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Your National GSA Movement in Action!

Aug. 15, 2012 ? Alan R

After countless hours of planning, conference calls and learning along the way, it finally happened: 70 youth and adult activists converged in Louisville, Kentucky on August 2nd for the 2012 National Gathering of the National Association of GSA Networks. Every year, the National Gathering brings the 37 statewide networks of Gay-Straight Alliance clubs from around the country together to learn from one another, build community, and share best practices.

As a new staff person at GSA Network, I didn?t know what to expect. I?ve always sought opportunities to do intersectional work, but those opportunities were fleeting. I found myself working separately in POC communities and LGBTQ communities, never able to truly unite the two ? until now.

This year?s National Gathering theme, GSA Organizing at the Intersections, brought to the forefront the importance of GSAs serving as anti-oppression change agents. For four days, we discussed visions for social justice, how the LGBTQ movement can be more inclusive of rural communities and activism, the Two Spirit Movement, ways we can decolonize Gender and Sexuality, and how to be better anti-racist allies.

And if you don?t believe it was amazing, there?s video proof thanks to Morgan Keenan at Missouri GSA Network [1]:

Ultimately the Gathering is an opportunity to strengthen the GSA movement and discuss the future of the National Association. There were various youth-led workshops, big group sessions, and networking opportunities that facilitated learning, discussion, and planning for future collaborations over the four-day conference. Additionally, the National Team provided capacity-building workshops for GSA networks that wanted to learn more about fundraising, strategies to utilize the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) in their work, and youth leadership models. But the National Gathering wasn?t all work: youth and staff displayed their talents through an amazingly entertaining talent show organized by the Louisville and Indiana Youth Groups.

T he National Gathering was an incredible opportunity to see the work others are doing across the country, hear about the challenges members of the National Association are facing, and learn from the creative strategies they are deploying to overcome these challenges. I found a strong community that worked together to ensure that this conference was a success. Without the hard work of the Louisville Youth Group [2], members of the Planning and Steering committees and Humana and Southwest Airline?s generosity, the conference would not have been as successful. As I reflect over the event, I realized how life-changing it was for the participants and myself. I am looking forward to next year?s gathering and am excited to see what great work the National Association will do leading up to it.

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Links:
[1] http://www.missourigsanetwork.org
[2] http://louisvilleyouthgroup.com/