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

Reaching the Summit

Jan. 16, 2013 ? Ariel

You hear a lot about our big conferences -- and for good reason! Over 700 people came to San Francisco for the incredible YES conference [1]last month. The Central Valley's Expression Not Suppression [2] (ENS) conference is coming up next month in Fresno.

But between these big events in major cities, California program staff are traveling across the state to gather smaller, but equally fierce, groups of youth for regional summits.

Armed with fabulous fliers by program intern Tammie Valer in SoCal and superstar youth trainers across the state, the summit season started in September with a bang. GSA Network typically puts on around 20 one-day youth leadership summits or trainings between September-March each school year.

Partnering with local organizations like the Independent Living Resource Center [3], the Rainbow Community Center [4], and other awesome groups is one of our secrets to success. This year we are also working with the ACLU of Southern California?s Student Rights Project [5] to provide specialized trainings to GSA advisors who are often instrumental in getting youth to attend.

Sometimes summits even draw special guests. Assemblymember Nancy Skinner dropped by our Contra Costa County summit to speak and meet some young people during a session focused on building strong youth-adult partnerships.

The most important ingredient, however, is always our group of youth trainers who dedicate many weekends to training their peers on GSA essentials like fundraising, legal rights, launching a campaign, and more. Youth leaders are graduates of other programs like our regional Youth Council, Activist Camp, and/or GAYLA who take part in a number of ?training-of-trainers? in order to train their peers.

This school year, we have already visited Sacramento, Modesto, Contra Costa, Visalia, North County San Diego, Orange County, Downtown Los Angeles (at Models of Pride), Long Beach, Antelope Valley, and San Diego (YES conference), Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Riverside (QCamp), and Orange County. Future summits planned for this school year include Pomona, San Gabriel, Temecula, San Bernardino, Kern County, Coachella, South LA, East LA, and San Diego.

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