



ReVision

re (ri) *n.* I. anew, again **vision** (vizzh'en) *n.* I. the manner in which one sees or conceives of something

School Counselors Grapple with Gender



Martha Fugate, leading the discussion on gender with school counselors and safe school coordinators.

Crisis calls related to transgender youth have increased dramatically in Miami-Dade County Public Schools. Counselors, teachers and administrators call on YES for our unique ability to provide innovative training and education.

School counselors often aren't prepared with the knowledge needed to confidently counsel children struggling with their gender identity. Most feel ill-equipped to handle the growing number of questions facing transgender youth, their parents and teachers each day. YES advises counselors that for transgender youth it's a matter of life and death - literally - being who they are, or not being at all. At YES, we invite faculty and administrators to become part of

the team protecting transgender youth from bullying, ostracism, and from dropping out of school.

The Sexual Minority Youth network (SMY) within Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) coordinates TRUST Specialists and guidance counselors who work with gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth. YES has worked with many of the counselors and the SMY network in varying capacities over the years. "Transgender, while included, was not really talked about until recently," explains Joseph Zolobczuk, YES Education Coordinator.

In the past two years, gender has emerged as a critical topic of immediate concern in schools. Tony Valido, Student Services coordinator for MDCPS, responded to counselors requests for help by inviting YES to host a course on

transgender youth in February. The course was led by Martha Fugate and Joseph Zolobczuk. Over 110 school TRUST Specialists and Safe School Coordinators attended.

Transgender youth may display signs of gender dysphoria as young as two years old, and often declare a conflicted gender identity by age five. Transgender youth often endure teasing and taunting in these early years, even from their own families. They are radically at risk for depression and have an estimated 50% suicide rate.

See **School Counselors Grapple with Gender**, page 2

Hispanic Parents: 'YES is Lifesaver'



Eva Leivas-Andino, leading PRINCIPIOS ESENCIALES DE ORIENTACION.

Many visibly fearful as they entered the YES Education Center, 15 parents attended PRINCIPIOS ESENCIALES DE ORIENTACION™, our introductory course in Spanish in April. For them, strong cultural taboos complicate the difficult acceptance process when a child comes out.

“ Thank you, Eva. You saved my life today. ” - Parent from Principios Course

A trail of tears started around the room as the first parent spoke. And in less than an hour, the room had changed. Not that parents weren't still upset, but they were no longer alone, and not so ashamed. They felt liberated by the knowledge they had acquired. By the end, all wanted to return for more information and education.

“ I used to think I was the only Cuban parent in Miami with these concerns in our family. I no longer feel so alone. ”

- Parent from Principios Course

Saint Andrew's School Welcomes YES

The YES Institute is known for helping people begin a dialogue on gender and orientation, focusing on a shared purpose of safety for all youth. In February, YES received a call from Saint Andrew's School in Boca Raton, Florida.



Theo Stephenson, Head of Counseling, Richard Torres, the Reverend Mary Ellen Cassini, School Chaplain, and Philip Crangi, Art Teacher and Alumni Ambassador.

**By Carlos Barroso, Director of Communications
St. Andrews School Adjunct Faculty**

The Reverend Mary Ellen Cassini, School Chaplain at Saint Andrew's, called YES to help open the discussion on diversity and sexual orientation. Saint Andrew's was looking to

enhance the school's support of all students, making certain Saint Andrew's School "respects the dignity of every human being."

YES's previous work with the Southeast Florida Episcopal Diocese prompted Rev. Mary Ellen to invite YES to make two special presentations with students and faculty in March. The presentations were a great success, and Saint Andrew's has invited YES back next school year to conduct faculty trainings and address middle and high school students.

An Episcopal school founded in 1962, St. Andrew's School is a nationally recognized K-12 day and boarding college, serving 1,150 students from local, national and international backgrounds.

These programs are made possible by your generosity. To participate in keeping all youth safe, visit www.yesinstitute.org to learn more.

Powerful Voices of Brave Volunteers



Armed only with the voice of authenticity, the courage of their convictions and the YES model of communication, nearly 100 volunteer speakers open much-needed dialogue across our community. YES speakers produce win/win outcomes, recreating fears and addressing myths about orientation, while inspiring people to make changes in their environment for youth safety.

"These brave individuals allow us to expand our reach and our model exponentially," said YES Director Martha Fugate. "Each of them is making a powerful contribution for change and inspiring people to make the world safer for youth. YES would not have the impact that we do without them."

YES speakers rise to each challenging situation by sharing the most intimate and profound details of their lives to a roomful of unfamiliar people who may be uncomfortable or express negative opinions about orientation or gender topics. They share their life experiences and manage to invoke a call to action so powerful that fears and hesitation are left behind. "Not everyone is up for the demands of this task," notes Fugate. "We extend our heartfelt appreciation to those that can and do give so selflessly of themselves. They are truly making a difference."



Marc Paige and Luis Pons at Turner Tech High School.

Engaging Everyone, Everywhere

We are frequently invited to speak to college mental health counselors. Recently, counselors-to-be were given a first hand perspective of the mental health aspects of gay and transgender individuals by YES speakers. Gerald Conde, Sophie Orta, Marc Paige, Magda Pantaleon and Nicole Soltau spoke to Dr. Anagloria Mora's class at Miami-Dade College, Gisela Vega's Florida International University (FIU) Women's Studies class, Dr. Lorrie Mitchell's Barry University class, and Dr. Marilyn Volker's classes at St. Thomas University and FIU. Other Miami-area presentations included: Turner Tech health classes, Barry University administrators, FIU South Campus residential students; Johnson & Wales University; New World School of the Arts, St. Andrews Church in West Palm Beach, Switchboard of Miami counseling groups, and Miami Bridge Youth & Family Services.

"I feel that YES is one of the best inservice we have ever had."

- Barry University Administrator



Jessica Lam at Miami Dade College.

Students Strengthened

Thanks to the generosity of Tim and Meredith Birrittella, benefactors of the Carolyn Garwood Education Excellence Award, over sixty of Ellen Fike's American High School students were able to attend an all-day SAFE-T course in April at YES. At the completion of the course, the students were invited to share their stories, which included rejection, self doubt, and a suicide attempt. However, after the course, they also revealed a new sense of empowerment.

"I learned useful strategies for times when I feel defensive. I am stronger and can now deal with being gay."

- American High Student

Meet our Newest Staff Member



Lubin Erne working at YES as a media specialist.

Continued from page 2

School Counselors Grapple with Gender

Two students from Hialeah-Miami Lakes (HML) High shared their experiences growing up transgender. Their TRUST counselor, Odalys Acosta, also shared, "It has taken me nearly a decade of faculty training and awareness work with the student body to make our school safe enough where they can attend and not get harassed or beat up. Ten years ago, I don't know if these kids would have made it through alive. We are very fortunate that HML enjoys this level of awareness. Although it is not perfect, it is a model of workability for other schools."

Language Bridge By Technology

By Tim Wagoner, IT Manager

Gigi Gonzalez, sign language interpreter and YES speaker, shared her expertise with us regarding deaf culture and new technologies for the deaf and hard of hearing (HOH). Gigi encouraged us to investigate the Sorenson VR-200 system, a free service enabling real-time calls and video relay calls through an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter. This is a most effective and natural way to include the deaf/HOH community in our work. Barbara Chotiner, an itinerant teacher for deaf/HOH students, taught us how to use the new system. Barbara's husband, Victor Solano, is deaf and cheerfully participated as we tried out the unit for the first time.



Barbara Chotiner (center) signs "Mother" while the new Sorenson VR-200 makes its first broadcast.

This state-of-the-art technology gives YES the opportunity to communicate with the deaf/HOH community utilizing quality communication services while providing accessibility to all of the resources of YES Institute.

Kiaora Society Membership

Philanthropist Jonathan Lewis continues to lead the way, endowing the future for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and all youth. His gift of \$150,000 in 2007 ensures the growth of YES Institute and provides support to the education so necessary for change in our society. We are deeply grateful for his counsel, guidance, trust, and support. Jon & Tina Kislak have become Kiaora Society Luminaries, in tandem with Jonathan Lewis to support the next ten-year vision of YES Institute. Jon's expert advice and sophisticated overview have been invaluable to the staff and board of YES. We thank the Kislaks for their relentless commitment to a world where all youth are valued and safe.

Continuing her extraordinary tradition of making contributions that make a difference, Adrienne Arshf has also become a Kiaora Society Luminary. The Arshf-Canon Foundation of Delaware made it possible for YES to return to Wilmington, this time to train the top leadership of the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and their Families and the Delaware Guidance Services. The Loudoun County, Virginia Sheriff's Department heard about this training and asked if they could join us, sending three deputies and one mental health expert to Delaware. This initiative will be developed as a model that other states may follow and will include an ongoing distance learning component. We are honored by Adrienne's long time support and generosity in making these innovative programs available on a national level.

Our dear friends, Visionaries Ed McAmis & Gerson Gonzalez have renewed their contribution and once again opened their magnificent home to all Kiaora Society Members. Amidst their extraordinary, award winning gardens, a veritable extravaganza of culinary delights and live music welcomed everyone. It was an afternoon of beauty, memories, and magic as Kiaora Society Members celebrated the ten-year anniversary of YES Institute.

YES Institute enthusiastically welcomes the support of Ernst & Young LLP as new Kiaora Society Champions. Mel Heifetz inspired us by generously renewing and increasing his Kiaora commitment to Champion after seeing some of the results powerful education is making to create a safer world for our youth. We also thank our dear friend Thomas A. Blount for renewing as Kiaora Champion and board member Dr. Karen Raben & Andrea Pernick for increasing their contribution to Kiaora Leaders. We thank Dr. Dan Nichols, who joined with his partner and long time YES supporter Dr. Jorge Centurion as Leaders. We also welcome new Mentors Bruce Lieb & Lawrence Magras, MD.

Our heartfelt thanks to Carlos Cuartas & Jim O'Connor from New York, Juan Carlos Sagrera & Raphael Wagner, Marty Schildhouse & Ed Miller, Janice & Howard Scholl, Mark Scott & Joseph Falk, Sergei Boissier, Ramon Escobar, Harry Rimm, Don Sadler, Lee Schragger, Gene Sulzberger and Patricia Woodson-Weinman for renewing their contributions as Kiaora Society Mentors.

Support Our Youth in Many Ways

There are many ways to contribute:

- Kiaora Society: Become a Mentor with a minimum contribution of \$1,000 - \$84 a month.
- Double your contribution with an employer match
- Tax Free IRA gifts: Transfer tax-free gifts directly from IRA accounts if you are 70 1/2. (Note- IRA gifts cannot total more than \$100,000).

- Planned Giving: A way to provide for heirs and make a gift to YES. These include Bequests in a Will, Life Income Gifts, Charitable Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts and Life Insurance.
- Endowment Fund: Gifts of cash, stocks, yachts or real property provide long-term financial stability to YES Institute.
- "In honor of" or "in memory of" contributions.

For more information about giving, call Eva Leivas-Andino at **305-663-7195** or visit www.yesinstitute.org/donate

Old Dogs Can Learn New Tricks

Dr. Oren Wunderman, PY, LMFT

I am a Psychologist and Marriage and Family Therapist in practice for 28 years. I've attended more than 300 hours of continuing education seminars, and view with skepticism claims that someone can teach me a dramatically new and effective version of conflict resolution. So it was with some veiled reserve that I began the COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ Course. It was well-paced, moving smoothly from concept presentation to trial learning. The young people sharing their stories of personal trauma and triumph, were truly moving and deeply impactful. So, do I feel equipped now with a new and effective paradigm for conflict

“The life stories of trauma and triumph were moving and deeply impactful.”

- Dr. Oren Wunderman



Participants in the April course with Dr. Wunderman, far right.

resolution? Yes, absolutely! Thanks and gratitude to YES Institute for teaching this old dog some new tricks.

Kiaora Society

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

Philanthropist \$100,000 or more

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April / May 2007 Edition
5275 Sunset Drive
Miami, FL 33143
www.yesinstitute.org

In this issue.... Dade Counselors Learn About Transgender Students



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Vision

A community in which ALL youth develop as healthy individuals free of suicide, violence and discrimination.

Mission

To prevent suicide and ensure the healthy development of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and ALL youth by initiating dialogue, providing education and creating support systems.

Education Accreditations

Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Professional Development, #2-403-003, #2-406-302 (MPP)

Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy, and Mental Health, #50-1652 (CEU)

Florida Board of Nursing, #50-1652 (CEU)

North Georgia College & State University, Professional Learning Units (PLU)

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Did You Know?

Anti-gay epithets are a catalyst for violence that affects all youth. Ninety-seven percent of all students hear anti-gay comments in school.

Gay Youth:

- 33% of all teen suicides
- 50% rejected by their parents

Heterosexual Youth:

- 80% of youth harassed "as gay" actually identify as heterosexual

Upcoming Courses

COMMUNICATION SOLUTIONS™ Course - 12 CEU & MPP
Friday & Saturday, July 20 & 21
Noon to 6PM each day

GENDER/ORIENTATION SERIES™ - 16 CEU / 12 MPP
Part 1 Gender Continuum - Friday, June 15
Part 2 Deciphering Matrix - Friday, June 22
Part 3 Being & Belonging - Friday, June 22

ESSENTIALS OF ORIENTATION™
Saturday, August 4 - 9AM to 1PM

<http://education.yesinstitute.org>



Use your login information above the mailing address to enroll in a course at: education.yesinstitute.org



MDCPS educators must first register on the Professional Development portal. Search under instructor "Valido."

Component Numbers
#2-403-003 #2-406-302

Speaking Powerfully

“YES speakers are great because everyone gets to share. You learn a lot and it's a real discussion, rather than a lecture.”

- New World School of the Arts Student



American High Students experience a breakthrough day in communication.

Bible Quotes in Middle School



Martin Reid, Principal, Eva Leivas-Andino, YES staff, and Leo Shama, TRUST Counselor.

YES visited Homestead Middle School where faculty and administration were given the opportunity to openly discuss gender and orientation. Prior to our presentation, some of the teachers had been distributing Bible scriptures to students condemning homosexual behavior. The faculty examined the consequences of these actions and other underlying messages that impact student well-being. This process allowed teachers to separate their personal viewpoints and keep a focus on safety for all youth. Leo Shama, TRUST counselor, reported that after the YES presentation, distribution of Bible quotes has ceased and a motivated group of teachers have stepped forward to consider a coalition in their school to address safety for all at-risk students.