Learn about Lady Gaga’s pledge to support homeless youth

To enter to win tix to Virgin Mobile FreeFest, our benefit concert to support homeless youth.

Visit facebook.com/virginmobilelive for details.

Dan Savage, Co-founder, It Gets Better Project, discusses sending a positive message to youth.

“For so many gay kids, there are no gay role models in their lives, no examples of what a healthy, happy gay life looks like. I realized, we could provide them with that example.”

Cyndi Lauper
Artist and civil rights activist

Bullying
Why LGBT youth are more at risk

Workplace diversity
Creating an inclusive environment

AN INDEPENDENT SUPPLEMENT FROM MEDIAPLANET TO USA TODAY

SPEAK OUT

PROMOTING
POSITIVE CHANGE

3 TIPS

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*Embrace diversity. Understand and respect cultural differences. Those are the messages that schools, communities and workplaces hear increasingly. If we fail at this mandate, the cost is remarkably high.*

Supportive families, healthy children

Families love their children and want the best for them. Families want to protect their children from harm. Those are two common views. I’ve seen in decades of work with youth and families. And I continue to see that these messages prevent young people from learning about their identity and from exploring who they are.

We want them to shine, to reach for the stars—like being a gay man in business?‘"When people ask, ‘What’s it like being a gay man in business?’ I take offense to that because I’m a man. Defining me by characteristics I was given at birth—like being Italian, Catholic and gay—is so limiting.”

Support leaders, make a difference.

Joel Burns is making a difference. The openly gay Fort Worth City Councilman’s moving story of being bullied as a teenager helped propel a national discussion about how to protect LGBT youth.

**The Victory Fund** trains, endorses and supports out and outstanding LGBT candidates like Joel. In office, these public servants become role models for young people and our strongest champions for freedom and fairness for all Americans.

Join us at www.victoryfund.org

*Embrace diversity. Understand and respect cultural differences. Those are the messages that schools, communities and workplaces hear increasingly. If we fail at this mandate, the cost is remarkably high.*
Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced verbal or physical harassment at school in the previous year. Make it better now for LGBT youth

Interveiw when you feel bullied, and spend the word that transcript and homophobic slurs are unacceptable.

Advocate for a non-discrimination or anti-bullying policy in your schools district that specifically includes protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Make sure the school district publicly testimonies that policies, so that students experiencing harassment know how to get help. Call up your Congressional representatives and tell them to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act. Contact your local ACLU to learn about the statewide safe schools legislation you should lobby for in your state.

Write a letter! Reach out to your former schools principal, let him or her known what it was like for LGBT youth when you were there, and ask the administration to make it better for today’s students. Go to “Write a Letter, Make it Better” at makeabetterreportcard.org for suggestions and to publish your story as an open letter.

Question: How can teachers and other school leaders help provide a safe environment for youth?

Answer: They can educate themselves about LGBTQ issues and promote equality in the classroom.

The schoolyard bully is a cliché of books and television shows. In reality, however, bullying can have serious, lasting consequences. And young people who are bullied because of their sexual orientation or gender identity often have fewer resources to help them.

Nearly 6 out of 10 LGBT students experienced verbal or physical harassment at school in the previous year, according to a 2008 study by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN). This was linked to increased depression and anxiety and decreased well-being.

Carolyn Laub, executive director of the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, says that students bullied because of real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity experience “disproportionately high rates of negative consequences,” including lower grades, dropping out of school, depression, and substance abuse.

Thomas Krever MPA, executive director of the Hetrick-Martin Institute, the nation’s oldest and largest LGBT, gay, bisexual, and transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) at-risk youth service provider, says that even when resources exist for LGBTQ youth, they may hesitate to use them if they are not open about being LGBTQ.

“Teachers and school administrators must educate themselves about LGBTQ issues and commit to students’ safety, regardless of their own personal feelings,” Krever asserts. “Safe space in a school isn’t a privilege, it’s a young person’s right.”

Anti-bullying policies

State and local anti-bullying policies are a good first step toward awareness and accountability, but they need to be adequate. Funding for monitoring and evaluating resources, and staff training.

Although adults must take action, Laub says, “students are fueling this movement.” One way is by forming gay-straight alliances. “Students can help make schools safe and affirming environments for everyone.”

Nearly 5,000 GSAs “can help make schools safe and supportive resources,” he wrote, “fostering this movement.”

Laub says, “students are fueling this movement.” One way is by forming gay-straight alliances. “Students can help make schools safe and affirming environments for everyone.”

The leading national education organization focused on ensuring safe schools for all students: glassonetwork.org

GSA Network

Youth leadership organization that connects school-based gay-straight alliances (GSAs) to other and communities through training, model policies, and creative programs that address bullying and harassment: pflag.org

American Civil Liberties Union

Provides information from various government agencies on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others can establish and maintain resources, staff training, model policies, and creative programs that address bullying and harassment: aclu.org/lgbt-rights/youth-schools

The Matthew Shepard Foundation

Supports diversity programs in education and helps youth organizations establish environments where young people can feel safe and be themselves: mshawful.org

Safe Schools Coalition

An international public-private partnership in support of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth: safeschoolscoalition.org

Stopbullying.gov

Provides information from the United States Government agencies on how kids, teens, young adults, parents, educators, and others in the community can prevent or stop bullying.

WelcomeSchools

An educational approach to addressing family diversity, gender stereotyping and bullying in K-12 learning environments: welcomeschools.org

INTERVIEW: KRYSTAL SCOTT

GSA Network’s Queer youth Advocacy Day. Photo: Carolyn Laub

Nearly 9 out of 10 LGBT students experienced verbal or physical harassment at school in the previous year. Make it better now for LGBT youth

Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth shouldn’t have to suffer through bullying in school. Here are some concrete steps you can take to make it better now for LGBT youth.

1. Support a Gay-Stright Alliance in your school or community. GSAs can be a life-saving source of support for students dealing with bullying.

2. Intervene when you see bullying, and spend the word that transcript and homophobic slurs are unacceptable.

3. Advocate for a non-discrimination or anti-bullying policy in your school district that specifically includes protections based on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. Make sure the school district publicizes that policy, so that students experiencing harassment know how to get help.

4. Call up your Congressional representatives and tell them to support the Safe Schools Improvement Act and the Student Non-Discrimination Act. Contact your local ACLU to learn about the statewide safe schools legislation you should lobby for in your state.

5. Write a letter! Reach out to your former school’s principal, let him or her know what it was like for LGBT youth when you were there, and ask the administration to make it better for today’s students. Go to “Write a Letter, Make it Better” at makeabetterreportcard.org for suggestions and to publish your story as an open letter.

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GSA Network’s Queer youth Advocacy Day. Photo: Carolyn Laub

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6. GSAs can be a life-saving source of support for students dealing with bullying.
**Cyndi Lauper, Artist, civil rights advocate**

"Helping youth get off the street is the single most important thing that we can do to support equality—whether they are gay or transgender. They were doing what they needed to do to survive, while their parents knew that it was wrong."

**Sasha Bruce Youthwork**

Helping youth get off the street for good through outreach, housing, mental health care, education, employment, and most importantly hope.

[www.greenchimneys.org/nyc](http://www.greenchimneys.org/nyc)

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**Leigh-Anne**

The singer and civil rights advocate, speaks to fans of her sponsorship of the Monster FREE.I.P. volunteer program as part of the "Lady Gaga: Monster Ball Tour" in support of the Ali forney Center, a group of youth providers helping homeless LGBT youth in New York. Ms. LaPalme calls for immediate crisis care, and long-term housing. She also mentions the importance of visibility and the need for support from the community.

**Lady Gaga**

Lady Gaga is a working celebrity who has been a leading corporation in support of the fight to bring attention to youth homelessness since 2006, teamed with the Ali Forney Center against people who would harm them. She has donated their time and money to help improve the lives of homeless LGBT youth.

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**Sasha Bruce Youthwork**

Making a difference in the lives of homeless youth and families in the nation's capital since 1974.

[www.sashabruce.org](http://www.sashabruce.org)

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**Sasha Bruce**

The Ali Forney Center "Dedicated to housing and transforming the lives of homeless LGBTQ youth".

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**Cyndi Lauper**

"We must better protect the country, our kids, and our future generations. It is remarkable to see the difference it makes in the lives of homeless LGBT youth when they are provided with housing and support."
(**Question:** What do most successful LGBT youth have in common?)

The numbers are striking. LGBT youth are three to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers, according to recent research. Transgender youth, while less well studied, seem to show similarly high rates.

**Why disagree on suicide rates?**

Ann Haas, director of prevention at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, says that lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth are the kind of factors we know to be most potent in predicting suicidal thinking and behavior. David McFarland, interim executive director/CEO of The Trevor Project, the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ youth, says, "It’s because they’re more often the victims of discrimination, legitimation, bigotry, and rejection, which contributes to the isolation and depression which could lead to suicide.”

Haas notes, however, that we still don’t know how many suicide attempts by LGBTQ youths result in death, because death certificates do not ask about sexual orientation or gender identity, something she hopes will change. Judy Heckely, executive director of the Trevor Project, said that if they were asked if they had tried to kill themselves, over 40% of the kids in the group admit to having tried to kill themselves. When a 14-year-old tells them that he’s never had a healthy, happy gay life like, I realized, we could provide them with that example.

What do people need to know about the LGBT Project?

That it is a true community project. LGBT youth matters know that a lot of straight kids are on their side—that more people are on their side that ever before. Sometimes LGBTQ youth think of straight kids as the enemy. We want to send the message that you will meet great straight people, and that as you grow older, the straight people who are in your life—parents, siblings, friends—they also get better and better, and more supportive and listen, and help push them to a trusted adult they feel safe talking to.

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**Sending a positive message:** It Gets Better

In September 2010, syndicated columnist and author Dan Savage created a YouTube video with his partner Terry Miller, in which they scour the nation for young people facing harassment. In response to a number of students taking their own lives after being bullied in school, they wanted to create a personal way of supporting everywhere to tell LGBT youth that, yes, it does indeed get better.

Two months later, the It Gets Better Project turned into a worldwide movement, inspiring over 10,000 user-created videos viewed over 51 million times.

**Why did you start the It Gets Better Project?**

I had read this woman’s blog. This was just after that string of suicides by youth encounter a “lot of negative messaging” about being LGBT. And while some youth have buffers against that—such as supportive families, other adults, or peers—others don’t.

Better project?

The Trevor Lifeline, a national, around-the-clock crisis and suicide prevention lifeline for LGBTQ youth 866-4-4-u-trevor (866-488-7386) was just after that string of suicides by young people facing harassment. In response to a number of students taking their own lives after being bullied in school, they wanted to create a personal way of supporting everywhere to tell LGBT youth that, yes, it does indeed get better.

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**Lowering the risk of suicide among youth**

**What message do you have for other LGBT youth?**

Start accepting yourself for who you are now. Your sexuality does not have to limit how far you can go professionally or limit how full your integrated life can be. If you do see those limitations, get over it and be yourself. Your family can and will support you.

Stanley Morgan was raised in a single-parent home in Boston, Mass. Growing up, he feared grasping with his sexual identity further burden his family and estrange him from his church. When he did come out at 18, he had to leave his religious community. Shortly after he started attending a residential high school for gifted students in Pittsburgh, he left the United States and moved to Rome, Italy. He started his education at Rhodes College on full academic scholarship, graduating with honors, magna cum laude, and the Phi Beta Kappa Prize of his class. Now a second year at Harvard Medical School, he is focused particularly on health disparities in the LGBTQ community and hopes to address those issues through medical school curriculum.

**What is the biggest obstacle you have had to overcome?**

Although my church provided me with support, it also insidiously engendered a lifetime of self-hatred about my sexuality. After knowing that this church, my place of self-acceptance has been paralleled with the journey of finding my way back to God. Although I am far along in my journey, I still have a lot to learn.

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**How has Point Foundation helped you achieve your goals thus far?**

Point Foundation provided me with scholarships to Harvard Medical School, thereby helping me achieve my lifelong dream of being a doctor. The sense of community that I found within Point has been a key factor in my success. Point Foundation has provided me with the best of education and a network of potential mentors that I have with the organization.

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**Questions & answers**

**1. What is the biggest obstacle you have had to overcome?**

Starting accepting yourself for who you are now. Your sexuality does not have to limit how far you can go professionally or limit how full your integrated life can be. If you do see those limitations, get over it and be yourself. Your family can and will support you.

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**PFLAG**

PFLAG — with 350 chapters and 35+ years of experience—is the leading parent, family and ally organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues.

Visit www.pflag.org

**Out & Equal Workplace Advocates**

Advocates is dedicated to ending workplace discrimination for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender employees.

Visit www.outandequal.org

**The Heckman-Martin Institute**

Creates a safe and supportive environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth and adults.

Visit www.heckmanmartin.org

**American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

Understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy.

Visit www.afsp.org

**www.trevorproject.org**

Get help: 866-4-u-trevor (866-488-7386)

www.gltcenter.org

www.betterproject.org

www.pflag.org

www.gltcenter.org

www.AFSP.org

Editorial@mediaplanet.com
There are many titles that can be used to describe Laurence Boschetto—CEO, executive director, LGBT ally, straight ally. It doesn't matter; they are just words, and the man behind them has a lot to say about how they are used to define him.

He speaks with confidence and wisdom that comes with maturity, but it wasn't always easy to be aware of himself. As a boy, Laurence, like many young people, was confused. Coming from a very large Italian/Catholic family, especially his grand- mother taught him that you should be pooling in the same manner as a boy. Laurence, like many young people, was confused. Coming from a very large Italian family, especially his grandmother taught him that you should be a dream market. It has lived up to that moniker. More than 100 million people worldwide identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual. This will put you in a position to rethink conversations and words you choose.

Assume nothing

Next time you meet someone new, don’t assume they are straight or gay. This puts you in a position to rethink conversations and words you choose.

Use inclusive language

Note that you’re not assuming anything, using language that inculcates all of people’s lives naturally follows. Using terms like “partner” or “couple” vs. “husband” or “wife” not only leaves the conversation open, but will be ignored by many LGBT people as an active choice to be supportive.

Come out as an ally

At work, join your LGBT employee resource group, at home talk about the topic of equality with your family. The visible presence of out straight allies shows more than anything else that equality is an issue for us all.

For more tips on how to be an ally, please visit www.atlantafamily.org.

DO YOU KNOW?

The dream market

A large percentage of gay consumers are affluent, educated and loyal to brands, and a large percentage of dollars are spent by marketers to reach gay consumers. In 2010, for the first time ever, the U.S. Census Bureau counted same-sex couples—now married or as married, even in states where gay marriage is illegal. This allowed marketers to figure out where the larger percentage of gay consumers are, how they live and where to target them.

The LGBT community was branded a “dream market” in a 2011 Wall Street Journal article. It has lived up to that moniker. The gay marriage is illegal. This was one of the moment’s earliest days of intervention, education and policy tools, and the greater obligations you have to protect and survive.” He was determined to never let anybody push you around.”

He learned early that names and who I was working with and that they called him names, and he didn’t understand what they meant, but he didn’t like it when they were bad. When he finally made it, he immediately went to his room and cut out the shorts and blouse he had worn. He was five years old.

“I strongly believe in the principles of this organization, which are about giving everybody the same level of respect and dignity regardless of their race or religion or gender or sexuality. I believe in inclusivity, period.”

“Do not assume nothing about the person you are talking to, and what they mean, but do not assume them either. They may offer lower prices or be more friendly and supportive of a brand they believed to be loyal to. It was always important for Laurence to stand up for himself, to fight for his rights, and to stand up for other people who are gay and about another quarter of them are teens. For young people, “We need to be able to create an opportunity in the world, where they are genuinely appreciated and respected for their talents and contributions. And they should have the same goals for their lives as other kids.”

Men and women like Laurence who are gay or straight and speaking out about taking charge of their lives, regardless of prejudices, are inspiring millennials to speak out about things that are wrong with society. Laurence reflects, “I strongly believe in the principles of this community which are about giving everybody the same level of respect and dignity regardless of their race or religion or gender or sexuality. I believe in inclusivity, period.”

How to help schools become safe places for LGBT students

The very first day of kindergarten, he noticed that Laurence was gay, but regardless of his thoughts, he always felt accepted. Parents play a crucial role in their children’s upbringing, making them feel loved or rejected, embraced or pushed aside. He recognizes that not everybody is as fortunate as to be able to choose the path you want to take. It can be very challenging, but it's never going to be ok waiting for ‘runners-up.”

When people ask, “What is it like being a gay man in business?” I take offense to that because I’m a man. Defining me by orientations was given at birth—like being Italian, Catholic and gay—is oh-so limiting. They may offer lower prices or be more friendly and supportive of a brand they believed to be loyal to. It was always important for Laurence to stand up for himself, to fight for his rights, and to stand up for other people who are gay and about another quarter of them are teens. For young people, “We need to be able to create an opportunity in the world, where they are genuinely appreciated and respected for their talents and contributions. And they should have the same goals for their lives as other kids.”

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Mandy Lynn editorial@mediaplanet.com

Laurence Boschetto, CEO and president of PFLAG, one of the world’s largest afterschool organizations, with 9,200 volunteers spanning 19 countries worldwide, is passionately committed to helping LGBTQ youth feel less alone and more loved and supported. His organization is helping promote greater understanding and acceptance. He is the author of two books: “From Darkness into Light” and “He Doesn’t Know I’m Gay.”

Your first reaction to learning that your loved one is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning can range anywhere from anger to sadness, fear to hurt, confusion to grief, and anywhere and everything in between.

These emotions, and the thousands of others that parents, families, and friends experience are normal as they navigate their loved one coming out process.

I can tell you with absolute certainty that you’re not alone. According to statistics, in one out of two people in this country and around the world is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), approximately one in four families has an immediate family member who is LGBT, and most people have at least one LGBT individual in their extended circle of friends and family.

The first thing you should do for yourself and your loved one is to talk to someone who has been through this process. Whether it is by e-mail, phone or in person, listening and talking to others who have experienced the feelings you are encountering is both cathartic and comforting.

The second thing you should do is educate yourself. The following are resources specific to family and friends of the LGBT community.

PFLAG (parents, families, and friends of LGBT youth): This organization is comprised of parents, families and friends of LGBT people and LGBT youth. It offers you to supportful and education and advocacy services. It is focused on helping you help your child or loved one with PFLAG.org.

The Family Acceptance Project: The only community research, training, education, and policy initiative that works to decrease suicide, depression, and drug use among LGBT youth.

Guidelines for allies, families, and friends

There are as many kinds of straight allies as there are colors of the Pride flag. But figuring out how to be a straight ally is the correct line. This will put you in a position to rethink conversations and words you choose.

Assume nothing

Next time you meet someone new, don’t assume they are straight or gay. This puts you in a position to rethink conversations and words you choose.

Use inclusive language

Note that you’re not assuming anything, using language that inculcates all of people’s lives naturally follows. Using terms like “partner” or “couple” vs. “husband” or “wife” not only leaves the conversation open, but will be ignored by many LGBT people as an active choice to be supportive.

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For more tips on how to be an ally, please visit www.atlantafamily.org.
Question 1: Why is it important for companies and organizations to dedicate specific resources to the LGBT community?

As a financial services company serving increasingly diverse customers, our support for the LGBT community is part of our broader commitment to diversity and fundamental to our continued success. We recognize the buying power of the LGBT community and the importance of providing specialized services for our LGBT customers. We strive to build a culture where our customers and our 275,000 team members feel accepted and respected.

Americans strive to live up to the founding principle that all are created equal and deserve liberty. Today, most of us have close friends, coworkers or loved ones who are openly lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, and clear majorities believe they deserve to be treated fairly by their government. Supporting us in our fight for fairness and freedom is the next step in moving our country toward a more perfect union.

Investing in our students today is a down-payment to ensure we have an inclusive workforce and society tomorrow. In too many places the open bigotry of some adults leads to more difficult environments for LGBT youth. Their safety is truly more important than the political views of a few ideologues, so it should be a national priority to protect kids at risk. Electing openly LGBT officials at all levels of government means these kids will have role models and understanding they can live authentic lives and still succeed.

There is general lack of support for LGBT youth, unlike other demographics—it is hard enough to be a young person, carrying the burden of educating the world around you and fighting for acceptance is tremendous.

Question 2: Why are LGBT youth more at risk than other demographics of our youth?

Bullying is an issue that impacts students of all ages in the K-12 educational environment; however, because many kids (and adults, too) do not fully understand sexual orientation and gender identity, LGBT youth are at greater risk for bullying. It is important that students believe their school is safe, nurturing places where ethnic, color, gender/gender identity, religious and sexual orientation differences are embraced. Investing in our students today is a down-payment to ensure we have an inclusive workforce and society tomorrow.

At-risk LGBT youth need to know they have a future. Openly LGBT elected officials are an important part of making life safer for young people who are coming to terms with their sexual orientation or gender identity. I would invite everyone to help the Victory Fund support candidates who are making a difference—people like Fort Worth City Councilman Joel Burns, Houston Mayor Annise Parker and Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin.

Raising awareness is vital—I launched Love & Pride as a vehicle for this visibility and change. Since 2005 we have donated a portion of our proceeds to incredible organizations that fight for equal rights. Anyone can make an impact in this fight for equality. Readers can donate time, talk to people, stay informed of new legislation and opportunities to speak out, and overall just stay focused on the end goal of equality and human rights.

Question 3: How can readers get involved and make a difference?

The Safe Schools movement offers many ways to become involved, including supporting GLSEN’s Safe Space Campaigns, a national effort to place a safe space kit in every middle school and high school in the United States. Wells Fargo’s support of the three-year campaign has enabled GLSEN to reach more than 7,600 schools, serving 31 million students.

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The LGBT community continues to openly suffer from discrimination; for them to not share in same civil liberties is absolutely a crime against human rights. The LGBT community is very active and is doing so much to make change, but it should not have to do this alone—companies and organizations have great visibility across many demographics and can reach new outlets by donating an army of resources—time, information and funding.

Investing in our students today is a down-payment to ensure we have an inclusive workforce and society tomorrow.

[Image]
Fact is, no single label ever defines any of us.