



According to Joyce Liljeholm, multiple advocates within the same community can better sustain their momentum through mutual support

teacher's plate, Hackett says. "They see it as run-of-the-mill harassment and teasing. It's hard to ask them to make it a top priority, but we need to work with them to develop strategies to deal with it. Some make it clear that you can't be disrespected, and that becomes low effort once established. But teachers also need to make it

clear why. 'Don't say that' isn't enough."

The network, he points out, would do more than simply help ensure organizational continuity and longevity. Such an association also would serve as a crucial resource for education on issues, activism and motivation. And a network of GSAs would provide role models, inspiration and support for other schools wanting to establish such an organization.

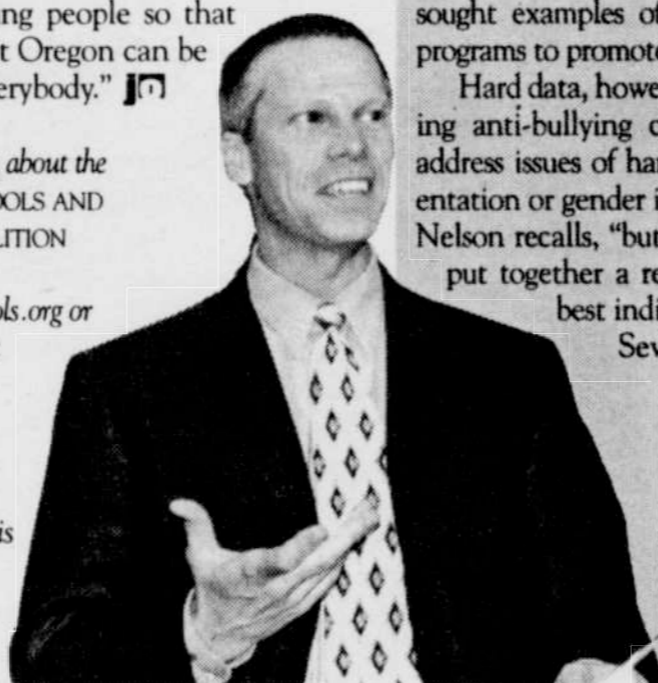
Passing the real test

Together, the annual workshop and statewide network will provide the coalition with not only a consistent message, but one that is tailored to the individual needs of diverse communities across Oregon.

"We want to connect people all over the state and within their communities," Franks says, "to increase visibility, provide education and empower young people so that schools throughout Oregon can be safe schools for everybody." □

For more information about the OREGON SAFE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES COALITION visit the Internet site www.oregonsafeschools.org or call Joyce Liljeholm at 503-232-4556 or Molly Franks at 503-260-5792.

TIMOTHY KRAUSE is a Portland free-lance writer.



Equity funds safe school initiative

Despite significant progress in recent years, schools continue to ignore or promote homophobia, which leads to harassment and violence," states program material from the Safe Schools Initiative of Equity Foundation. "The challenge is to help school administrators and teachers understand that the problem is real and that there are effective ways to address it."

Two years ago, Equity executive director Matthew Nelson launched a special research and grant program to do just that. He assembled a team of community leaders to investigate what was being done around the country to make school environments safer for queer and questioning kids. They sought examples of documented, research-based programs to promote in Oregon.

Hard data, however, were rare, and most existing anti-bullying curricula did not specifically address issues of harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity. "We were frustrated," Nelson recalls, "but we took what we found and put together a request for proposals based on best indicators for success."

Several criteria were evident,

including the involvement of youth, past experience working with schools and the ability to leverage other resources from throughout a community.

Of the 17 proposals received from around the state, the foundation last fall awarded four grants, each renewable for two subsequent years. In addition to the Oregon Safe Schools and Communities Coalition, they include:

- **Community Alliance of Lane County:** \$5,000 to raise awareness of human rights, mobilize response when abuses of dignity occur and hold public institutions accountable, especially working with the Springfield schools.

- **James Madison High School (Portland):** \$7,538 to develop a curriculum about hate and nonviolence and to create a Gay Straight Alliance to forge bonds among diverse groups and further promote students' self-esteem.

- **Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Salem Chapter:** \$3,000 to promote a safe educational environment in the Salem-Keizer area through staff training regarding sexual minority issues, making resources and materials available and creating GSAs.

Nelson says grant recipients will present the results of their programs in a public forum this fall. "Our hope is that we will prod the schools to say that it is OK to talk about gay and lesbian issues." □

For further details contact EQUITY FOUNDATION at 503-231-5759 or www.equityfoundation.org.

"The challenge is to help school administrators and teachers understand that the problem is real and that there are effective ways to address it"

—Matthew Nelson

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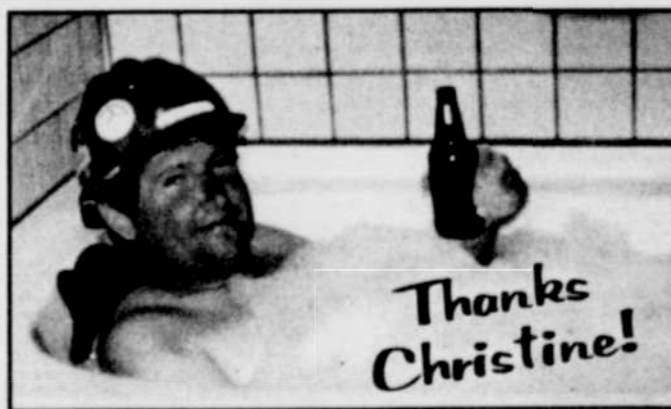
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