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School Safety and Bullying are Focus of Annual Youth Conference in Fresno

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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School Safety and Bullying are Focus of Annual Youth Conference in Fresno

Hosted by Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Community Link

FRESNO, March 25, 2011 – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth and straight allies from across the Central Valley will gather at The Big Red Church in Fresno for a free conference to learn new skills and meet other young people working to overcome bullying and harassment based on sexual orientation and gender identity at school.

"Although many Central Valley students are working hard to fight discrimination through their Gay-Straight Alliance clubs, there are obstacles they must overcome," said GSA Network's Central Valley Program Coordinator, Joey Fernandez . "This conference will teach them how to organize campaigns on campus that will improve school climates so that all students feel welcome and safe."

Expression Not Suppression (ENS) is a free annual conference hosted by Gay-Straight Alliance Network and Community Link to support LGBTQ and straight ally youth dedicated to fostering safe schools for all students. The conference is planned by youth and for youth, although teachers, parents, and other allies are

invited to participate and, this year, to attend youth-led workshops designed for family and school administrators.

"There has never been a more important time to train students and teachers to address school safety issues, especially in the Central Valley," says Jeffery Robinson, CEO of Community Link.

"Countless schools were impacted by anti-LGBT bullying this year and many communities lost young people to suicide, including Chloe Anne in Clovis and Seth Walsh in Tehachapi," says Justin Kamimoto, 17, a senior from Clovis North High School in Fresno and a youth leader helping to plan the conference. "The best way to honor these youth is for student leaders to work together, at conferences like ENS, to make our schools safer."

Speeches begin at 10am, including an address by**Andrew McIntosh,** an openly gay collegiate athlete, who will share his coming out story. **Robin McGehee,** co-founder of GetEqual.org and local leader in Fresno recently named one of 2010's people of the year by The Advocate, will keynote the event.

- **WHAT: Expression Not Suppression (ENS) conference for LGBTQ youth & allies**
- **WHEN: Saturday, March 26: 9am-5pm, followed by a youth-only dance**
- **WHERE: The Big Red Church is located at 2131 North Van Ness Blvd., Fresno**

For more information, visitwww.gsanetwork.org/ens[2].

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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.

http://www.gsanetwork.org [3]
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