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By Matt Baume

Thanks to a gift of $20,000 from Wells Fargo, a national network of gay straight alliances with its headquarters in San Francisco can grow its anti-bullying initiatives well into 2011.

GSA Network launched its Make It Better project in October, spurred by a wave of teen suicides and a high-profile campaign by writer Dan Savage to reassure LGBT youth. The Make It Better project includes a website at http://www.MakeItBetterProject.org [1] and a YouTube channel, both of which highlight actions that students and adults can take to counteract anti-LGBT harassment.

The purpose of the Make It Better project is to act as an anti-bullying clearinghouse, providing youth and supportive adults with productive next steps to make schools safer. In addition to corporate support, it's earned endorsements from nearly 100 organizations, including the Trevor Project, the Safe Schools Coalition, and People for the American Way.

Wells Fargo presented a $20,000 check to GSA Network on Tuesday at KFOG's Concert for Kids, a benefit concert for the Toys for Tots program.

The gift will allow GSA Network to augment its Make It Better website with a more comprehensive listing of resources and actions, and to fund additional outreach.

"What's important about this funding is that we're going to be able to keep Make It Better going for the next year," Carolyn Laub, executive director of GSA Network, told the *Bay Area Reporter* . "We know that there's a problem ... now we've got a clearinghouse of actions people can take, and we can focus people on solutions."

Among those solutions is http://www.WriteYourPrincipal.com [2], a site started by Berkeley activist Jacqui Shine and endorsed by the Make It Better project. Shine's project organizes letter-writing campaigns to high-school principals, asking them to take action on LGBT bullying.

In the new year, Laub hopes to work with Shine to develop a set of tools to help people compose customized letters.

"The support from Wells Fargo has been really phenomenal," said Laub. "They've embraced the idea of making their community safe, and making schools safe for kids."

"We fully support the Make It Better Project," said Maggie Mui, San Francisco market regional president at Wells Fargo, at the concert. "Education is very important to us."

Headquartered in San Francisco, Wells Fargo has a history of giving to LGBT causes.

The company is a founding sponsor of the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, and has had a score of 100 percent in the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index for several years.

Michael Kyle, a brokerage associate with Wells Fargo Advisors, is on GSA Network's board of directors.

In addition to its work with Make It Better, GSA Network will host a Youth Empowerment Summit Saturday, December 11 at Horace Mann Middle School, 3351 23rd Street in San Francisco from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a youth dance from 5 to 8 p.m. All students, educators, and community members are invited to attend workshops and discuss strategies for creating safer schools, and the event is free.

http://ebar.com/news/article.php?sec=news&article=5303 [3]
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