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Youth Suicides Prompt Make It Better Project

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GSA Network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In response to LGBT youth suicides, Gay-Straight Alliance Network launches

MAKE IT BETTER PROJECT

Giving youth tools to combat anti-LGBT bullying and prevent suicide

San Francisco, October 3, 2010 - In response to many recent suicides by LGBT youth, Gay-Straight Alliance Network is launching the **Make It Better Project** [1] to give youth the tools they need to fight back against anti-LGBT bullying and make schools safer for LGBT youth.

The Make It Better Project [1] includes a **website** [1] and **YouTube channel** [2] where students and adults can upload video messages to share what they are doing to prevent suicide and make it better for LGBT youth in schools now. You can also follow the project on Twitter [3] and Facebook. [4]

LGBT youth suicides made headlines in September as anti-gay bullying drove a number of young teens to take their lives - including Seth Walsh, 13, in California; Asher Brown, 13, in Texas; and Billy Lucas, 15, in Indiana.

In response, columnist Dan Savage launched "**It Gets Better**," a video message to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth that life gets better after high school. The Make It Better Project [5] takes this one step further, giving youth the tools they need to make their lives better now.

"School doesn't have to be horrible just because you're LGBT! Schools should be safe for everyone," said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, who launched the project. "Through the Make It Better Project, youth and adults can work together to prevent suicide and make schools safer for LGBT youth right now. Go to **www.MakeItBetterProject.org** [5] to learn how."

A Week of Action [6] in support of the Make It Better Project will begin on October 5th, culminating in National Coming Out Day on October 11th. Make It Better events will take place around the country to remember the youth who have died, support LGBT students, and call on lawmakers to pass the federal Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act. See a list of events [7] for the Week of Action.

"LGBTQQ teenagers are dying at the hands of homophobia, and as National Coming Out Day approaches, it is time for all of us in the LGBTQQ and straight ally community to not just come out for ourselves but also come out for each other and especially for the youth who need us now more than ever," said Sean Chapin, one of the grassroots organizers of the Week of Action.

Several youth involved with the Make It Better Project will be on the **Dr. Phil Show** this Wednesday. They will discuss how they are working to prevent suicide and make their schools safer for LGBT students through Gay-Straight Alliance clubs.

The Make It Better Project is endorsed by: Californians for Justice, COLAGE, GLBTQ Online High School, GroundSpark, Marriage Equality USA, Our Family Coalition, Safe Schools Coalition, San Francisco LGBT Center, TransActive, Transgender Law Center, and Youth Pride, Inc. (partial list).

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GSA Network

empowers youth to fight homophobia and transphobia in school by training youth activists and supporting student-led Gay-Straight Alliance clubs in California and throughout the country.

While anti-LGBT bullying is an epidemic in this country, with 3 in 5 LGBT students reporting that they feel unsafe in school, research shows that students with a GSA club experience less harassment and are more likely to feel safe at school. Since GSA Network began in 1998, the number of GSA clubs in California has skyrocketed from 40 to over 800, including 33 middle school GSAs.

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http://www.makeitbetterproject.org [5]

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