

ARROWS

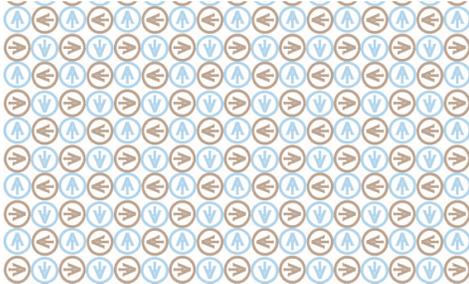
CHARTING THE COURSE

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE
ILLINOIS SAFE SCHOOLS ALLIANCE

SUMMER
2012



The mission of the Illinois Safe Schools Alliance is to promote safety, support and healthy development for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth, in Illinois and communities, through advocacy, education, youth organizing and research.



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Words from the Executive Director

Welcome—and thanks for keeping up to date on our work at the Alliance to ensure schools are safe and respectful for all students regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity. The past few weeks have been so exciting and mean so much for the movement. Thanks to an in-kind grant from EPIC, our youth leaders are featured in an Alliance film, *Dear 40-Year-Old-Me*, which has nearly 40,000 worldwide views on youtube.com and has hit the press from the *Huffington Post* to the *Redeye*. For these types of platforms and this many viewers to be listening to and engaged with our youth leaders is a huge success!

And, of course, we are fresh from Chicago's ninth annual Night of Noise celebration where over 300 youth leaders from all over the Chicagoland area come together to break their silence from the Day of Silence, rally and celebrate their successes in leading efforts to change their schools and communities. As Thomas Watkins from Curie High School said at the event, "Don't let anyone tell you you can't create change. I'm 18 years old and I've already organized two events, one that involved the Mayor of Chicago!" Indeed.



YOUTH COMMITTEE MISSION



**ILLINOIS SAFE SCHOOLS ALLIANCE
YOUTH COMMITTEE**

We educate youth on issues that affect them so that they can **become leaders, take action, and make long term change.**

The Youth Committee is **brilliant, intelligent, fierce and queer.**

At the event, the youth committee of the Alliance asked all youth present to be intentional about more trans-inclusion, including changing your Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) to a Queer-Straight Alliance (QSA) in order to ensure transgender and gender non-conforming students feel more welcome.

On the organizational side, we are wrapping up a year-long intense strategic planning process with writing and finalizing a new five-year strategic plan. Thanks to all of you who participated in surveys, interviews and focus groups. We look forward to sharing the plan widely.

Sincerely,

Shannon Sullivan

THE ALLIANCE YOUTH

300 Youth Activists Pledge to Make Schools Safer for Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Youth

On April 20th, youth from the Chicagoland area gathered to collectively break the silence at the 10th annual Night of Noise.

The Day of Silence is a tremendously important event that brings recognition to the violence, harassment, and discrimination faced by LGBTQ youth in schools. Though silence is an effective tool in protest, we understand that silence must be broken, and that youth must speak out to make schools safer for ALL youth.



Youth rallying at the April 20 Night of Noise

This year at the Night of Noise, the Youth Committee highlighted the additional silence faced by transgender and gender non-conforming youth not only in schools, but within the larger LGBT community as well. A 2010 report from GLSEN, *Harsh Realities*, found that 90% of transgender students heard derogatory remarks like "dyke" or "faggot," 89% report being verbally harassed, and a third heard school staff make negative comments about gender expression.

Attendees at the Night of Noise were asked to stand up in support of trans and gender non-conforming youth. They made commitments that ranged from doing educational campaigns in their schools on trans and gender non-conforming youth issues to advocating for policies dictating the treatment and respect of trans and gender non-conforming youth.

We were able to collect commitments from about 35 schools in attendance, and will be providing support to them as they reach those commitments in the upcoming school year.

June 9 Bowl-a-thon

What are the ways to participate?

- ↑ **Be a Team Captain:** Recruit 4 additional bowlers to join your team. Raise \$1,500 and up (\$300/bowler).
- ↑ **Be a Bowler:** Raise \$300 and up. Be placed on a team.
- ↑ **Be a Donor:** Contribute a donation of any amount and help sponsor the 1st Annual Alliance Bowl-a-thon!

1st Annual Bowl-a-thon Adults & GSAs Allied to Strike out Bullying!

Sat., June 9, 2012
1pm – 3pm

Diversey Rock & Bowl
2211 W. Diversey
Chicago, IL

Why should you bowl?

Because you'll be making a difference for youth across Illinois. Because youth are worthy of developing to their fullest potential. Because youth have the right to learn in safe and nurturing schools. Because youth deserve to live in communities that accept and honor differences. Because everyone should have the freedom to express their sexual orientation and gender identity. And because the event will be tons of fun!

What is the Bowl-a-thon?

Hosted by the Alliance Youth Committee, this event is an opportunity to bring together Chicagoland Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) and adult supporters to both raise awareness and the funds necessary to do our work. The Bowl-a-thon's goal is to have at least 20 teams, made up of 100 bowlers, all raise over \$20,000! Won't you join us?

For more info or to register, contact Loren Linder at 312/368-9070 x314, or loren@illinoissafeschools.org.

The Alliance Communication's Committee, and all of us at the Alliance, extend a HUGE thank you to each and every one of these individuals involved in the making of this video.

EPIC Team:

Danny Schuman,
Writer & Creative Director
Jerem Sloan,
Editor & Producer
Liz Cook, Elaine Lopez &
Monina Velarde, *Art Directors*
Jill Mannor & Jacqueline
Ostrowski,
Project Managers
Jamey Lundblad,
EPIC Board Member
Erin Huizenga,
EPIC Founder/Executive Director
Katie Kowaloff,
EPIC Program Director

Additional Video Team:

Hootenanny
Jim Annerino,
Owner, Smoke Online Artist
Sean Halvorsen, *Director &*
Director of Photography
Annelise Smith, *Data Wrangler &*
Assistant Editor

Noise Floor
Cory Coken,
Owner, Sound Design & Mix
Nick Ray Harris,
Location Audio
Devin Delaney & Kate Steinberg,
Music Composition

Nolo Digital Film
Joe Flannigan,
Owner, Producer
Mike Matusek,
Owner, Colorist
Elliot Rudmann,
Colorist

Freelance Helpers

Sara Philips, *Camera Operator*
Bob Vonderau, *Camera Operator*

“Dear 40-Year-Old Me” Educates and Inspires



On Thursday, April 19th, we released a short video called, “Dear 40 Year Old Me.” Featuring Alliance Youth Leaders, former youth leaders, and other young people connected to our work, the video quickly caught steam across the internet. Some of the young people featured in the film share how they feel about this success.

When we started the process of filming “Dear 40 Year Old Me,” we didn’t really know what to think. But then after the filming started and the questions started being asked, we were able to reflect on the journey we have been on with the Alliance. Just through talking to the camera, and seeing the video after it was cut, we were able to look back and really appreciate the amount of change we have made, and what it feels like to be a part of something this great.

After it was done and we saw the final version cut together, we didn’t really think about where it was going to go. We hoped it would be big, but didn’t really know what that meant. Now, it’s incredible to see so many people responding to the video. In schools, some of us who were in the film are getting high fives and congratulations in the hallway. Some of our teachers have shown it to their classes. It is more than we expected, and we are so glad to have been a part of it. We hope that the video will continue to spread our message that schools can be safer for LGBTQ youth, if everyone pitches in to help.

POLICY IN ACTION

Changing Systems, Changing Schools!

HB 5290 – Bullying Prevention Policy

On Tuesday, May 1, HB 5290 – Bullying Prevention Policy passed out of the Senate Education Committee 6-4 and heads to the Senate floor. If it becomes law, the bill, carried by Sen. Heather Steans (and joined by Sens. Kimberly Lightford, John Mulroe, Iris Martinez, William Delgado and Emil Jones, III), will improve schools' efforts to prevent bullying by providing them with guidance to develop and implement effective policies. Specifically, the bill sets out seven components that must be included in a bullying policy, including requirements that the policy be developed with the input of students and other school stakeholders and list alternatives to exclusionary punishments schools can take to address bullying.

With support from the Alliance, the Prevent School Violence Illinois coalition has worked hard to support HB 5290's passage. The State School News Service stated that, in contrast to just two opponents, the bill had so many proponents at the committee hearing that "we lost track." Marc Kiehna, Monroe-Randolph County Regional Superintendent of Education and member of the Illinois School Bullying Prevention Task Force, testified at the hearing, noting the short and long term psychological effects of bullying. "We see suicides happening. I had one last week in my Columbia School District. We need all the guidance and interventions that we can get from experts across the state.... I believe that all of my schools can do a better job in this area."

CPS Bullying Prevention Policy

The Chicago Public Schools have asked the Alliance to help develop a forward-thinking bullying prevention policy, which it hopes to institute at the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year. Members of the Alliance Policy Committee have begun to review CPS' draft language as well as existing models, and to develop a set of recommendations to the district. Among other issues, the Alliance is focused on helping CPS create policy that will effectively support the safety and healthy development of transgender students, institute regular professional development, and replace punitive discipline measures with restorative consequences.

Join the Alliance Policy Committee!

Consider, for a moment, the exciting work described at left. As a member of the Alliance Policy Committee, you could be instrumental in efforts like these and more. Are you interested in:

- Partnering with a broad-based group of committed advocates to develop the Alliance's influential policy initiatives to create safe and welcoming schools for all youth and families regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression?
- Working in tandem with the Alliance Youth Committee to move forward the Alliance's policy initiatives?
- Working with schools, agencies and government officials to put policy theory into practice?
- Educating decision makers and allied organizations about the relationships between bullying prevention and other efforts to positively transform schools?

Are you interested in making a powerful difference in schools across Illinois?

We would love to have you!

For more information, please contact me at (312) 368-9070 ext. 323 or sarah@illinoissafeschools.org



IN THE SCHOOLS

Educators
team up to
become
agents of
change

There is no one solution that can make schools safer. We often wish that there were a magic program that would end bullying, or a class that could build students' empathy and acceptance of others.

However, the world is so much more complex than a single program or class could ever encompass. Schools are unique, and each one has a specific set of student, administrative, and community factors that influence the community and culture inside the building.

For this reason, the Alliance provides an annual 3-day institute for educators who want to impact the community and culture of their schools and are stepping up to be the leaders of change within their communities. This institute brings participants together for an in-depth look at sexual orientation and gender identity issues in schools, and an understanding of frameworks and tools that are affective in positively impacting school climate and culture.

Rather than providing participants with answers to the issues they are facing in their own schools, we facilitate a process for them to incorporate the information, tools and frameworks into a plan that meets the very specific needs of their own school contexts.

This year's summer institute is taking place on June 18th, 19, and 20th at DePaul University in Lincoln Park. We are encouraging schools to send teams of educators so that, as they plan to make their school safer, they have the capacity and support they need to implement their plan. If you would like to learn more about the Summer Institute, please email David Fischer, the Alliance's Program Manager at david@illinoissafeschools.org.

Special Acknowledgements:

The Board, staff, volunteers and most especially the young people, would like to extend a special thank you to those organizations, businesses and community partners that have provided funding, partnership and awareness to our work to make schools and communities safe and respectful places for ALL young people. In the last couple months, the Alliance highlights the generosity and kindness of the following:

- ↑ OPALGA – last November, the Alliance was selected as one of the beneficiary organizations of the annual OPAL Gala. We are extremely grateful for their donation of \$1750.00!
- ↑ Roscoe's – last month we were fortunate to be selected as the featured organization for this year's Boyz 2 Women benefit at Roscoe's. With the tips donated by Roscoe's staff and patrons, the matching contribution from Roscoe's, the sponsorship of Tequila Don Julio and an additional donation from Charlie's, the Alliance has been pledged a contribution totaling \$4,500—thank you!!
- ↑ Equality Illinois – for April's First Friday, the Alliance was selected as EQIL's featured organization for its wildly successful monthly event held at Sidetrack. We applaud Equality Illinois for this opportunity to present our work in the safe schools movement throughout Illinois!
- ↑ And a very special note of appreciation to the staff and volunteers at EPIC (Engaging Philanthropy | Inspiring Creatives) for the tremendous contribution they've made to the Alliance since the beginning of this year. EPIC empowers creative people to make social change happen in Chicago. The Alliance was selected for one of EPIC's creative rallies—eight, intense, fun weeks of collaboration—and was paired with hand-picked volunteers from the advertising and design industries. Through this probono process, the Rally Team Members revised and created promotional materials that will continue to establish the Alliance as the go to resource for safe schools work throughout Illinois.

SAVE THE DATE!
The 4th Annual
Alliance Brunch
Sun., Sept.30, 2012



At this year's Brunch, the Alliance will honor Jamie Nabozny with the Alliance's Trailblazers Award for his courage to stand up to his school administrators in Ashland, Wisconsin. Like all too many young people, Jamie's life changed drastically when he was targeted in middle school for being gay. His years of harassment ended with a beating that put him in the hospital and required abdominal surgery. With the help of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, Jamie won a Landmark Lawsuit in Federal court that establishes that all young people, including those who are LGBT, deserve a safe educational experience. Jamie now speaks out for the millions of kids bullied in our schools everyday. He travels the country and shares his story so that no child has to endure what he endured. In addition to the Alliance's Trailblazers Award, Jamie was recently named a Defender of Human Rights by the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights. The Southern Poverty Law Center also produced a documentary titled "Bullied" that chronicles his life.



www.illinoisSafeSchools.org

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SUMMER 2012

Visit us online at IllinoisSafeSchools.org

Make a donation through the **Donate Now** link on our homepage.

SAVE THE DATE!

The 4th Annual Alliance Brunch
Sunday, Sept.30, 2012

Join us in honoring Jamie Nabozny and thank him for his courage, leadership, and for the foundation he and his landmark case laid in support of our work across Illinois and throughout the country.

(See inside for more details on Jamie and his case).

To receive additional details on the event, please send your mailing address to Loren Linder at loren@illinoissafeschools.org or feel free to call him at 312/368-9070 x 314.

