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When I [read the news](#)  ^[1] about Krista Blevins founding the GSA at Yucca Valley High School, I was so impressed. As the founder of my high school GSA, I remember how much courage it took. I wanted Krista to be able to share her story with GSA youth and supporters everywhere.

My Story

By Krista Blevins, GSA President/Creator, Yucca Valley High School

Starting up a GSA was far from my mind during my 2009-2010 junior year. I had enough on my plate. Coming out as a Lesbian in the beginning of the year was not only hard for some of my friends to comprehend, but it was also new for me as well. I used to be one of those kids who would pick on the "gay" society. I was ashamed of the feelings I had for the same gender so I decided to bury them with hurtful words and forcing myself to close my mind to the idea of being anything but gay. But, enough was enough, **it was time for me to tell myself the truth** and accept myself for who I really was.

During April I began thinking about creating my school's first GSA when a substitute teacher, Mr. Larson, came up to me during school and asked if there was a support system at the school for LGBT youth. From that point on we talked about what I should do to create such a group and how beneficial it would be for all students at my school who needed help with being secure with themselves and accepted by others. I knew that once I started it, I would ultimately put my voice to the test. Previous years I've heard about failed attempts at starting a GSA club, so I got scared. I thought if I'm going to go through with it, I might face disapproval and upheaval within the administration. I was ready to give up, but with a little more support from Mr. Larson I was fully motivated and ready to fight for what I stand up for: my rights.

My girlfriend was a lot of help because she was a participant in the prior years of trying to launch a GSA. We went through the proper process and got the paper work needed to start a club at our high school. Filling it completely out and returning it the next day we were a little anxious to see what would become of it. I waited a week and heard nothing, so I went up to the principal's office and the secretary told me that he would be calling me in when he wasn't busy. Another week

went by and they saw through my persistence that something needed to be done. So finally the principal called me into his office, and said that he wasn't disapproving of the club, but that I needed to have two full time advisors in order to start the club. He gave me a list of four teachers that he thought would be open-minded and free during the school hours that the club needed. After that it was then a challenging hunt for two brave advisors to lead the way. This was a difficult task, more difficult than I had thought at first. Many teachers didn't want to have the negative attention on them for running a "gay club" so the first three teachers I went to turned me down. Before I knew it I was on my own to find advisors for the new club. After many days of searching, I found two teachers who were willing to sacrifice their time and reputation to a rightful cause. One was a teacher I had in a previous year, Mr. Knapp, and the other was one of the advisers for another club I was involved in, Ms. Jungwirth.

Finally I had the club approved by the principal. Now it was time to see how our school's ASB (Associated Student Body) would feel about the club's passage. Luckily my younger sister was involved in ASB at the time so she was my "inside man" and gave me updates about how the approval of my club was going. Surprisingly there were only three out of the thirty students who disagreed and thought it was "immoral". As for the rest they strongly approved and wanted to give us a fair chance, just like any other club. Living in a very conservative community, **many of my friends and peers were excited that something new and positive, such as a GSA, would take place at our high school.**

Next, I started getting posters made, agendas set up, officers in order, and figuring out how I wanted our club to be run. I put in a morning announcement, but I was restricted from putting a description of the club on the announcement, which banned me from saying "Gay-Straight Alliance." So therefore I could only put the club title, which I named "True Colors", and the when and whereabouts of our meetings. There were many parent phone calls and complaints about our announcements and posters, which put a lot of friction between the administration and our club. In other words, we were on a "short leash."

Our first club meeting took place on April 21st and there was a surprisingly amazing turnout of about thirty kids. It was an uplifting and inspiring feeling to know that so many kids supported us, and needed the club. It made me feel like it was sort of like a symbiotic relationship; we all needed each other and benefited from each other. As a group we decided to make the club a support group, and a school activist group to inform not only our school population but our community as well. Each meeting we talked about something new. For example, we talked about how to deal with harassment, how to inform others, and how to stand up against anti-LGBT bullying in our school. One of the major issues that we deal with in our school and community is that the view of anything other than being heterosexual is a "choice". Our goal is to prove to people that it is not a choice, and show them the facts. Why would someone choose to make their life harder? Dealing with the setbacks, intolerance, and limitations of being different; it's not an easy life. What exemplifies this belief is when I hear stories from my peers and older people within the LGBT community and how hard their life is, but yet they go against all odds and embrace it to be who they are. That is what I want the club to show to our students: that they shouldn't be afraid and they shouldn't hide who they are because the longer you do, the more unhappy you're going to be with yourself, and others. **In a closed community our LGBT youth has never really had an opportunity to feel accepted and not judged, before now.**

Our GSA's vice president, secretary and myself attended the 2010 Gay Pride event in Joshua Tree to showcase our newly started Yucca Valley High School Gay-Straight Alliance. The overwhelming support and acceptance shown by everyone there was truly incredible. If that didn't inspire me more to keep the club going, I don't know what would have. We were astonished at how many LGBT adults came up to our table and shared their stories of how high school would have been so much easier if they had something like a Gay-Straight Alliance when they were younger. At that point I finally realized how this small club could make a difference in someone's life.

During our first months of the club we have made a name for ourselves in a short period of time, and we are looking forward to better, more influential years to come. We have found a lot of support and resources among the local LGBT community, making it an easier time financially for our club. Our goal for next year is to reach out more in the community, and continue to press forward in making a difference in our school. We want to use some of our finances next year to go towards going to the Palm Springs Pride festival, so all of our club members can experience the freedom and liberation shed forth at pride events, and many other events as well.

I know that the hard work I put into this club is making an impact on my fellow students and LGBTQ youth around the world to give them a little stepping stone that not many of today's adults had back when they were our age: support, acceptance, and tolerance.

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Links

[1] <http://www.hidesertstar.com/articles/2010/07/10/news/doc4c381676e780a743459301.txt>