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(Fruit) Salute to Ohio Organizing!

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On Saturday August 11th, 2012 Kaleidoscope Youth Center [1] hosted our very first GSA Summit here in Columbus, Ohio. Over the 2011-2012 school year our GSA network, called KYC Connect, grew from approximately seven GSAs to 33 GSAs and we had attendees at our summit representing ten different schools. The GSA Summit included training youth to be leaders, empowering them to provide their own insights on important issues, equipping youth with the tools that they need to make a difference in their schools and making sure that youth are aware of the supports at their disposal. We wanted participants to come out of this summit with new knowledge and skills when it comes to GSA work as well as a newfound or renewed motivation to get involved in their community and to plan events and workshops as a part of the network here in Ohio.

So how did we do? One youth participant was so excited that he evaluated the summit a twelve in all aspects on a scale from one to five! When asked directly how the GSA Summit was helpful another participant commented, ?It energized me to occupy a more active role in the LGBT community.?

This event took place the weekend after the 2012 National Gathering [2], an event that gave me some much-needed motivation just in time for our GSA Summit here in Ohio. Sometimes we need a reminder that the hard work and dedication that we pour into GSA organizing has a clear purpose and affects the lives of so many youth in amazing ways. And sometimes we just need new energizers ? I will admit that the Fruit Salute, an amazing energizing activity I learned at the National Gathering, made its Ohio debut at our GSA Summit. (If you don?t know about it, you should definitely check it out [3].)

I am so grateful for having been given the opportunity to attend the National Gathering and bring a part of that experience back to Ohio. After attending a workshop about site visits at the National Gathering, I was able to talk more broadly about the specific type of support GSAs in Ohio could request from KYC Connect in hopes of keeping their GSA strong and growing. As part of the National Association of GSA Networks, I connect with so many amazing people and organizations from around the country dedicated to GSA organizing. Being able to discuss best practices, share success, and dialog about some of the challenges with this work is critical and the benefits show in the work happening here in Ohio. Thank you to all of the National Association members for that support, and thanks for giving my story a looksee!

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Links:
[1] http://www.kycohio.org/index.php
[2] http://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/your-national-gsa-movement-action/08/15/12
[3] http://youtu.be/ddg_fJWaCsM