

Duke, ally create leadership partnership
 DURHAM — Duke University's Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity and Athlete Ally have entered into a partnership to launch the Sports & Social Justice Leadership Initiative.

The new program "is specifically for student-athletes, recognizing that they are in an influential position to advocate for social justice and inclusion with respect to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE)," said center Director Bernadette Brown in a release.

Duke is the first partner to be selected by Athlete Ally, its Founder and Executive Director Hudson Taylor remarked.

"Duke's longstanding commitment to social justice, combined with its world-class athletic program, makes the university and its community perfect partners in our important work," Taylor said. "We are thrilled to be working with Duke on this initiative. Athletes have the power to change the world," he added. "We strongly believe in educating and activating athletes to champion social justice issues."

Training will be provided in a series of workshops for the student-athletes. Topics covered include sports activism history, sports and SOGIE research, encouragement to become social justice leaders and more. Afterward they will host a conference for the athletic community, from physical education teachers to sports administrators at all levels of the educational spectrum, Duke shared.

"The conference will present and explore inclusive policies and practices to better the lives and experiences of LGBTQ+ athletes across sports," Brown said.

The initiative is done on a voluntary basis.
 info: duke.edu.

— L.M. and releases

Western

Youth group hosts celebration

ASHEVILLE — Youth Outright will hold its "Young Voices 2015" fundraising event on Sept. 17, 8 p.m., at Asheville Jewish Community Center, 236 Charlotte St.

Entertainment will include excerpts from the University of North Carolina-Asheville's Queer Youth Theatre Project's "Qtopia."

Reservations are encouraged. Admission, which includes one raffle ticket, is \$30/advance, \$35/at the door.

Raffle items include items from theaters, restaurants, jewelry designers and others.
 info/tickets: youthoutright.org.

— L.M.

Youth group launches initiative

ASHEVILLE — Youth OUTright has announced that it has started its Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) and Schools Outreach program.

This initiative connects LGBT and allied youth in secondary schools and supportive school personnel throughout Western North Carolina (WNC). It began as a pilot project, and was the WNC Gay-Straight Alliance initiative introduced in last year's academic year, *Blue Ridge Now* reported. It will provide enhanced visibility for Youth OUTright, while strengthening GSAs, provide programming for GSA meetings, formation of new clubs at schools and more.

Funding is provided by The Palette Fund, Gamma Mu Foundation, Mission Health, The Chaddick Foundation, Wells Fargo and Bank of America.

info: youthoutright.org.

— L.M.

Curriculum launched for center

ASHEVILLE — Our VOICE, Buncombe County's incorporated rape crisis center, announced on Aug. 28 the implementation of Own Who U R, its Teen Tech Safety Project curriculum, in area schools.

The program seeks to educate teens and tweens regarding the unintended consequences of texting sexually explicit photos, also known as "sexting," and posting sexually explicit photos online. The program also helps teens and tweens to develop strategies to not give into social pressure to sext or engage in cyberbullying, the center's Executive Director Angelica Wind said in a release.

"Sexting and posting of sexually explicit photos online can have long lasting effects and devastating impacts on all involved," Wind added. She stated that sexting can impact a teen's access to higher education and stable employment and can result in criminal charges as it may involve the production and distribution of child pornography.

The curriculum was developed as part of a Women for Women grant through the Western North Carolina Community Foundation which was awarded to the agency in 2013. The launch will celebrate the success of the program, which to date has reached over 2,600 teens to warn them about the dangers of sexting. The curriculum itself will be available for purchase by other communities and is accompanied by a social media and print campaign targeted to teens. The print campaign is designed to grab the attention of teens and tweens the center is trying to reach.

info: ourvoicenc.org.

— L.M. and releases

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South Carolina

AFFA sets soiree date

CHARLESTON — The Alliance for Full Acceptance GAYLA will hold its surreal soiree, "Wildest Dreams," on Oct. 17, 6 p.m., at The Memminger Auditorium, 56 Beaufain St.

This celebratory event recognizes these "dreams come true: accomplishments: marriage equality, gay boy scout leaders, coming out by noted public figures, adulation over trans awareness (especially with Caitlyn Jenner) and Irish vote for marriage equality, among others.

Enjoy cocktails, hors d'oeuvres and a silent auction followed by a seated dinner. A live auction and entertainment also fill the evenings fare.

Cocktail attire recommended.

Tickets are \$150 per person and are available online. Additionally, sponsorships, table captains and program ads are also welcome.

info: affa-sc.org.

— L.M.

Campus Scene

Video collaboration released

CHARLOTTE — The Chronicle of Higher Education in collaboration with Campus Pride has released a 12-minute video documentary, "#AskMe," which features voices of nearly 20 LGBT college students from across the nation.

The video was produced by Julia Schmalz, a video journalist, during this past year's Campus Pride Summer Leadership Academy.

More information is available online.

info: campuspride.org.

— L.M.

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