

# Youth Pride, Inc.

## A Message from James Robinson, New Executive Director of YPI

What an exciting time to be joining the team at Youth Pride, Inc. (YPI) Our visibility as an organization is increasing, thanks in part to a wonderful partnership with PFLAG that resulted in our visibility campaign. Last month RIPTA buses traveling throughout the state sent an important message to all Rhode Islanders, and a message of hope young people as learn about and deal with their gender identity and sexual orientation. This is unprecedented in the state, and YPI is proud to be a part of it.



We are all hopeful that this will inspire more and more youth to learn about all that YPI has to offer. In addition to being a safe place for LGBTQ youth to socialize, YPI offers a variety of activities and services that influence our participants' day-to-day lives and help them prepare for the future. We offer one-on-one and group support, a community food pantry, a lending library, the Playaz (an issue-based improvisational group), a wellness program, leadership development activities, on-site and off-site personal development activities, and the list goes on.

Finally, after almost 20 years working for various not-for-profits in Providence, Boston and New York City, I have found a genuinely exciting place to be. Although I am truly impressed with the knowledge and commitment of YPI's staff and the dedication of our board of directors (an impressive group of youth and community leaders), it is the young participants who inspire me to do all that I can to lead YPI into our next phase of growth and development. These young people have welcomed and challenged me to be the best that I can. I accept the challenge and look forward to a thriving and successful union.

## Wise Words From Two Met School Interns at YPI

Mariah

My name is Mariah and I'm a freshman at the East Bay Met School. I have an internship at YPI. I chose to do my internship at YPI because I am passionate about gay rights and I want to try to make a difference. My dream is to be an activist and change the world.

Through my internship and YPI, I hope to gather a better understanding of activism and gain the skills to help better myself. I've only been here less than a month and already I'm gaining new skills that will stay with me my whole life. I've met so many new people and I really enjoy my time here. Tuesdays and Thursdays have become my favorite days of the week.

At my internship, I do tasks like helping bring food up to the food pantry, helping people check out at the food pantry and office work with Arthi, and I attend Group with her on Thursdays. My first day here was terrifying. I didn't know anyone and I'm not good with people I don't know. Since I've been here, I've made a lot of great new friends and I've learned how to overcome my fear of talking to people I don't know. I love my internship here and hope to intern here next year too.

Ruby

My name is Ruby and I am a sophomore at the Met school in Providence. I have been interning at YPI since the beginning of last fall. Last year I heard Stump Olsen, now my mentor, speak about YPI and their programs. Stump was speaking about the homophobia that LGBTQ young folks experience and how to deal with it. I was excited because I agreed with what she was saying. I looked more into YPI and thought it would be a great opportunity to intern there. I started my internship a month later.

When I first came into YPI, I was very shy and kept to myself. I didn't know anyone. Some of the kids at YPI have been members for years and I was just a stranger coming into "their" space. I'm very shy and not very good at meeting new people in a space I'm not used to and was afraid that I would not meet anyone and remain an outsider. But that couldn't have been further from the truth. As soon as people realize that someone new has come into the space, they come up to you and introduce themselves. Everyday that I am at YPI, I meet someone new. It didn't take very long for me to start feeling like I had a place at YPI. I

became more familiar with the members at YPI and what they do there.

The responsibility of a Met intern is to do a project involving his or her internship. I chose to gather personal essays from the "OUTspoken Playaz" and create a book of them for my mentor, Stump, to take out to her trainings. The next part of my project is to hold a fundraiser to raise money for the OUTspoken Playaz so they can go out on a group gathering to reward all their hard work. I have finished the book and am working on my fundraiser. Some other things I do as an intern at YPI are make copies and help staff with their tasks. Also, my mentor Stump has gotten me to start thinking critically about the world around me.

Being at YPI has made me more aware of the injustices around me. I reflect on my past actions, how to become an ally and educate my close family, friends and others about important issues that affect the LGBTQ community and what we can all do to help. Most importantly, I am learning at YPI how to become well-rounded and create positive change within the community.

## Drop-in Hours End in Newport

After three great years of running a satellite center in Newport, YPI has decided to end its drop-in hours there. YPI Newport was funded primarily by the generous support of the Newport County Fund youth opportunities initiative. When the grant ended and participation at drop-in hours was low, YPI decided it was time to focus its outreach in Newport County in different ways.

Youth Advocate Arthi Sundaresh said, "There are a lot of great opportunities for youth in Newport County right now, and YPI has made strong partnerships with organizations like the MLK Center, the Women's Resource Center, the Boys and Girls Club and the Jamestown Teen Center. I feel confident that staff and youth at these organizations are sensitive to the needs of LGBTQ youth and equipped to stand up to homophobic and transphobic language; they know they can turn to YPI for questions or assistance."

YPI will continue to work in Newport County and maintain its ties not only with these community organizations, but also to school-based organizations. Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) have been active in Portsmouth, Middletown and Rogers High Schools, as well as at St. George's School in

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Middletown. YPI's GSA Coalition will continue its work with these clubs and students who are a part of them to provide technical assistance, support, and leadership opportunities.

YPI extends its gratitude to the Newport County Fund and all of our community supporters in Newport who made our satellite center possible. We are proud of the work we have accomplished and the partnerships we have developed.

## Day of Silence 2008

It is estimated that by the time a student graduates from high school, he or she will hear a homophobic or transphobic slur about 56,500 times. The National Day of Silence is a day when students across the country take a vow of silence to protest the ways in which lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning youth and their allies are silenced every day by verbal and physical harassment, bullying, and heterosexism. This year's Day of Silence is Friday, April 25th.

YPI held its annual planning conference, One State One Silence, in February. Students and advisors are still encouraged to contact YPI for technical assistance for the Day of Silence and to order t-shirts designed especially for Rhode Island students. YPI volunteers and staff may be available to come to your GSA meeting to assist with your planning.

Last year, over 1500 students, faculty and staff participated in the Day of Silence in Rhode Island. Let's increase that number to spread awareness about the reality of the homophobia, transphobia, and heterosexism that impact all youth every day. To make your participation count for the Rhode Island tally, please be sure to contact YPI at 421-4526 or [gsa@youthprideri.org](mailto:gsa@youthprideri.org) to report how many people in your school participate in the Day of Silence on April 25th.

## Check Out YPI's New Home

Open House Wednesday, March 12<sup>th</sup>

YPI will host an open house on Wednesday, March 12 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at our new home – 171 Chestnut Street (2nd Floor) Providence. All are welcome. Come meet our young people, staff and board. Learn about our programs, activities and volunteer opportunities. Have a little something to eat and drink. RSVP to YPI at 421-5626 or to [marilyn@youthprideri.org](mailto:marilyn@youthprideri.org). ▼