

National News / Religion, Faith & Values: Emphasizing the Importance of LGBT-Inclusive Diversity Education

9/21/2010



Last week, GLAAD worked with staff from SIECUS, Groundspark, GLSEN and HRC on strategy, messaging and talking points for Bruce Messinger, a school superintendent in Helena, Mont. facing criticism for a proposed health education program that would teach respect for diverse families, including those with same-sex parents. GLAAD staff provided training for Messinger prior to his appearance on FOX News' "FOX and Friends" and, despite aggressive questions and comments from the hosts, Messinger presented viewers with effective talking points that underlined the need for LGBT-inclusive diversity education.

Subject: meanings of abreviations

GLAAD - Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation: promotes fair, accurate, and inclusive representation of individuals and events in all media as a means of eliminating homophobia and discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation ... a good resource for media literacy classes. Phone: 1-800-GAY-MEDIA; Email: glaad@glaad.org; Website: <http://www.glaad.org>

GLSEN - Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network: has a national network of local chapters and regional offices working to end harassment and discrimination leveled against students and school personnel based on sexual orientation or gender identity. GLSEN's student organizing project provides support and resources to youth in even the most isolated of places. 121 W 27th St, Suite 804, New York, NY 10001. Phone: 212-727-0135; Email: glsen@gsen.org, Website: <http://www.glsen.org/splash/index.html>

GroundSpark (formerly Women's Educational Media): GroundSpark creates visionary films and dynamic educational campaigns that move individuals and communities to take action for a more just world. GroundSpark's Respect For All Project facilitates the development of inclusive, bias-free schools and communities by providing media resources, support and training to youth, educators and service providers. Address: 2180 Bryant Street, Suite 203, San Francisco, CA 94110; Phone: 415-641-4616 or 1-800-405-3322; Fax: 415-641-4632; Website: <http://www.groundspark.org/>; Contact forms for specific people linked from: <http://groundspark.org/about/contact.html>

Heartstrong: provides information and support to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and allied people who attend or are employed by religious schools of all denominations, kindergarten through university. 1011 Boren Avenue #199, Seattle, WA 98104; Phone: 206-621-9129; Email: heartstrong@heartstrong.org; Website: <http://www.heartstrong.org>

Human Rights Campaign: a national lesbian and gay political organization which lobbies for human rights and works to educate the public. Their web site includes a "familynet" addressing family concerns (from custody to schools to summer camps). 919 18th St., N.W., Suite 800, Washington, D.C. 20006; Phone: 202-628-4160, TTY: 202-216-1572; Email: hrc@hrc.org; Website: <http://www.hrc.org/>

SIECUS APPLAUDS HELENA FOR THEIR EFFORTS !!!

"We know that young people who receive accurate information, have access to resources, and are equipped to discuss sexuality and related issues make better decisions both now and in the future," comments Jen Heitel Yakush, director of public policy at the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. "SIECUS applauds Helena for their efforts and commitment to raising healthy, productive members of society and we look forward to seeing the implementation of the new curriculum once it is approved."

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Professional right-wing activist comes to Helena to Divide Community Local Helena groups urge community to examine Grossman

(Helena, MT) – Today, an out-of-state activist will travel to Helena to push an anti-sex education agenda and attempt to further divide our community over this important public health issue. Leaders of the Montana Partnership for Sex Education called on the Helena community to do some homework when it comes to today's presentation by Dr. Miriam Grossman. Dr. Grossman's opinions on comprehensive sex education are contrary to the well established position of the medical and educational community. Instead of attending this lecture, the Montana Partnership for Sex Education is asking community members to consider staying home and talking to their kids about sex and their values around family and relationships.

Known nationally for her opposition to all elements of a good sex education curriculum, Dr. Grossman is not in line with the Helena community when it comes to addressing the issues of teen pregnancy and STD rates.

"Dr. Grossman is a professional anti-sex education activist whose opinions are wildly out of step with the mainstream medical and educational community," said Kim Abbott, Program Director at the Montana Human Rights Network. "We believe that when Helenans take a look at the extensive list of medical and educational associations who have endorsed the type of curriculum that Helena Public Schools is considering, they'll want to support solid, comprehensive sex education for youth in our community."

The medical and education community has long-supported programs that stress the benefits of abstinence, but also provide young people with information about contraception and disease prevention.

"Planned Parenthood of Montana believes that age-appropriate, medically accurate information regarding health and sexuality helps students make responsible, informed decisions, which ultimately protects public health and saves Montana taxpayers millions of dollars in costs associated with teen pregnancy and birth," said Jill Baker, Director of Education for Planned Parenthood of Montana.

The Helena community has an opportunity to improve upon the existing Health curriculum and further address issues of dating violence, bullying, healthy relationships, teen pregnancy and rising STD rates. After fourteen years of steady decline, in 2006, Montana experienced a 3.2% jump in teen pregnancy and a 9% increase in teen births, one of the highest increases in the nation. Additionally, 33% of Montana teens who had a pregnancy indicated they had a prior pregnancy.

Nationally, approximately one quarter of all new cases of STDs occur among teenagers. In Montana, 36% of all Chlamydia cases and 29% of all gonorrhea cases occur in youth ages 15 to 19. In Lewis and Clark County, 40% of Chlamydia cases were in youth ages 14-18.

"Our youth need and deserve the truth about their bodies and sex. Helena's proposed curriculum gives them the information they need to maintain healthy bodies and healthy relationships. To offer them anything less is shortchanging their futures, said Niki Zupanic, Public Policy Director at the ACLU of Montana."

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