically active (voting). In April, over 100 students participated in Day of Silence. The team was not allowed to advertise on campus, so they created T-shirts – which became the "cool thing" to have and they couldn't make enough of the shirts for the demand. Also in April, Conner Green, a former SMHS student, who is transgendered and very politically active, came with his partner to speak about what it was like to be queer in high school, the current political climate of the major West Coast cities, and vocabulary related to GLBTQ.

Lotus Rising – Medford This nonprofit supports GSAs in the Southern Oregon region. It provided leadership training to youth (effective meeting skills, etc.) and has been visiting high schools throughout the region. With the appearance and growing strength of white power groups in Southern Oregon, the emphasis this spring will be meeting with GSAs and working on safety issues. Lotus Rising is working on a "Not in my School" program that will provide resources for youth and schools to keep hateful violent activities from hurting students.

MORE NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Scappoose High School: On November 4, while most people were thinking about the presidential election, students at Scappoose HS held their first GSA meeting. As soon as Missy Main, transferred to Scappoose HS, she wanted to start a GSA. Due to an outspoken parent complaint, the administration invited OSSCC to attend a meeting. The students provided factual information, and strong legal arguments, and their GSA Club was approved.

Missy went on to become a featured youth speaker at the Basic Rights Oregon Day of Action at the state capitol. She shared her personal story of how bullying in the schools has affected her and explained why stronger language and more policies are needed to protect Oregon youth from other forms of bullying!

Lincoln County: Some courageous adults in Lincoln County became outraged over needless student suffering. One student died by suicide and another suffered permanent damage from an horrific attack. It was time to speak up! OSSCC was privileged to provide some initial support to this LGBT team. The group created PFLAG Central Oregon Coast chapter, and in partnership with Lincoln County School-Based Health Centers, brought OSSCC to give an presentation to school staff on the needs of LGBT youth. Now there are GSAs at both Taft HS and Newport HS.

OREGON YOUTH SEXUAL HEALTH PLAN ADDRESSES NEEDS OF LGBTQ YOUTH

An important new document regarding the sexual health of youth is now available from the Children, Adult, and Families Division of the Oregon Department of Human Services. *The Oregon Youth Sexual Health Plan* speaks to the sexual health needs of youth and OSSCC is especially pleased to see that the report is inclusive of LGBT youth.

One of the plan's five overarching goals includes the elimination of sexual health inequities with an objective to "ensure access to health care for all youth and community members to eliminate disparate rates of unplanned pregnancy and sexually transmitted infection." One study noted in the report states that "26 percent of gay teens were kicked out of the house when they came out. It's estimated that 20 percent to 40 percent of homeless youth are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning youth."

Clearly, addressing health inequities for LGBT youth is an important factor in making schools and communities safer and healthier places for queer youth. The plan encourages the involvement of youth as collaborative partners rather than taking an approach that identifies youth "as having problems that need to be 'fixed.'" One of these strategies in that regard states, "Develop and involve youth leaders who reflect community diversity by identifying and engaging underrepresented groups such as incarcerated youth, teen parents, young men, people of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ), low income, youth with disabilities and others." OSSCC applauds the breadth, inclusiveness, and science-based approach of the plan for addressing the sexual health needs of youth in Oregon communities and looks forward to working with others around the state to make our schools and communities are healthier and safer places for all youth, including LGBTQ.

An electronic copy of the plan is available at the Oregon Department of Human Services. Call the Children, Adult, and Families Division at 503-945-5944 or check their website at <http://egov.oregon.gov/DHS/children/teens/tpp/#actionagenda> or.