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## Hawai'i joins the GSA Movement!

Oct. 28, 2011 ? laura

It's official! In September, GSA Hawai'i joined the National Association of GSA Networks, making them the newest member of 33 networks.



Hawai'i used to have an LGBTQ support center for all ages, but when the center closed down, the [Life Foundation](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, Hawai'i's first AIDS organization, started getting calls from teachers and administrators about what they can do to make it better for LGBTQ youth. And the calls didn't stop. "Where are the GSAs?" asked **Melanie Moore, Communications Consultant for Life Foundation**. Staff at Life Foundation started calling schools and found out that there weren't very many GSAs in the state, but they wanted that to change ? fast! Thus, Life Foundation launched [GSA Hawai'i](#) <sup>[2]</sup> in July 2011 to provide advocacy and support to LGBTQ youth. In this initial push to establish GSA Hawai'i, Moore connected with GSA Network to learn more about the [National Association of GSA Networks](#) <sup>[3]</sup> and the field of organizations doing GSA work across the country. The National Association members inspired Moore and other staff, and they realized Hawai'i's potential to build a GSA network in their own state.



"The National Association of GSA Networks has given us a lot of vision for the future," said Moore. "A lot of the networks have been around for so much longer and gave us insight into what we need to prepare for."

In August, Calvin Marquez, Development Associate of Life Foundation, traveled to the [National Gathering](#) [4], an annual conference that brought together National Association members in Washington, D.C., where he met other organizations and GSA movement leaders from across the country. The National Gathering provided a sense of community for GSA Hawaii. "We're not doing this alone and we have a sense of community now with other GSA networks," Moore explained. GSA Hawaii is a huge step for the LGBTQ youth movement in Hawaii. "For Hawaii, it's the first big step forward for LGBT youth making themselves heard," noted Moore. "This is the first time that youth and GSAs are really publicly coming out."

Although GSA Hawaii is new, they are already making great strides. GSA Hawaii recently brought together a large group of youth leaders to determine their goals, programs and priorities. Youth are leading the way and are already planning for a youth-led GSA conference. Hawaii has nine GSAs and the goal is to reach 20 by the end of this school year.

**The future is bright for GSA Hawaii and we are excited to welcome them as the newest member to the National Association of GSA Networks.**

To learn more about GSA Hawaii and stay up to date with their events and programs, visit [www.gsahawaii.org](http://www.gsahawaii.org) [2].

To find out about other National Association members, visit the National Association of GSA Networks national directory: [www.gsanetwork.org/national-directory](https://gsanetwork.org/national-directory) [5].

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#### Links

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

[2] <http://www.gsahawaii.org>

[3] <https://gsanetwork.org/get-involved/change-nation/national-association-gsa-networks>

[4] <https://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/gsa-network-goes-washington/08/18/11>

[5] <https://gsanetwork.org/national-directory>