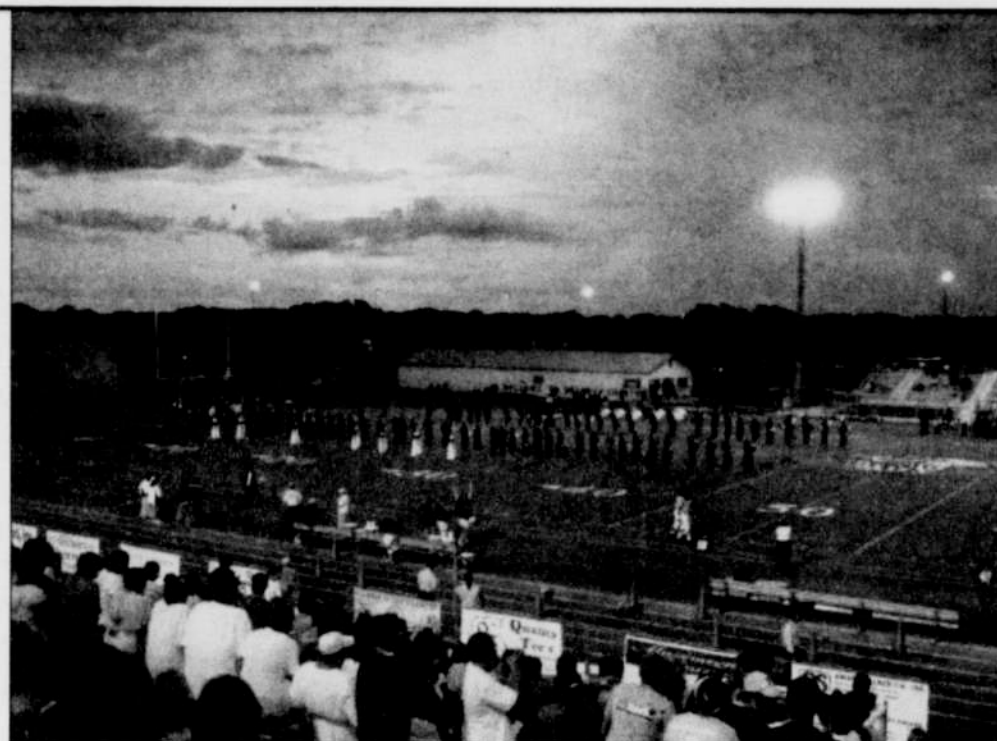


gay students at my school," said Brittany Martin, a 17-year-old upcoming senior at Okeechobee High School who is the GSA's president. "All we've ever wanted was to have a club to talk about tolerance and harassment so we can try to make our school a better place for all students."



Gay Straight Alliance members at Florida's Okeechobee High School won a federal case for the right to meet on campus, just as this Okeechobee football team does.

In a first-of-its-kind ruling, Moore held that schools must provide for the well-being of gay students to the same extent as straight students and therefore the school may not discriminate against the GSA. In the order, the court grants students in the GSA "all the rights and privileges granted to other noncurricular groups." The victory is the second federal student rights case won by the ACLU this summer.

The ACLU filed the federal lawsuit in November 2006 after students at Okeechobee High School were denied access to meet on campus by their principal, Toni Wiersma. Then senior Yasmin Gonzalez approached the ACLU for help, and after several failed attempts to convince the school to comply with the Federal Equal Access Act, the lawsuit was filed. The ACLU won a preliminary injunction in 2007 allowing students to meet on campus after repeated failed attempts by the defendants to characterize the club as "sex-based."

NEW YORK Peace Corps to Stop Terminating HIV-Positive Volunteers

The Peace Corps has agreed that it will no longer terminate volunteers just because they have HIV. The American Civil Liberties Union demanded the policy change on behalf of a volunteer who was sent home from his post in the Ukraine and terminated after he tested positive for the disease.

The ACLU sent a letter July 30 to the Peace Corps acknowledging the new policy barring HIV discrimination, but making it clear that simply adopting a nondiscrimination policy is not enough. The letter notes that the agency is bound

by the Rehabilitation Act, which bars the agency from discriminating against people with HIV and requires the agency to make accommodations for the special needs of those with the disease when necessary.

The ACLU demanded the change on behalf of Jeremiah Johnson, who served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Rozdilna, Ukraine, where he taught English to middle and high school students. During a routine midservice medical examination, he opted to take an HIV test that came back positive. After receiving the diagnosis, he was immediately sent back to Washington, D.C., and given just two days to pack his bags and say goodbye to his students and others. Although further medical testing showed that Johnson had no health problems, he was told he could not finish his service in the Ukraine or elsewhere.

In 2001, Rebecca Coulborn was volunteering in Burkina Faso in West Africa. Just days after she tested positive for the disease, she also was shipped back to Washington, D.C., and kicked out of the Peace Corps.

"While I'm still disappointed that I didn't get to finish the projects I started in the Ukraine, getting the Peace Corps to acknowledge that volunteers with HIV shouldn't be discriminated against has helped to remind me why I chose to volunteer in the first place," said Johnson.

The new policy guarantees that the Peace Corps will conduct an individual assessment of volunteers who test positive to determine what steps to take to protect their health while also allowing them to continue their service, as required by the Rehabilitation Act. **jo**

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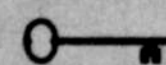
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