

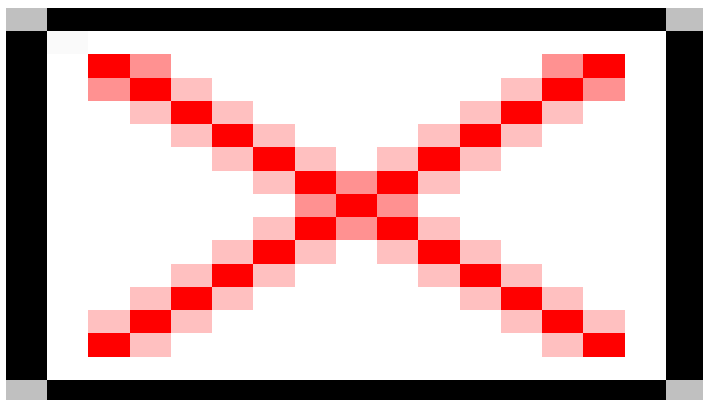


Published on *Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network* (<http://gsanetwork.org>)

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National Momentum: A GSA 'Explosion' in Wisconsin

Apr. 9, 2012 ? laura



“We’ve really seen an explosion (in the number of GSAs) in the last year or two,” said Tim Michael, Manager of GSA Outreach at Wisconsin’s [Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools \(GSAFE\)](#) ^[1]. “And particularly GSAs in the rural part of the state.”

As the GSA movement spreads across the country, GSAFE, an organization that empowers LGBTQ youth, school staff, and families to change Wisconsin school climates, is making sure their state – and its large rural population – catches the momentum. A founding National Association member with grassroots going back to the early ‘90s, GSAFE has grown from just 7 GSAs to over 140. Now, inspired by the racial and economic justice focus of the 2011 National Gathering, themed “Make It Better for All,” GSAFE is expanding GSA work across oppressions and geographic boundaries.



"One of our goals is to provide intentional anti-racism training for GSAs and see more GSAs take on broader social justice issues in their schools," Tim said. "We want to help GSAs think outside their typical issues that isolate the LGBTQ identity."

Recently, GSAFE showcased this pioneering work at the third bi-annual State Superintendent's Conference on LGBT Youth, which over 100 students and 250 educators attended. The summit featured a plenary session and Models of Resiliency Panel to discuss issues facing low-income & LGBTQ youth of color. GSA Network's own Racial & Economic Justice Manager, Geoffrey Winder, attended the plenary as a keynote speaker.

"I felt like (the event) was a pivotal shift in the way people talk about GSAs," said Geoffrey, "and



especially in building the capacity of GSAs to engage with the queer youth of color organizing that is already happening."

After his keynote, Geoffrey worked with GSAFE staff, board members, and students on integrating anti-racism and economic justice into the safe schools work already happening in Wisconsin.

"This is an important step for GSAFE Wisconsin," said Brian Juchems, Director of Programs at

GSAFE. ?We are really challenging an audience that doesn?t connect LGBTQ issues with issues of class, race and immigration status.?

Keep up the important work, Wisconsin. We are proud to see this member of the National Association of GSA Networks lead the way for organizations that are putting issues of race, class and other oppressions at the center of their work with LGBTQ youth.

To follow GSAFE, visit their **brand new** website: <http://www.gsafewi.org> ^[1]

To learn about more members of the National Association of GSA Networks, visit our National Directory: <http://www.gsanetwork.org/national-directory> ^[2]

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[1] <http://www.gsafewi.org>

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