

Youth Pride, Inc.

Update on East Providence High School's Gay-Straight Alliance: Helping Those Left Out

My name is Kayla Hurley and I am one of two co-presidents of East Providence High School's Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). I am a sophomore, and this is an update on our club. Last summer I began drafting mission statements and a GSA constitution, with help from Youth Pride, Inc, hoping that this work would accelerate the organizational process of our GSA.

In the fall, our group faced a great challenge. The GSA's advisor had moved to another school and we had to seek out a new advisor before we could start meeting. This turned out to be harder than we anticipated because most of the GSA had graduated at the end of the 06-07 school year and very few were left to help locate a new advisor. We were turned down a number of times, but soon we found someone who was willing and able to be our group's advisor. We now have a teacher with a number of years in the school district ready to be our advisor.

We finally had our first meeting in November. We had eight steady members and started organizing. By our second meeting we had adopted a new mission statement. Our current concern is putting finishing touches on a constitution for our club, and we are hoping to finish organizing the GSA by the end of January.

East Providence High School's GSA meets every other week. Our next meeting is Feb. 11 in room 137 for all students of East Providence High School who may be interested in attending.

OUTspoken Playaz Graduate and Celebrate

It's graduation time, and what a great time that is at Youth Pride (YPI)! The OUTspoken Program at YPI has been training young people in public speaking, facilitation, and performance skills to be used to educate direct care providers and educators about the issues that impact lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth. The six young folks in the latest class of Playaz have been working tirelessly every Monday night from 5-8 p.m. to become community educators and bonding together to become the best trainers they can be; after ten long months they are well on their way. To honor them and the work they have done, we held a graduation ceremony at YPI. This was a time to celebrate their accomplishments, and to also show the LGBT community what they can do. This training program is not for the faint of heart.

We ask a lot of our Playaz; and for those that succeed in this program, it is life changing. Said one graduate in her acceptance speech, "It's my fellow Playaz that have the most impact on me. The strength that you guys bring to this program blows me away every day. Any time that I describe this program (which is often) I mention the training and who we talk to. I brag about the people with whom I get to collaborate and work." Another graduate says, "I ended up walking away with far more than knowledge. I ended up with strong friendships and many memories. Now that my 'official' training is over, my training altogether has yet to cease. I hope that over the years to come, I can continue being in the OUTspoken and continue to help educate others and to continue to build strong friendships." Please join us in congratulating this incredible group of young folks.

Now what's even more exciting is that we are starting a new class in March here at YPI! This is a class for anyone out there between the ages of 13-23 who want to learn skills, make friends and laugh a lot. If this sounds like you, please call Stump Olsen with any inquiries at 421-5626 Ext. 22. Finally, if you'd like to stop in any Monday night from 5-8 p.m. to sit in on an OUTspoken Playaz training night, you are more than welcome to do so. This is a great way to see what we do and help you decide if it's of interest to you. See you all soon!

2007 Holiday Party a Success!

The pies, turkey, stuffing, and vegetables practically overflowed the table the night of YPI's annual holiday party. Youth, staff, board members and community members enjoyed their meal and shared their New Year's wishes. The evening concluded with holiday stockings for all youth filled with warm mittens and socks, stickers, CDs, gift cards, journals, candy canes, and Erase Hate wristbands. Finally, everyone received hoodies with the YPI logo embroidered on the front.

On behalf of YPI youth, staff, and board, thank you to everyone who so generously contributed to making this great event happen. We could not have done it without you!

Youth Pride, Inc. offers a drop-in center located at 171 Chestnut Street, Providence and in Newport. or visit them on the Web at www.youthprideri.org. ▼