



The Truth About Suicide

Focus on the Family Blames "Pro-Gay Advocates" for Lesbian Teen Suicides. Researcher Says Results "Hijacked"

MIAMI BEACH, FL - Going far beyond the research results, Focus on the Family claims a recent study presented at a Canadian public health conference links "pro-gay advocates" to increased rates of lesbian teen suicide attempts, a claim that has baffled the scientist who conducted the study.

"Nothing in the brief results we presented or in our overall study could lead to such conclusions," said Dr. Elizabeth Saewyc, an Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia, and research director of the McCreary Centre Society.

"The research has been hijacked for somebody's political purposes or ideological purposes and that's worrisome," CBC News quoted Saewyc. Gay teens in America are at the highest risk of suicide prior to coming out, and do well after coming out unless others harass them, Saewyc said in the June CBC story.

What we have found is that sexual, racial, or anti-gay harassment, discrimination, and violence are strongly associated with suicidal attempts among young people - and that includes heterosexual teens too.

Reacting to survey results that showed higher rates of suicide attempts among lesbian high school students vs. heterosexual teens, Focus on the Family blamed the very people trying to help teens enter a more accepting society.

"Regrettably, they think they have to embrace homosexuality because pro-gay advocates told them that they were born gay," claimed Melissa



Wayne Besen, founder of Truth Wins OUT

Fryrear, a spokesperson for Focus on the Family, on their website.

When contacted about Focus on the Family's claims, Saewyc, the study's principal investigator, said she was "disturbed" by what "seems to be an attempt to make their opinions more credible by linking them to scientific research - even though the research doesn't support those beliefs." She said Focus on the Family draws conclusions well beyond the study results by claiming that lesbians are suicidal because

they are "embracing homosexuality," as well as other inaccuracies in their article.

"Population surveys cannot determine cause and effect," Saewyc explained, "they can only suggest possible links. Even so, other researchers have not found these sorts of links, and neither have we."

She added, "What we have found is that sexual, racial, or anti-gay harassment, discrimination, and violence are strongly associated with suicidal attempts among young people - and that includes heterosexual teens too." She noted her previous study of Seattle high school students, which found four out of five students experiencing anti-gay harassment identified as heterosexual, and harassed students were significantly more likely to report suicide attempts regardless of their orientation.

"Focus on the Family has attempted a sick spin on tragedy," said Wayne Besen, executive director of Truth Wins Out, an organization that challenges right wing organizations on issues of gay identity. "Lesbian, gay and questioning teens commit suicide because of the shame and ostracism that Focus on the Family peddles every day."

The research found 38 percent of lesbian teens and 30.4 percent of bisexual teen females had attempted suicide in the year before the survey. That compares to just 8.2 per cent of the heterosexual teen females surveyed.

The data came from the McCreary Centre Society's 2003 survey of more than 30,000 Canadian students in grades seven through twelve.

Besen said Focus on the Family's rhetoric is the first sign of a push into North American schools.

"In Canada and the U.S., we're tracking efforts by Focus on the Family and others to push anti-gay pseudo-science into schools. Wherever gay-straight alliances exist, those schools will be their first targets," Besen said. "They have no shame, using the tragedy of gay teen suicide as a talking point against youth having a safe space in which to discuss their identities." ▼

HIV+?

**Feeling alone in the HIV System?
Newly diagnosed?
Need help getting the services you need?**

CONTACT THE HIV CONSUMER ADVOCATE

VT People with AIDS Coalition, P.O. Box 11, Montpelier, VT 05602
800-698-8792 & 802-229-5754 & vtpwac@sover.net & vtpwac.org

Opera North

2006 Summer Season

Verdi
Il trovatore
a romance

Aug. 12, 15, 18, 23, 26
Matinee Aug. 24

Britten
Albert Herring
a riot

Aug. 17, 19, 22, 25

Professional opera at the Lebanon (NH) Opera House

Evenings \$17 - \$75
Matinee \$5, \$25

For Tickets: (603) 448-0400
www.OperaNorth.org

From Truth Wins OUT press release and CBC News. Truth Wins OUT is a nonprofit organization that counters right wing propaganda, exposes the "ex-gay" myth and educates America about gay life. For more information, visit www.TruthWinsOut.org.