



Hudson Valley

NEWS

The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network

www.glsenhudsonvalley.org

Fall 2004

GLSEN is a national education organization creating safe schools for all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students.

We are making LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling unacceptable in America's schools.

We engage and empower educators as partners in creating schools where every student can fully participate in school life, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression.

We are ensuring that the national education agenda to create effective schools includes LGBT issues.

OUR CHAPTER

Our chapter, founded in 1997, is comprised of sub-chapters in Westchester, Rockland, Putnam, Orange, Dutchess and Ulster counties in New York

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NEWSLETTER

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November 15 - "Healing the Hurt" Conference

The Sixth Annual "Healing the Hurt" Conference will take place on Monday, November 15, 2004 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains.

Join hundreds of educators, community leaders, youth workers, parents and students for a day of learning and making a difference in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.



This year's conference features a Youth Speak-out in the morning and a new Networking Roundtables format, as well as workshops, in the afternoon. Educational workshops range from the basics, like "LGBT 101" and "Transgender 101," to information tailored to middle school, "No Name Calling," and a workshop about gender issues for elementary age children.

During the morning Youth Speak-out, young gay and lesbian people will speak publicly about their experiences in schools and local communities. Their stories are an emotional mix of heartbreak, courage, and hope. The roundtable session after lunch will allow discussion of LGBT issues in separate groups for school administrators, religious leaders, families and friends of LGBT people, straight allies in schools, and other interest groups.

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First Person: A Creative Expression Weekend

The 2nd annual "First Person – A Creative Expression Weekend" is scheduled for Fri. October 29 - Sun. October 31 at Camp Mariah in Fishkill, NY. The weekend's theme is "Windows and Mirrors" and will bring together LGBT teenagers and their straight allies to explore social justice issues through storytelling, multimedia arts activities, and team-building games.

Activities aim to decrease feelings of isolation, create connections, and help empower groups and individuals using the arts as a vehicle to articulate their mission and communicate their message. Workshops are offered in theater, music, visual arts, writing, and movement. The outdoor "ropes course" presents fun challenges that require teamwork. Saturday night there will be a Halloween Dance!

Continued on page 2...

Inside...

**Chapter News
Update on DASA
School GSAs**

“Healing the Hurt” Conference

Continued from page 1

Organizing sponsors of “Healing the Hurt” are GLSEN, the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network Hudson Valley Chapter; PFLAG, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Westchester; Center Lane of Westchester Jewish Community Services; and the Westchester County Executive's Office.

The Conference is endorsed by the Westchester-Putnam School Boards Association, the Westchester-East Putnam District PTA, Hudson River CHHOP Teachers' Center, and the National Association of Social Workers/Westchester Division.

Major funding for “Healing the Hurt” comes from a generous grant from the Paul Rapoport Foundation and from Norman E. Friedman, Mental Health Assoc. of Westchester, Westchester County Dept. of Social Services, Westchester County Youth Bureau, and Xyloware Corp..

Additional support comes from the Westchester County Dept. of Community Mental Health, A.R.C.S. (AIDS-Related Community Services), WESPAC Foundation, and NY State Sen. Suzi Oppenheimer.

To receive a brochure or for more information, you may email westchester@glsenhudsonvalley.org or call GLSEN Hudson Valley at 914-962-7888.

First Person: A Creative Expression Weekend

Continued from page 1

Information about this unique program has been mailed to all high school principals and GSA advisors in Westchester, Putnam, Rockland, Dutchess, Orange, and Ulster Counties. Last year's weekend attracted fifty-five participants. The registration fee is \$100 per person. Several schools underwrite their students' and staff's participation using New York State “safe schools” funds.



For more information, visit our website - www.glsenhudsonvalley.org (see 'Events') or call 914-962-7888.

GLSEN Hudson Valley received a \$1000 grant from the Eastern Dutchess Inter-Parish Council of Episcopal Churches and will use this generous donation to defray expenses of this “First Person” weekend.

A Look Ahead

DAY of SILENCE

The *Day of Silence*, a project of the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in collaboration with the United States Student Association (USSA), is a student-led day of action where those who support making anti-LGBT bias unacceptable in schools take a day-long vow of silence to recognize and protest the discrimination and harassment -- in effect, the silencing -- experienced by LGBT students and their allies.

Wednesday, April 13, 2005.

Visit www.dayofsilence.org

NO name-calling week

No Name-Calling Week is an annual week of educational activities aimed at ending name-calling of all kinds and providing middle schools with the tools and inspiration to launch an on-going dialogue about ways to eliminate bullying in their communities.

Jan. 24-28 2005.

Visit www.nonamecallingweek.org



FROM MY DESK

I'm really excited to tell you about a new GLSEN program. "Lunchbox 2," the revised edition of this popular training kit, was presented at the National Conference in July as part of the School Training Track.

The "GLSEN Lunchbox 2" is a comprehensive training program aimed at providing educators and community members with background knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to make schools safer and more affirming places for actual and perceived lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students. The GLSEN "Lunchbox 2" is designed to be a "do-it-yourself" kit and contains all the instructions and materials necessary for even inexperienced facilitators to conduct complete trainings that address LGBT issues. Here are some highlights on how the "Lunchbox 2" has been improved:

- More activities for specific audiences
- LGBT issues framed in a broader context of diversity and human rights
- More activities that specifically relate to issues around gender expression and identity
- Training "menus" that allow for more flexibility in a time when there is limited funding and time for in-service training of school staff
- "Less talk and more action"

The Hudson Valley Chapter has several Lunchbox 2 kits for your examination in our lending library, and each sub-chapter has a kit too. We will be providing trainings this school year, using "Lunchbox 2." Feel free to contact me for further information.

Mary Jane Karger,
Co-Chair Westchester

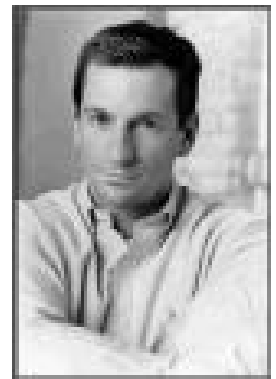
TASK FORCE STUDIES ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

As you may know, GLSEN is governed by an all-volunteer National Board of Directors, whose responsibilities include setting the strategic direction for the organization, securing resources to help it fulfill its mission, monitoring the expenditure of those resources, and hiring and evaluating an Executive Director.

It is advised by two bodies: an Advisory Council, made up of members of the organization's grassroots constituency; and a Leadership Council, made up of business, non-profit, and organizational leaders who are committed to securing resources to support the organization. The co-chairs of both Councils serve on the National Board to facilitate communication among these bodies. The Executive Director hires and supervises the staff of the organization, which is charged with developing and implementing programs that advance the strategic direction set by the Board to fulfill the organization's mission.

The Organizational Structure Task Force is evaluating our network of chapters, with an eye towards changes that would enable GLSEN to be even more effective in:

- achieving the mission
- effectively and efficiently raising funds
- enrolling members
- building the brand
- sustaining itself long after we are gone



Executive Director
Kevin Jennings

Editor's Note - During the past year, GLSEN has been studying its various structures (i.e.. national office, board of directors and local chapters) with an eye toward streamlining the operation and increasing effectiveness. Changes are coming! Executive Director Kevin Jennings describes today's structure and what goals have been set for the future of local chapters. Our own co-chair of Hudson Valley, Mary Jane Karger, has been chosen to co-chair the newly formed Advisory Council to the national board. Look for a future report of recommended changes. For more information, contact GLSEN's national office or visit www.glsen.org

Benefit Gala - A Big Success!



(l-r) Alette Ahlefeldt, Mary Jane Karger, Vicki and David Huebner

Thanks to all who made our May 30th Benefit Gala both a delightful evening as well as a successful fundraiser! St. Matthew's beautiful Parish Hall in Bedford was the setting for a delicious buffet dinner followed by a musical performance.

Internationally acclaimed pianists **Tony and Mary Jane Newman**, treated us to several compositions. And baritone **Raymond Diaz** added a wonderful operatic note to the evening. Our thanks to these talented performers, especially the Newmans who donated their performance to the chapter! Thanks also to the benefit committee that organized the event: **Rob Conlon, Mary Jane Karger, Bev Weiner, and Mike Witsch.**



A standing ovation for (l-r) Raymond Diaz, Anthony Newman and Mary Jane Newman



(l-r) Tom and Mary Jane Karger, Alec Holmes and his mother Laura

We're grateful to the following companies for their generous donations to our luxury gift raffle: **The Crown Plaza Hotel, White Plains; Francis Francis! USA Inc.; Freedom House, New Hampshire; Holbrook Cottage, Briarcliff Manor NY; Needless Necessities, Larchmont NY; Wicked LLC, New York City; and The Vision of Tomorrow Salon & Spa, Larchmont NY.**

Congratulations to 2004 GLSEN Leadership Award Recipients

2004 GLSEN Leadership Awards were presented during the Benefit Gala to six outstanding people.

- **Jennifer Altman** is an English teacher at Mamaroneck High School and advises the school's GSA.
- **Xona Bari** graduated in June from Fox Lane High School where she was active in many areas.
- **Sara Braun** is the director of Center Lane, a program of Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS).
- **Jenna Grisar** and **Lori Weingarten** graduated in June from Horace Greeley High School, where they were active leaders in their Alliance for Equality.
- **Adrian Shanker** is starting his senior year at Fox Lane where he's described as a "born activist." Our congratulations to each of these leaders!



2004 GLSEN Leaders (l-r) Jenna Grisar, Lori Weingarten, Adrian Shanker, Sara Braun (Not pictured) Jennifer Altman, Xona Bari

I was very excited to receive the award from GLSEN, an organization whose mission is so compatible with that of Center Lane and with whom I've worked for many years. WJCS was impressed with the added recognition that the award gives this program for LGBT youth in our community.

- Sara Braun

I have grown immensely through my work with Alliance for Equality. It's interesting that our group is a very active club, but in being an activist, it helped me to personally grow. I've become much more confident. I've even become a better public speaker! But Alliance has really made me realize that we can make changes in our community. The award is very symbolic for me, as somewhat of a culmination of my work with my GSA at Greeley. I'm very proud of the time and effort I put in to making the community safer for GLBTQ people, and it feels wonderful to be recognized.

- Jenna Grisar

I am really touched to have received this award. Working with my school's GSA over the past three years has been both exhilarating and all consuming. It has given me an opportunity to meet some of the most wonderful, thoughtful teens I know and to learn from them as we work together.

- Jennifer Altman

Update - Dignity for All Students Act (DASA)

Albany, March 10, 2004 - For the third year in a row, the New York State Assembly approved a measure aimed at combating bias-based bullying, discrimination and violence in the state's public schools. Known as the Dignity For All Students Act (Dignity) (A.1118 / S.1925), the vote in favor was overwhelming (137-7).

"Schools need to be safe, harassment-free zones where kids can learn and reach their full potential, said Alan Van Capelle, Executive Director of the Empire State Pride Agenda, the statewide civil rights organization committed to achieving full equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) New Yorkers. "The Assembly has strongly reaffirmed its support for safe schools yet again. We thank every member again who voted for this bill and we especially thank Assembly member Steven Sanders (D-Manhattan) for his sponsorship of Dignity in the Assembly and for his tireless dedication and hard work to get it passed for a third time."

DASA requires school administrators, teachers, parents and students to recognize and address bullying and bias-related behavior of all kinds that interferes with student safety and learning. Categories specifically listed in the bill are race, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation and gender.

DASA requires school administrators, teachers, parents and students to recognize and address bullying and bias-related behavior of all kinds that interferes with student safety and learning. Categories specifically listed in the bill are race, color, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation and gender. Gender is defined in the bill to include "gender identity and expression." Among its key provisions are developing rules to prevent and respond to discriminatory violence; establishing teacher, staff and administrative training guidelines for dealing with diversity, reducing discriminatory behaviors, and responding to discriminatory harassment and hate violence; incorporating discrimination awareness and sensitivity into civility, citizenship and character education curricula; and, reporting incidents of discrimination and bias harassment to the State Education Department.

Ross Levi, Director of Public Policy and Governmental Affairs for the Pride Agenda, said, "Students can't focus on learning if they are afraid of being taunted or physically assaulted in school. This bill offers protections from violence to students, including LGBT students, whose differences make them frequent targets. At the same time, this bill respects freedom of speech. If a person wants to express disapproval of a religion, a sexual orientation, or an ethnicity, they can still do so as long as it is not in a harassing manner."

Last week, the Senate Majority took up and passed its own safe schools measure, also for the third time, by a vote of 57 - 4. Known as the "Schools As Safe Harbors Act" (Safe Harbors) (S.4023), it differs from the Assembly's Dignity bill in several important areas. The Safe Harbors bill does not include teacher training or cover harassment by school staff. It also has no specific prohibition on gender expression discrimination. Last year during negotiations between the Assembly and the Senate on the two measures, the Pride Agenda signaled to the Senate leadership that these issues needed to be addressed in any compromise version that might be fashioned out of the Dignity and Safe Harbors bills. Negotiators were unable to reach agreement on key differences before the session ended, and currently the bill appears to be in legislative limbo.

"This year we are looking for movement from the Senate on key sticking points," said Levi. "This is the third year around for this important measure. New York's youth should not be kept waiting any longer for something to be done that substantively addresses bias-based violence and school safety."

Meanwhile, the New York City Council passed its own DASA bill. This important piece of education legislation prohibits discrimination and harassment in NYC schools based on actual or perceived race, national origin, ethnic group, religion, sexual orientation, gender, sex, or physical or mental disability. Mayor Bloomberg vetoed it, but the City Council voted Sept. 9 to override the veto.

The Pride Agenda is the lead advocacy group working with the Legislature on Dignity and is one of over 170 groups in the state that have joined together to form the Dignity For All Students Coalition (Dignity Coalition) to build broad-based support for its passage. The other co-facilitator of the Coalition is the **Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN)**.

Twelve states and the District of Columbia have passed laws or policies that provide similar protections for students. These include Connecticut, Wisconsin, California and Massachusetts and Washington. Dozens of localities in New York State have passed anti-bias measures in their schools. These include Albany, Buffalo, East Hampton, Heuvelton, New York City, Rochester, Yonkers and Saratoga Springs.

Chapter News

WESTCHESTER

Thursday, September 23 at the Loft (6:30 - 8:30 p.m.) "**Meet 'n' Greet**" chapter members and the board of directors. Hear plans for the new school year. Preview the new "GLSEN Lunchbox 2" training kit!

Wednesday, October 6 at Westchester County Center (all day). At the **Guidance Expo**, GLSEN Hudson Valley and the Westchester Mental Health Assoc. present a workshop, "I Think I'm Gay, Now What?" GLSEN will also host an information table.

Thursday, October 28 at the Loft (6:30 - 8:30 p.m.). Introducing the new "**GLSEN Lunchbox 2**," a training kit on LGBT issues. Watch short videos, review printed material, and hear about classroom strategies. Preview samples from the chapter's extensive lending library of books, videos, and curriculum materials. A must for educators, parents, and students working to make a difference in their schools!

Friday, Saturday and Sunday, October 29-31 at Camp Mariah, Fishkill, NY. 2nd annual "**First Person: A Creative Expression Weekend**" for LGBT high school students and their allies. Workshops in theater, movement, writing, visual art, and music. Leadership training, a "ropes course," and a Halloween dance are included!

Monday, November 15 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains. 6th annual "**Healing the Hurt**" Conference, a full-day conference with workshops and roundtable discussions. Co-sponsored by GLSEN Hudson Valley, PFLAG, Center Lane and Westchester County.

December
(Enjoy the holidays! No meetings.)

January-February 2005 - "**GLSEN Lunchbox 2**" trainings. Dates and locations TBA.

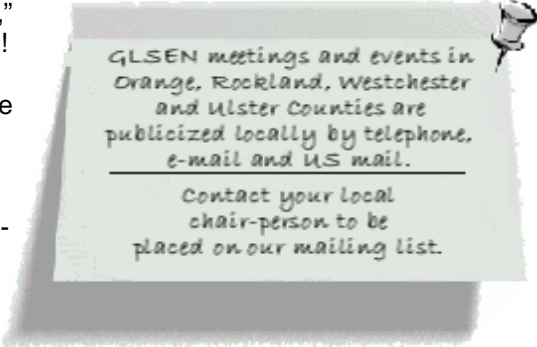
ULSTER

There's new leadership in Ulster County. In an August reorganization meeting, Laura Shapiro "passed the baton" to **Melissa Servant** and **Rob Conlon**. Melissa teaches at Wallkill HS where she also advises the Diversity Club. Rob recently moved to Ulster from Westchester where he served on several chapter committees.

Fall plans include mailing letters to all gay-straight alliances in Ulster County and a **September 21st meeting at Wallkill HS for those GSAs**. Organizers hope this first-ever meeting will be the start of regular networking among the county's GSAs.

An informational packet about GLSEN will also be mailed to Guidance Counselors. Included will be an invitation to participate in "First Person" and "Healing the Hurt."

For more information, email Rob Conlon at ulster@glsenhudsonvalley.org.



GLSEN meetings and events in Orange, Rockland, Westchester and Ulster Counties are publicized locally by telephone, e-mail and US mail.

Contact your local chair-person to be placed on our mailing list.

ORANGE

Jan Whitman is co-chair of this northern Hudson Valley area. Please contact her for information and news of activities there. Call 845-733-1125 or e-mail orange@glsenhudsonvalley.org

ROCKLAND

Four terrific teachers are GLSEN's new leaders in the Rockland County sub-chapter! **Diane Schneider**, who advises the GSA at Ramapo HS, reports collaborating with **Susan Solar** and **Mimi Goodman** from Clarkstown South HS, and **Diane Gonzales** from Chestnut Ridge Middle School. All worked with Kathy Walters, who moved out of the area. They're proud of the strides made in the past, and they're planning more outreach to county schools.

James Young, an energetic and enthusiastic member of C.A.N.D.L.E., the Community Awareness Network for a Drug-free Life and Environment has established a monthly meeting of students from GSAs in the county. Several students and teachers had a great experience at the "Common Threads" retreat last January.

Clarkstown South hosted a production of "The Laramie Project" last fall. Diane says hundreds participated in last spring's "Day of Silence," and that "No Name-Calling Week" had good participation among middle schools in the region. Rockland's Gay Pride Week in June also drew many students from local schools.

At Ramapo HS, Diane maintains a showcase in the middle of the school on LGBT issues. The GSA there meets twice a month. It began as a political action club but has changed, she explains, into more of a support group. She and her students are already planning a GSA information booth at the school's 10th grade orientation.

Contact Diane Schneider at rockland@glsenhudsonvalley.org.

Growing Up Gay, for some teenagers the struggle is for acceptance

by Katya Cengel

© The Courier-Journal

QUICK TAKE

By the numbers

3: Number of times gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) youths are more likely to attempt suicide than their peers.

84: Percentage of GLBT students who report being verbally harassed.

39.1: Percentage of GLBT students who report being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation.

64.3: Percentage of students who report feeling unsafe at their schools because of sexual orientation.

28.6: Percentage of GLBT students who report missing at least one day of school in the past month because they felt unsafe.

Sources: *Pediatrics*, the *Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics*; and *the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network 2003 National School Climate Survey*.

"I thought it was just a phase," says Nick Jenner, fiddling with his backpack. "I never thought I would turn out like this."

"This" being an energetic 16-year-old Iroquois High School junior with pink-tipped blond hair and a firm handshake. A friendly teen who is a member of Air Force ROTC and a lifeguard.

And gay.

Nick's first inkling that he was a little different came in middle school when he became more interested in boys than girls. He says he figured it was something he would outgrow or be able to change. By junior high, he realized he couldn't change his attraction to boys. But it was something he could keep secret.

And he did.

Because in his world, being gay is not a good thing.

In school, if something wasn't cool it was "gay." At church, the youth-group teacher preached about the unforgivable sin of homosexuality. Although he didn't believe he would burn in hell for being gay, Nick says he wondered how God could make him gay and then condemn him.

At home, Nick thought his family was homophobic because on trips to the mall, members would sometimes utter, "Well, there goes a fairy," when they saw someone they thought was gay. He was so worried about his parents' reaction that he couldn't tell them he is gay. He had a friend tell them.

"I was really scared they were going to pretty much hate me" for being gay, says Nick. "Because I still had the impression wherever you go it was bad."

Massachusetts may have opened the door to gay marriage. TV shows such as "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" may be making gay more mainstream. But here in Kentucky, a large majority of people favor a state constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, according to a Courier-Journal Bluegrass Poll. And life for gay, bisexual and transgender teenagers hasn't changed much.

In addition to the normal upheavals of adolescent life, these teenagers must confront society's ideals, identity questions and often alienation from their families. These trials leave them more vulnerable to depression, addiction and even suicide. They are three times as likely to attempt suicide than other teens, according to *Pediatrics*, the journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Log onto www.courier-journal.com/features/2004/08/01/gayteens.html and read five articles published August 1, 2004 in *The Courier-Journal* in Louisville, Kentucky. Our thanks to the author and publisher for permission to reprint the first article here.



Gay Youth Onstage

Danny Zaccagnino, a recent graduate of SUNY Purchase, made the pages of *The Advocate*, a national magazine. He explains the origins of his play, "Condemned in the Classroom," a collection of monologues based on interviews with students and teachers about the violence and discrimination faced by gay youth in our schools. Last spring, Danny performed to positive reviews in area high schools and now wants to bring the play to more schools and organizations. Contact him directly via email: sinistr33@aol.com

The magazine article can be found at www.advocate.com/html/stories/919/919_zaccagnino.asp.

Thank You...

GLSEN Hudson Valley thrives on the volunteer efforts of so many people. Thanks to **Rob Conlon** for two years of service on the Board (Westchester), your good-humored attention to detail, and event organizing skills. **Christina Reidel** also served two years, setting-up monthly meetings and her husband, Angel, for helping maintain the chapter website. We wish Christina continued success as advisor to the GSA at Harrison High School. Rockland County Co-chair for the past two years, **Kathy Walters** has moved out of our area. Thank you, Kathy, for your leadership and welcome new Co-chairs: **Diane Schneider, Susan Solar and Diane Gonzalez**. Applause for **Laura Shapiro, Amy Myslik**, and **Julie Staber** who organized GLSEN activities in Ulster County and a big welcome to new Co-chairs there, **Melissa Servant** and **Rob Conlon**. Board alumnus and Webmaster, **Alec Holmes** spent some of his college vacation creating a new look for our website and updating information. **Stephanie Charpentier**, a recent graduate of Riverdale High School and our summer intern, helped update files, maintain the lending library, and organize the chapter's small office. Good luck at Swarthmore!

Current Board of Directors, Hudson Valley Chapter:

Co-chairs **Mary Jane Karger** (Westchester), **Jan Whitman** (Orange), **Rob Conlon** and **Melissa Servant** (Ulster), and **Diane Schneider, Susan Solar and Diane Gonzalez** (Rockland).

Westchester members and their responsibilities are: **Ori Cruz** (benefits), **Carleen Gilot** (trainings), **Linda Prendergast** (meetings), **Jill Schreiber** (grants + public relations), **Michael Witsch** (secretary + newsletter), and **Bev Weiner** (membership.)



Nominations for the 2004-5 Board are being accepted until October 18. We especially want youth members on the Board! Please contact Mary Jane Karger to find out more or to nominate someone. Call 914-962-7888 or email us at westchester@glsen.org

Gay-Straight Alliances

There are currently **43 schools in our chapter area** that have gay-straight alliances (GSA) or similar student organizations. For example, "Human Rights Clubs" (HRC) deal with LGBT issues from time to time but are not exclusively gay-straight alliances. We urge you to contact your local school's office to voice your support of the organization. Maybe ask how you can get involved? We know from talking with faculty advisors and students that community support is vital to the success of these organizations!

If we've left out a school group, please let us know. If you want to help a school start a GSA or similar organization, GLSEN Hudson Valley can help. Call 914-962-7888 or email us: glsenhv@aol.com.

WESTCHESTER

Briarcliff HS (presently forming), Bronxville HS, Lincoln HS, Fox Lane HS, Hackley School, Harrison HS, Hastings HS, Horace Greeley HS (AFE), Irvington HS, John Jay HS, Lincoln HS, Mamaroneck HS, New Rochelle HS, Ossining HS, Port Chester HS, Rye HS, Rye Country Day School, Scarsdale HS (SAGA), Sleepy Hollow HS, Somers HS (HRC), Westlake HS (CoalFE), White Plains HS, Yorktown HS, Yonkers HS

ROCKLAND

Clarkstown HS South, Tappan Zee HS, Clarkstown HS North, North Rockland HS, Pearl River HS, Chestnut Ridge MS, East Ramapo HS, Suffern HS, Spring Valley HS, Rockland Country Day School, Albertus Magnus Nanuet HS, Nyack HS

ULSTER

New Paltz HS, Onteora HS, Rondout Valley HS, Wallkill HS (Diversity Club)

PUTNAM

Putnam Valley HS, Carmel HS (HRC)

DUTCHESS and ORANGE

Information needed

Breaking the Silence - April 21, 2004

GLSEN's national Day of Silence on April 21, 2004 was observed in dozens of high schools in our area. After school that day, 150 youth and adults gathered in a ballroom at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in White Plains for "Breaking the Silence," an event co-sponsored by Center Lane and GLSEN Hudson Valley.

High school students and their mentors from area colleges organized the program which drew an audience of students, parents, teachers and other school staff, as well as some local and state government officials.

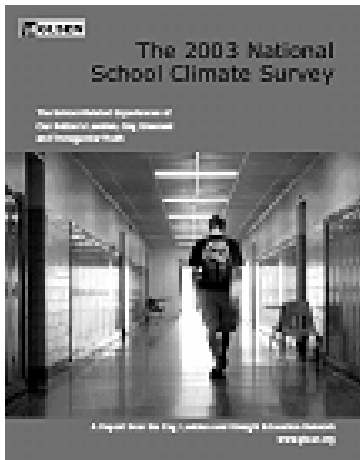
Last year on Mothers Day, my son gave me a gift that far surpassed any bottle of perfume or bouquet of flowers. He told me he was gay, and thus he gave me his authentic self, his heart and soul. That is a gift I will treasure forever. From that day on there has been nothing but blessings in my life. I've been introduced to the "gay community" and what a community it is!

As I sat in the audience for my first "Breaking the Silence" and listened to the remarkable kids who shared their experiences, I felt many emotions. I was proud of them, their resilience and courage is nothing short of amazing. I was heartbroken for their pain, outraged for the injustices and just a little bit envious that my own son didn't have the friendship and support that these kids have in their high school years. He made it through alone and is now thriving and happy in college.

The love and support in that room was palpable. I left feeling uplifted and optimistic. You kids are all gifts to us and you are changing the world by "Breaking the Silence."

- Bev Weiner, chapter board member

The next national **Day of Silence** will be Wednesday, April 15, 2005. Visit www.dayofsilence.org or contact GLSEN Hudson Valley for more information.



According to GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey...

- **91.5% of students report hearing phrases such as "faggot," "dyke," or "that's so gay" frequently or often at school.**
- **Supportive faculty and staff made it more than twice as likely that an LGBT student would plan to attend college: 24.1% of LGBT students who did not have such support said they did not plan to go to college, while only 10% of respondents who did have supportive faculty or staff did not have college plans.**

Download a copy of the 2003 National School Climate Survey's key findings at www.glsen.org.

WWW.PINKBOOKS.COM

Here is a great site that profiles new and recently published books for queer teens and young adults. We have many of these books in our lending library, located in Yorktown Heights, and readily available to our members and others. Contact glshv@aol.com or call 914 962-7888.

Rick Slansky
rslansky@aol.com (914) 698-1850



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