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Today is Gay-Straight Alliance Day

Des Moines ? Governor Culver has declared today ?Iowa Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) Day?. The day, organized by Iowa Pride Network, is meant to honor GSA groups, students and staff who work to end violence and homophobia in Iowa schools and colleges.??

"It is a known fact that Gay Straight Alliances make our schools safer and more accepting," said Lt. Governor Judge. "The Culver/Judge Administration and Iowa's outstanding Gay Straight Alliances share a common vision - ensuring that every Iowa student has a safe nurturing environment in which to learn, and we look forward to working with GSAs and all Iowans to turn this goal into a reality."??

According to recent Iowa School Climate Surveys, nearly 38% of gay and lesbian students are physically harassed and 21% are physically assaulted in Iowa schools because of their sexual orientation. However, students with a GSA in their school are 23% less likely to be assaulted. ?Having a GSA is a simple, cost-effective way to create safe schools,? stated Rachel Johnson, Iowa Pride Network Outreach Coordinator. ?That is why having a day that raises awareness of GSAs and the positive impact they have on schools and colleges is so important.???

Hundreds of students from dozens of secondary schools and colleges are expected to take part in activities to address the serious problems of anti-gay bullying and harassment, while advocating for solutions - like GSAs and implementation of Iowa?s Safe School and amended Civil Rights laws.??

Stephen Wayne Boatwright, a senior at Hoover High School and Iowa Pride Network board member, helped create a GSA at his high school. ?After we started the GSA at Hoover, more students are thinking twice before using anti-gay slurs. There are students out there who get picked on for being gay or being perceived to be. This day let?s them know that they aren?t alone and that they?re supported.???

The event, now in its fourth year, continues to gain momentum. Four years ago Iowa had approximately 50 GSAs, today over 120 exist. Iowa is the only state in the nation with such a day. ?We?re proud of the impact our GSAs have made across the state and appreciate the state of Iowa recognizing our work,? stated Boatwright.

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News Article
http://www.journalexpress.net/news/local_story_027094007.htm... [1]
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