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Hundreds Gather in Fresno for Annual GSA Network Conference

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GSA Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Hundreds Gather in Fresno for Annual Gay-Straight Alliance Network Conference
Student leaders will address school safety in the Central Valley

Fresno, March 16, 2010 - Middle and high school students from across the Central Valley will converge on Fresno's First Congregational Church on Saturday, March 20th to discuss how to make schools safer for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students.

The annual Expression Not Suppression (ENS) conference, sponsored by Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Community Link, will also draw teachers and adults committed to ending homophobia and transphobia in school.

ENS includes a welcome and keynote address beginning at 12:30 pm, workshops from 2:10 to 6:50 pm followed by a youth dance from 7:30 to 9:30 pm. Workshops will offer students and adult allies the chance to increase their knowledge about LGBT and school safety issues. Topics span everything from students' legal rights to religion and LGBT issues.

The conference represents an important opportunity for students like Justin Kamimoto, a junior at Clovis North High School. "It's important that at the conference everybody will accept LGBTQ individuals and their straight allies because not all the time are we accepted at school," explained Justin. "I want to learn things that I can bring back to my Gay-Straight Alliance club at Clovis North High School so we can continue to get more education out there about homophobia and how much it really hurts people."

"Despite progress in many parts of California and non-discrimination laws that protect students, many Central Valley schools remain hostile places for LGBT students," said Carolyn Laub, executive director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network. "That's why we sponsor the ENS conference. We need to give youth and adults the chance to gain skills and share strategies on how to address the pervasive bullying and anti-LGBT harassment in Central Valley schools."

The conference is free and includes lunch and dinner. First Congregational Church of Fresno is located at 2131 N. Van Ness Blvd.

Kip Williams, community organizer and Co-chair of the 2009 National Equality March in Washington DC, will address students and teachers on Saturday. After Prop 8 passed in California, Williams co-founded the direct action group One Struggle, One Fight and organized a six-day civil rights march from the Bay Area to Sacramento.

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Saturday, March 20th, 12:00 - 9:30 pm
First Congregational Church of Fresno
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd.

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Gay-Straight Alliance Network [2]'s mission is to empower youth to fight homophobia and transphobia in school by training youth activists and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs. Since GSA Network began in 1998, the number of GSA clubs in California has skyrocketed from 40 to over 760, including more than 70 clubs in the Central Valley. GSA Network also supports GSA activists around the country through our National Program [3].

Community Link [4] has provided services to the LGBT communities of the Central Valley since 1988. Community Link's Youth Alliance offers LGBT youth a safe, substance free environment where they can be themselves, express their concerns and discuss issues that affect their lives.

Learn more about ENS:

http://www.gsanetwork.org/ens [5]
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