



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

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SPIN Summit

Jun. 4, 2012 ? Brandon Serpas

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When I first heard about GSA Network's ?Safe & Healthy LGBT Youth Project,? I thought it sounded great ? but had no idea what it meant on the ground. After all, the health and safety of LGBT youth is a pretty big issue for a single project to take on, even with federal support!

I finally got a glimpse of the project ? and the other work happening to further LGBT youth safety



in California ? at last month's Suicide Prevention and Intervention NOW (SPIN) Summit held at the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center. The event gathered LGBTQ youth and adult ally community groups and Los Unified School District (LAUSD) officials to discuss strategies to eliminate suicide among LGBTQ youth and decrease homophobia and transphobia in L.A. County schools.

The SPIN Summit began with resource tables from tons of participating community organizations, including The Trevor Project, Gays and Lesbians Initiating a Dialogue for Equality (GLIDE), LAUSD School Mental Health Services and others. With its wealth of resources and connections, the resource fair alone could have been an event, and was only overshadowed by the speeches and amazing afternoon workshops. LAUSD Mental Health Services Officials even offered an ?assumption wall? activity, which helped participants collaborate with each other on ways they can create change at their schools.

Dave Reynolds, Project Director for the Safe & Healthy LGBT Youth Project, kicked off the afternoon sessions with the GSA Advisor workshop. This workshop educates participants on how



to advise and support youth in schools who are starting, running and using their GSAs to work towards safer schools for LGBTQ and ally youth. It was really cool to see GSA clubs officially recognized as a way to increase the health and safety of LGBT youth!

The Summit ended with awards for people making a difference in the lives of LGBTQ youth. I was impressed to see a middle school principal, James Kundani of Virgil Middle School, win SPIN's administrator of the year award. And I was thrilled when Isaias Guzman, a fellow GSA Network Youth Leader, won the youth SPIN Award for his work in making schools across the state safer places for LGBTQ youth and allies. It's clear that GSA clubs and activists are leading the way in LGBTQ youth safety.

Congrats, Isaias, and thank you to the many committed Californians who are working to create safer and healthier schools!

Source URL: <https://gsanetwork.org/news/blog/spin-summit/06/04/12>