

Charlotte Business Guild

Meeting Date:
Tuesday, May 20, 2003

Program:
Gardens in a Bowl - How To
Holiday Inn
College and 7th St.

Social 5:30 pm - Dinner & Program 6:30 pm

To Reserve:
Cost \$20

Call 704-565-5075 by 12:00 pm
Monday, May 19, 2003

charlottebusinessguild.com

GLBT



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Administrators personally responsible for student safety

*Six students alleged their school
administrators ignored bias incidents*

NEW YORK — The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network hailed a ruling issued by the US Circuit Court of Appeals in San Francisco and called upon school administrators across the country to take immediate action to meet their responsibility to ensure that all students are safe from harassment and violence motivated by bias against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people.

The federal circuit court ruled that school administrators can be held personally responsible under federal law for failing to protect students from harassment based on sexual orientation. Six students filed suit in 1998 against officials at Live Oak High and Murphy Middle schools in the Morgan Hill Unified School District, accusing them of ignoring years of complaints about anti-LGBT taunts and abuse. The court's ruling allows the case to proceed to trial.

"This ruling adds to the growing body of precedent on this issue that confirms what we have asserted for years — that administrators, teachers and other school staff must take action in the face of anti-LGBT harassment and violence," said Kevin Jennings, GLSEN's Executive Director. "Every school across the country should take heed of this ruling and take proactive steps to stop violence and harassment before it occurs, and address incidents quickly and decisively when they are reported."

Anti-LGBT violence and harassment are all too common in America's schools. GLSEN's 2001 National School Climate Survey found that four out of five LGBT students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school and 30 percent report missing at least a day of school in the past month out of fear for their personal safety.

info:

www.glsen.org

ACLU: no more school outings

LITTLE ROCK, AR — The American Civil Liberties Union filed suit in federal court against the Pulaski County Special School District for its treatment of an openly gay 14-year-old student. The lawsuit contends school officials violated Thomas McLaughlin's rights to free speech, equal protection and privacy and that they violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment by preaching to him and forcing him read the Bible as punishment.

"We tried to work with the district to reach a settlement that would protect Thomas McLaughlin's Constitutional rights and allow him to be open about his sexual orientation," said James Esseks, litigation director for the ACLU's Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. "They were offered ample opportunity to do the right thing here, but the district refused to meet our demands so we're taking them to court to ensure that other lesbian and gay students in the district wouldn't face similar discrimination."

In papers filed with the US District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas, the ACLU is seeking an injunction to prevent Jacksonville Junior High School from further restricting McLaughlin's speech with regard to his sexual orientation or past discipline he's been subjected to by school officials. "All I want out of this is for me and other gay students to be able to

go to school without being preached to and without being expected to lie about who we are," said Thomas McLaughlin.

The ACLU sent a letter to the district on March 13 describing how Jacksonville Junior High School faculty and administrators had "outed" Thomas McLaughlin to his parents without his permission, preached to him, made him read the Bible, and disciplined him for talking about his sexual orientation and later for talking about that punishment. McLaughlin's disciplinary record confirms these allegations.

"Our demands are fairly simple. The district needs to acknowledge students' First Amendment right to talk about their sexual orientation during non-instructional time," said ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project staff attorney Leslie Cooper, adding, "We want the district



Thomas McLaughlin

see OUTINGS on 28



Raymond A. Warren

Attorney and Counselor At Law
Former Judge of the Superior Court

A General Practice Serving the
Community with Nearly
Twenty Years of Legal Experience.

900 Baxter Street, Suite 109, Charlotte, North Carolina 28204

Telephone: 980-321-0155 or 704-347-1328

Fax: 704-969-7207 • Email: Ray@RayWarrenLaw.com

www.RayWarrenLaw.com