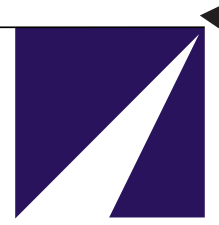


ReVision



P R O J E C T

YES

re (ri) *n.* 1. anew, again **vision** (vizh 'ən) *n.* 1. the manner in which one sees or conceives of something.

Making our world safe for ALL youth

The mission of Project YES is to prevent suicide and ensure the healthy development of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth by initiating dialogue, providing information and creating support systems.

Florida PTA State Conference Report

Broward Training for Elementary Counselors



In October, Project YES conducted four workshops for Broward County Public School Elementary Counselors. We were anxious to hear from the counselors how gender issues and homophobia show up at the elementary school level. Their comments were surprising:

- "Helped me realize that change starts with a single step and one person can really make a difference."
- "I hope Broward School District moves toward a school curriculum to help gay and lesbian students as well as educate students and parents."
- "More educators need to be aware of this issue, and the fears and concerns of students, even in elementary school."
- "Children are aware of this issue. We can no longer keep it on the back burner."

Continued on page 2



Diane Fitzsimmons, Legislative Chair DCC PTA/PTSA, Karin Brown, President DCC PTA/PTSA, Martha Fugate and Chyanne Crawford

It was obvious on Friday night that the buzz of the whole weekend would be the Safety for Gay, Lesbian and All Youth platform item. Heated questions on all sides provided a dramatic three days.

There was obvious fear and perception that this might be threatening to the PTA. As the weekend progressed, so did tensions. Attendees were taking sides, others were warning about possible dangers, attempting to be peacemakers or providing support. Sunday morning felt like "Custer's Last Stand", until the platform item was finally and eloquently presented on the floor by Diane Fitzsimmons, Dade County Council Legislative Chair.

The debate hardly began when a motion was made to eliminate the entire platform. The platform was removed by a marginal 227 to 117



Patty Hightower, President Fla. PTA, Betty Noe, Platform Chair DCC PTA/PTSA, Latha Krishnaiyer, Immediate Past President Fla. PTA

vote. Project YES speaker, Marie Ortiz, left the room in tears. In the agonizing minutes that followed, with dogged determination, Marilyn Spiegel, immediate past president for Dade County Council, identified an opportunity that one last comment could be made. As the conference was almost coming to an end, Marie slowly approached the dais and asked Latha Krishnaiyer, PTA State President, if she could step to the podium and say a few words. Marie was granted permission, walked up with tears streaming down her cheeks, and gave a speech no one could forget:

“I came to this conference to pass a platform that would protect gay, lesbian and all youth in schools. It didn't pass and that is okay. You voted fairly against it. This weekend you have been arguing about statistics. I want to tell you that I am those statistics, one of those youth you say doesn't exist and, on this topic, my parents could not help me. My mother is a teacher and she was not there for me. My father is a counselor, and he was not there for me. I came to the PTA



Conference, hoping you would be here for me. I wanted to have education and debate on this so people could learn and one day my parents would be proud of me and not ashamed.

But that did not happen here. But I will come back and I will keep trying until all youth are safe at home and in school.”

Marie Ortiz, Martha Fugate, Betty Noe, and Eva Leivas-Andino

- Marie Ortiz

Continued on page 2

Inside

SAFE-T Course at South Plantation Senior High GSAPage 2

Communication CoursePage 2

God As LovePage 3

Memorial Regional Hospital WorkshopsPage 3

Kiaora Society Members ListingPage 3

NYAC ReportPage 4

Upcoming EventsPage 4

Special AnnouncementsPage 4

Broward Training for Elementary Counselors

Continued from page 1

Betty Talley, Division of Student Services Director, sent us this memo:

"I considered the quality of the trainings to be excellent. Of the participants, 80% rated the workshops excellent, 18% good, 1% average and 1% poor. An overwhelming number also indicated that they felt the training should be extended to include elementary school administrators, and 60% thought that parents would benefit from the training as well.

Based on this information, I would strongly encourage Project YES to contact the Human Resources Dept. of BCPS and the Florida Council of PTA's and offer workshops to parents throughout the State of Florida.

I feel that elementary counselors in Broward County are better equipped to do their job in providing safe, secure learning environments for all students thanks to Project YES."

Project YES would like to acknowledge the Broward County School Board, Betty Talley, Sharon Friedlander and the Office of Student Services, Mercedes Hardisson, Office of



One of the four groups of Elementary Counselors trained by Project YES

Diversity, and the A.D. Henderson Foundation for working in partnership to make the vision of safety for all students and families a reality in South Florida.

"I have unearthed some interesting statistics that might be of interest. 70% of Broward's elementary counselors attended one of four full day training sessions. I consider this percentage to be quite high considering the demands placed on elementary counselors."

- Betty Talley

SAFE-T Course at South Plantation Senior High GSA

Home of the Colonels



South Plantation Senior High School

The SAFE-T Course is a one-day course for youth designed to empower their voices as instruments for change in their school and home environments.

The voices of youth are most powerful – when they speak from the heart and from the reality of what it's like to be a teenager today, people are moved, shocked, inspired and called to action. The SAFE-T Course (Student Alliance for Empowerment Training) is currently offered to the Gay-Straight Alliances and support groups in Miami-Dade and Broward County High Schools as an in-school field trip.

"Wonderful experience... I learned how to handle different, stressful, pressuring situations. The 3 steps to powerful communication are very good. I see now that force, or manipulative strategies are not effective."

- South Plantation student at the SAFE-T Course

Florida PTA Conference Report

Continued from page 1



Rev. Dr. Marta Burke, Karin Brown, President DCC PTA/PTSA, Marie Ortiz, Community Voices speaker, Eva Leivas-Andino, Martha Fugate, Shirley Igo, National PTA President Elect, and Rev. Maria Pierre

When Marie finished, the entire delegation, even members outwardly opposed to the item, rose and gave a standing ovation to her courageous and tear filled comments. The lonely voice of a young woman, full of wisdom and dignity, touched the hearts of all present. Parents stood in line to hug her and assure her they would

not let her down. Even those who virulently opposed the platform approached her, vowing to help pass the platform next year. Marie's willingness to share her pain began a true coalition building process that had not happened all weekend.

Communication Course

We have a new group of incredibly dedicated and passionate speakers to complement our expanding speakers bureau. Our Communication Course enables one to have purpose-driven, generous dialogue about gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth issues that honors diverse viewpoints. Our purpose can get lost in the battle of right/wrong, win/lose communication methods. The course empowers speakers to stay directed by a purpose and to produce win/win solutions for the whole community.

The next course will be February 24 and 25. If you want to improve your communication skills, want to make a difference for gay and lesbian youth, are afraid of public speaking, or are a seasoned public speaker, this course is for you! Sign up today by calling 305-663-7195. Registration fee is \$50 for adults; \$15 for students under 21.



Project YES Communication Course participants

"GOD AS LOVE"

Initiative Update by the Rev. Dr. Marta Burke



Participants of the Ministry Communication Course

The Ministry Communication Course is a one-day course for religious leaders in ministry designed for specific challenges of the faith community.

Rev. Dr. Martha Rutland, Director of Clinical Pastoral Education at VITAS Hospice shared her experience of the Ministry Communication Course:

"I gathered with nearly a dozen others at the first Communication Course. I was surprised to find a few people retaking the course. Now I know why. The workshop presents very cogent, specific skills. Receiving and using these skills, however, is 'HeartWork'. Unlike 'hard work', it cannot actually be done on a schedule. 'Heart Work' happens when you discover yourself not just talking or listening but being together. In fact, that is the first step, 'Being Together.'

The next step, 'Recreate.' Oh dear, I prefer a new thing. I listened and watched, experiencing Martha 'recreating' relationships. I could see that I have a tendency to exaggerate or minimize. To recreate seems boring when I want action. True communication is not about convincing another, it's about engaging each other. If we are not two forces pushing against each other, a stillness is born out of which communication can build community.

We practiced communicating in situations of intense conflict, I can still hear Martha's 'OK.' That responsive 'OK' sounded like a blessing.

No matter what extreme we threw at her, she caught it, received it, and blessed its offering. Can I be such a receiver? That requires the final step, 'Generosity.'

I experienced myself challenged to hear, to see, to receive from another what of their life they offer to me. Communication means I accept you. Can I receive another as they are without trying to change them, use them, persuade them, convince them, manipulate them to accept me?

Asking for such respect for myself, can I so offer such respect to another? Out of such respect grows communication, and finally, community. This kind of experience is a rare and precious gift. I give thanks for this time of being together, recreating, and generosity, that I experienced for a few moments on this day of communication."



Participants of the SFCFTS workshop at Project YES

Our "God As Love" program has also conducted a presentation for the students at South Florida Center for Theological Studies, and the Rabbinical Association of South Florida, to empower people of faith to minister and include all youth and families.



Exciting update! The South Florida Center for Theological Studies is offering continuing education credit for participation in the Project YES Ministry Communication Course. The next Ministry course is Thursday, January 18, 2001. Please call Rev. Dr. Marta Burke at 305-663-7195 for more information.

Memorial Regional Hospital Workshops

Memorial Regional Hospital in Broward was named out of 5,000 hospitals by the American Hospital Association, "to serve as the national model for improving the health status in the community." Fulfilling their commitment, Mabel Rodriguez, LCSW with the Adolescent Services Department invited Project YES to conduct two workshops for hospital staff.

We shared information and explored ways to meet the needs of patients, youth and families and to construct the safest environment possible so that healing, on both physical and emotional levels, can take place.



Hospital staff workers at the training

"This information will be extremely helpful when working with children and adolescents who are struggling with their identity. I feel I am now better equipped to handle questions pertaining to gender and identity."

- Mabel Rodriguez

Kiaora Society Members

Kiaora Society members donate \$1,000 or more to Project YES annually.



Visionary

\$10,000 or more

Gill Foundation
A. D. Henderson Foundation
Collin Higgins Foundation
Ittleson Foundation
Jonathan Lewis & Roberto Posada
John T. Macdonald Foundation
Ed McAmis & Gerson Gonzalez
New World Symphony
Peacock Foundation
Ruth Anderson Foundation

Champion

\$5,000 or more

Greg Baldwin & Jose Castro
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\$2,500 or more

Kate Adler & Pam Reynolds
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BellSouth
Bob Cole
Colonial Bank
Cordis Corporation
Dwina Gibb
Health Foundation of South Florida
Robert Oldakowski & Luis Mendoza
Pink Palm
Karen Raben & Andrea Pernick
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Jacques Soukup
TIDES Foundation/Kicking Assets Fund
William Vaughan

Mentor

\$1,000 or more

ADAM Fund
Nancy Allen
Lang Baumgarten
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City National Bank of Florida & the Abess Family
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Alice G. & Thomas C. Davis
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Lee Brian Schrager
Chesterfield Smith
The Rev. Frank Smith & Isabelle Hill
South Florida Tennis Club
Mark Steinberg & Dennis Edwards
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Upcoming events

Communication Course for Clergy, Rabbi's and Laity: Thurs., January 18, 2001
Project YES Speakers Communication Course: Sat. and Sun., February 24/25

Call 305-663-7195 to register, or click the "Course Sign-Up" link at www.projectyes.org

Next Community Meetings: Thurs., January 11, 2001 at 3:30 PM and Thurs., February 8, 2001 at 3:30 PM

SAVE THIS DATE! MARCH 30, 2001

FROM RUSSIA, WITH LOVE—NEW WORLD SYMPHONY BENEFIT CONCERT

Special announcements

Boy Scout Update

The School Board of Broward County faced tremendous pressure but stood firm, asking the Boy Scouts to vacate Broward Schools because they discriminate against some children. Miami-Dade County Public Schools have not followed this course because the Boy Scouts have protected allied status granted to them by school board member rules. Many of you have called with comments about

United Way and its funding of the Boy Scouts. We are supporting United Way in finding solutions to this conflict. We encourage you to continue to support United Way, and if you are not comfortable with your donation going to the Boy Scouts, indicate your wish to exclude the Boy Scouts on your pledge form. We also ask that you add something extra to your United Way gift this year and designate that extra gift to Project YES.

NYAC Report

By Joseph Zolobczuk



Joseph Zolobczuk in D.C.

I arrived in Washington, D.C. at the 4th annual National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC) with hopes of being inspired, learning new skills to better serve my community, discover effective models of advocacy to make my work in the community more efficient. What I found was a mix of advocacy, self-expression, frenzy and rallying support for gay youth, but without clear objectives.

The problems and hardships faced by gay youth were clearly discussed at NYAC. However, the solutions to stopping the violence, changing people's hearts, and initiating the healing process for us who have been hurt was not as clear. The program read, "everyone is an expert." If we are all

experts, who do we listen to? What collective purpose do we have together if everyone is following their own? These and other questions came up for me as I left the conference feeling that there was more work to do – not just with the larger world, but within the gay youth community as well.

A few years ago, I was able to identify readily with the youth at the conference. But as I get older, and much of the hurt and anger has healed, I see too often how smashing

down the door can actually be an obstacle to gay youth advocacy than ringing the doorbell. Back then, it used to be all about me, now it's about my friends, their parents, and our teachers helping make a safe world for all youth.

I am glad that there is a national conference and I am looking forward to the next step. My vision of the next step would be a place where the national PTA, the President, the ACLU, NAACP, and similar leaders would be invited to collaborate. Key speeches by Tim Gill, Elizabeth Birch, and others would inspire and provide healthy role models. The focus would be on changing the world, and encouraging other organizations to take responsibility to include our youth and families, not just us trying to make it happen.