

# Views: Why Does It Matter?

I just started a Gay-Straight Alliance at CVU High School. I had second thoughts about our need for the club because we seem to be a mostly open and accepting school. I wasn't sure if we really had a need for a "safe place." However, I thought it was important for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and allied kids and teachers to have the opportunity to connect with others like them.

My friend and I went to see our student activities advisor and then talked to the advisor of our previous GSA. We figured out the logistics and announced it in multiple ways. I made some posters by hand.

The Monday before our Thursday meeting, I went around the school during "early block" (7:30) hanging posters in popular places with extra tape to discourage people from tearing them down. By the time

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I walked by at 10:00, two of the posters were gone. Another poster that I hung on Wednesday lasted only one block.

I expected people to protest the GSA, especially in the cowardly,



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anonymous form of tearing down posters. I also wasn't that upset about the work that went into them, but it was the principle of the thing that really bothered me. Do people actually think that tearing down posters will stop us from being here? It accomplishes nothing, because GLBT people are still here, we have allies, friends, and families to support us, and we still have our strong, proud community.

Tearing down our posters, using homophobic slurs, and threatening us just reinforce the fact that we need a GSA in our school - in all schools. Thankfully, we don't have nearly the shunning and violence that I have heard about in other schools.

However, I still see people who have no understanding of queer issues bashing our "lifestyle," and trying to act educated on the topic. This is one of the things that irks me the most. People who have no connection to GLBT issues should not be the ones others go to for information. They should not be decision-makers for people who are knowledgeable and personally con-

nected to the issue. Hopefully, a GSA can combat ignorance by promoting connection and education.

Another issue I've had with starting a GSA is getting straight people to come in support of us. I know most of my friends are supportive of GLBT people, yet none of them came to our first meeting. People seem afraid to show their support. They think that if they are supportive, others will think they identify with the queer community. This sort of defeats the purpose of the Gay-Straight Alliance.

Yes, the GSA is there to provide a safe place and the ability for GLBT youth and teachers to connect, but it is also there to educate straight people about the effects of homophobia. With more support from straight people, homophobia is better combated because their support will show in the straight community. Thus, less accepting people see that it's okay to be supportive of those different from them. And they will learn that showing support doesn't mean they're gay.

Of course, there are some people who don't want to change their opinions, no matter what we do to show that it's okay to be GLBT. But the queer community has to be willing to educate them. When they use slurs or violence, we should speak out and inform them of their misjudgment. If we keep promoting education and end the silence on queer issues, we can prevent future problems.

So we'll continue having GSA meetings on Thursday mornings, we'll continue hanging posters (this time they're going to be photocopied for easy replacement), and we'll continue spreading the message of equality and acceptance of GLBT people. And it really *does* matter. ▼

*Lauren Parker is a junior at Champlain Valley Union High School in Hinesburg.*

## Trans Living

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rately and wholly reflect our own lives.

On November 20, 2003, at Burlington City Hall, the Transgender Day of Remembrance will take place again. For newcomers it can be the beginning of a powerful and affirming tradition and for those returning, a renewed vigor in an old

faith. We may go to stand vigil or to be visible, to mourn or to find community. We may go to reclaim what is misrepresented in media translation; to memorialize and honor the loss of loved ones, friends and family; and to take a unified stand against anti-transgender sentiment and violence.

And finally, we can go to claim our inheritance: the brilliant lives of transwomen, transmen, drag queens, sex workers, activists, advocates, military personnel, police per-

sonnel, transvesti, partners, lovers, high school students, singers and an unending list of testimonies brought forth to life. ▼

*The Transgender Day of Remembrance will take place at City Hall in Burlington on November 20, 2003: candlelight vigil at 6pm; visibility procession through Church Street at 6:30; an indoor memorial service and speakout at Contois Auditorium at 7pm. All are invited to attend any or all events.*



## Sweet Honey and the Rock with Toshi Reagon & Big Lovely

Sunday, November 16 at 7 pm

*"Sweet Honey is the voice of experience . . . striking a chord for freedom and still harmonizing after all these years." (Baltimore Sun)*

*"[Toshi Reagon] is one of the great voices of this generation." (Village Voice)*

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