

# Gay Straight Alliance spreads awareness, acceptance

## Day of Silence event shows solidarity with LGBT students

By Lyra Fontaine  
For Seaside Signal

Seaside High School's Gay Straight Alliance is a "group of acceptance" with the goal of standing up for students who may not feel welcome in their communities. Through educational events and meetings, GSA aims to provide support and speak out about issues faced by those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender.

"It's important for students to want to be active in raising awareness and acceptance," GSA president and senior Jac-

queline Hernandez said.

The group is there for "anyone who wants to join who doesn't feel welcomed," senior Lucy Swenson said.

GSA's efforts might encourage students to be more open about their identity, group members said.

"Having a portion of the community be vocal about their support of people who feel oppressed by their communities — and even their families — helps students feel safe, even if they are not a part of GSA," senior Caitlynn Howe said. "There are people who are outspoken about their bigotry and that can be very harsh, so knowing there are people who do support you is important."

National Day of Silence on April 15 is one way the group



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**Seaside High School's teacher adviser Susan Baertlein with some members of the Gay Straight Alliance: Jacqueline Hernandez, Caitlynn Howe, Cosma Davis, Claire Ogilvie and Lucy Swenson.**

raises awareness and shows support. GSA spearheads the event, but all students can take a vow of silence to protest anti-LGBT bullying and

harassment in schools.

"The event encourages students to be silent or wear certain colors to highlight the inability of people

in the LGBTQ community to not be able to voice their opinions or even be themselves in their communities," senior Claire Ogilvie said.

Participating students have cards to hand out to explain why they are silent, or can wear a Day of Silence T-shirt or color to support the event.

"It's a way of standing in unity with the people who can't speak up," Howe said.

The silence is symbolic, teacher adviser Susan Baertlein said. "The tagline is 'Think about the voices that you're not hearing today.'"

GSA also organized Ally Week, Transgender Day of Remembrance and Transgender Awareness Week.

Group members hung up posters throughout the school with facts and statistics about

how transgender people are treated in society.

Senior Cosma Davis said the posters encouraged conversation. She heard students express surprise and sadness upon reading them.

"The school is pretty welcoming to the information we provide, and they're learning from it," Swenson said.

Participating students wore black ribbons for the Day of Remembrance and blue, pink or white ribbons for Transgender Awareness Week.

"Most of the student body participates in whatever we happen to do, such as ribbons and pledges to not bully and be allies," Howe said. "These are all things people can grab onto to support without necessarily attending the meetings."



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