

JASMYN News

JASMYN's vision is to create a world where all young people are safe and accepted for who they are.

From the Directors Chair - Liberation in Every Step

By Cindy Watson



The JASMYN Youth Activism Project has sponsored two exciting events in the last few months: a trip to Mississippi to learn about organizing around HIV/AIDS, poverty, race and LGBT issues, and an organizing school presented by our partners at SONG: Southerners on New Ground, out of Durham, NC. Both events gave JASMYN youth leaders and staff a chance to learn important history and lessons around making social change.

One of the great social change agents of the last century, M. Ghandi had a notion that to make change, we have to BE the change we want to see in the world. Here's another way he said it: Every step toward liberation has liberation in it.

At JASMYN, we are about the work of making positive change and of liberation: we support young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning by nurturing their right to be free to be who they are and all they can be. We support their health, well-being, and safety so they can be thriving young people and full participants in our society. We support their visibility and their empowerment in many segments of the community: schools, youth programs, and the workplace.

That's why we work to be visible and empowered in our advocacy for LGBT young people. Through the Coming Out Breakfast we asked our allies in the corporate workplace to be visible for the LGBT community; at the Teaching Respect for All Seminar, we asked teachers and school personnel to be visible in their support of LGBT students.

Just as we invite our young people to be visible, to stand up and work for change, we invite our adult supporters, allies and LGBT adults like you, to stand up, be visible, and work for change in Jacksonville. In an election year where change has become a consistent theme, lets all look for ways to be the change, and to put liberation into every step we take toward making our world safe as well as nurturing of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender young people.

JASMYN GALA. More photos and article inside.

JASMYN's Youth Activism Project

In November, JASMYN sponsored a youth trip to Mississippi, as part of a peer mentoring collaboration funded by the Pfizer Foundation and the Queer Youth Fund.

JASMYN's Youth Activism Project Coordinator, Garrett Boardman, led the trip with Crystal Welcome from JASMYN and Diedre Lane from OneJax. The purpose of the visit to Biloxi and Ovett, Miss., was to further youth leaders' knowledge about organizing work in HIV/AIDS and in community responses to Hurricane Katrina.

Youth and staff visited the South Mississippi AIDS Project in Biloxi to tour their facilities and hear stories of survival and to share their knowledge of activating LGBT youth with the project. In Ovett, youth were treated to a weekend workshop at Camp Sister Spirit Folk School, where they learned about the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the rural poor, and heard stories of the Mississippi history of organizing for LGBT, HIV/AIDS, racial and economic justice.

"I think the youth learned a lot about the interconnections of oppression and really seeing that things like racism, homophobia, and class (differences) are still very much alive in the south," said Boardman. "Just hearing the stories of the people who started the Camp Sister Spirit, it was a place created for future young people, like themselves, to be safe."

One of the highlights at Camp Sister Spirit was adding individual and collective art to the 100 yard Freedom Fence. "We are the ones we've been waiting for" was one of the messages JASMYN youth painted, reflecting the hope and courage this youth trip inspired.

"I think it was a really big eye-opening experience (for JASMYN youth)," said Boardman. "It was seeing that education being spread out in some of the most difficult areas and how they affect smaller communities and rural areas."



Some of our attendees at our Gala.



Teaching Respect for All - Making Schools Safe for LGBT Students



A new workshop at University of North Florida focused on creating safe schools for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students.

The first-ever “Teaching Respect for All” workshop was held last October that included a youth panel, provided by JASMYN, to share their experiences with more than 50 guidance counselors, teachers, parents, health educators, and social workers from Duval, Clay, and St. Johns County schools. The workshop was designed to help school personnel create a school culture where students were free to be themselves while reaching their fullest potential.

Panel members included Brittany Williams, Mindy Middleton, Anne-Marie Comeau, Leni Akapnitis, Kirsten Greenly, and Crash.

“I thought it was a great collaboration between JASMYN and the UNF LGBT Resource Center,” said UNF LGBT Resource Center Coordinator Emily Rokosch. “This program benefited a lot of people and created a very successful event. People walked

away with a better understanding of the issues and struggles that LGBT youth face in our schools.”

The panel recounted stories and experiences about their school experiences, harassment, and even restrictions that clearly violated student rights for fear of backlash that new gay/straight alliance groups may face.

“To me it was a really amazing experience to sit up there in front of educators, administration, and faculty and be able to take what we were saying to use in their schools,” said UNF student and panel member Leni Akapnitis. “It didn’t seem like we had much of a voice in our schools and this was our chance to make it better for future students.”

Co-sponsors of the seminar with JASMYN and the UNF LGBT Resource Center included the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network of Jacksonville; Parents and Friends of LGBT Jacksonville; UNF Department of Leadership, Counseling and Instructional Technology.

The seminar offered several different workshops that addressed the issue of how teachers and school faculty members can address harassment and bullying. Individual workshops included issues such as how homophobia impacts youth, how faculty can respond to name-calling and bullying in classrooms, how to respond to LGBT parents and families, understanding transgender youth, and even legal issues when responding to harassment and bullying. Seminars also addressed specific issues such as supporting gay-straight alliances, starting no-name calling week, and supporting the day of silence.

“It’s intimidating to go up to the principal to try to start something to better the student body,” Akapnitis said. “Even though I wasn’t really out, I still wanted to make a difference at my school. This makes me feel hopeful that schools will change to make the student body and faculty more open-minded and accepting.”

Both Duval and Clay county public schools have policies that prohibit harassment based on sexual orientation, but schools do not have procedures and support in place to prevent LGBT harassment or encourage reporting appropriate interventions. Studies have shown that 30-70% of gay and lesbian youth experience verbal or physical assault in schools.

“There is a need for this kind of program and training in northeast Florida,” Rokosch said. “People want to know how to contribute, how to increase involvement, and how to make the workshop even better for next year.”

Welcome New JASMYN Staff

JASMYN, Inc. welcomes two new staff members with Sabrina Cluesman as the new HIV Prevention Coordinator and Natalie Nguyen as the new Resource Development Coordinator. Sabrina runs the MPowerment program that includes Spectrum and Un-Zipped that focus on safer sex practices and sex education. Natalie oversees public relations and marketing responsibilities for the JASMYN organization including newsletters, media and donor relations.

Sabrina is a 2006 UNF graduate with a B.A. in sociology and philosophy and a former JASMYN volunteer.

Natalie is a 2007 UNF graduate with a B.S. in communications and a 2004 University of Kansas graduate with a B.A. in music.

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VISIT JASMYN ON-LINE:

www.jasmyn.org
Make an on-line contribution,
find out about how to volunteer,
locate resources, and MORE.

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Minority Youth Network, Inc.
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Our JASMYN Gala

Closing out the 2007 year, JASMYN celebrated its fourth annual holiday gala December 8, 2007 at the Karpeles Manuscript Library raising more than \$10,000 in donations.

While enjoying live music from the We 3 Swing trio, drinks, and catering, guests also participated in the silent auction for items that included gift baskets, weekend passes at local resorts, estate planning package and even free rounds of golf for four.

The list of accomplishments and benchmarks to end the 2007 year included:

- Opening a health clinic that provides both HIV testing and prevention services as well as free STD treatment for JASMYN youth.
- Training foster parents, case managers and workers in group homes on how to care for the special needs of gay youth.
- Purchase of the JASMYN house in historic Riverside.
- Sponsorship of the inaugural “Coming Together, Building a Future” breakfast to recognize Jacksonville-area businesses who support GLBT rights.



Host Committee Members Dr. John Bordelin and Jerry Wilkinson alongside Verna Griffin and Roz Starling



Pat Carney, Kirsten Doolittle, Rick Ceriello



Board President Edi Castro, Vice President Beth Hawley, Executive Director Cindy Watson, and Treasurer Michael Swanhart.

The honorary host committee members include:

- * Bobbie and Trav O'Connor
- * Dr. John Bordelon and Jerry Williamson
- * Chet Wilkinson and George Masters
- * Dr. Tom Serwatka and Wayne Tubel
- * Lori Johnson and Beth Hawley
- * Edi Castro and Gloria Perino
- * Frieda and Leonard Saraga
- * Cookie Davis and Susan Cochran
- * Laura Lane
- * Jimmy Midyette, Jr.
- * Leslie Ford
- * Dorothy Nutant

Thanks to all our donors for making the JASMYN Gala a success:

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| * Pastiche | * Aida's Timeless Elegance Flower Shop |
| * Art Jennette Catering | * Partyland |
| * Blue Bamboo | * Dan Harris Photography |
| * Riverside Liquors & Village Wine Shop | * Oliv'r Twist Mobile Mixology |
| * The Law Office of Kirsten Doolittle, PA | * Walt Disney World |
| * Jerry Rosenberg | * Peterbrook Chocolates |
| * Jeffrey Seller, producer of Avenue Q | * White Oak Plantation |
| * Jennifer Eckensberger Massage Therapy | * Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens |
| * Arthur Murray Ballroom Dancing | * Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum |
| * Carraba's & Outback Steakhouse | |

Special thanks to our gala volunteers:

- * Beth Hawley, Event Chair
- * Lora Brown
- * Edi Castro
- * Aida Correa
- * Jennifer Gorman
- * Danny Hanson
- * Cookie Davis
- * Jimmy Midyette, Jr.
- * Dorothy Nutant
- * Frieda Saraga
- * Tom Serwatka
- * Mike Swanhart
- * Lori Johnson

Florida Times-Union reporter Heather Camp attended and wrote about the gala. The article was then featured on the front cover of the December 17, 2007 issue of the Northside Sun.

“I’m really impressed by everyone’s passion,” Camp said. “Everybody here is so dedicated to JASMYN’s goal and vision and I didn’t realize how much they had accomplished in only one year.”

Copies of the Florida Times-Union article can be found at Jacksonville.com or simply follow the link on the JASMYN.org website.

JASMYN Programs for LGBT Youth

HIV Prevention & Health Education:

- **MPowerment**

- Un-Zipped - a workshop filled with strategies for safer sex, healthy relationships, and community building.
- Spectrum - fashioning a strong and supportive community of young gay and bisexual men ages 18-23 through social activities and community events.
- CORE group - a youth planning team for social activities to socialize and build community and leadership within Jacksonville youth.
- Outreach - building community, promoting events and awareness, and creating change in the Jacksonville area.

- Peer Educators - Youth learn about sex, sexuality, birth control, relationships, HIV/STD prevention, and communication. Peer educators are then educated and can inform their peers about these topics.

- Street Smart - An interactive program that allows teens and young adults to talk about real-life issues in a safe, non-judgmental environment.

Safety Net:

- Foster Care Advocacy - LGBTQ youth in the foster care system have rights. JASMYN makes sure that these needs are met through training and consultation with various foster agencies.

- Case Management - Youth are able to find the resources they need to help put their life together to find employment, obtain a diploma, and/or find a place to live.

- Clinic - The JASMYN clinic offers general medical care, STI and HIV testing to any youth in Jacksonville. The clinic is a partnership with JASMYN and the Duval County Health Department that includes clinic staff Dr. Matson and registered nurse volunteer Dana Bowlus.

- Food Pantry & Bus Tokens - The food pantry provides food and toiletry items to homeless or youth in need. Bus tokens help provide a reliable and safe mode of transportation for JASMYN youth.



JASMYN Youth Activists interns Leni Akapnitis and Dean Bonilla organized the “Gay? Fine by Me™” project at UNE, January 31, 2008.

Look for this article in the next JASMYN newsletter.

JASMYN Programs for LGBT Youth

Youth Leadership & Activism:

- Safe Schools Initiative - the Teaching Respect for All seminar and workshops for teachers, guidance counselors, parents, social workers, and faculty members helps create a safer school environment for LGBTQQ youth in area high schools and support for students organizing gay-straight alliances.
- Outloud Panels - LGBTQQ youth and adults share their experiences and speak out to the community about what it's like to be LGBTQQ in Jacksonville. Panel members let others know what life is like from their point-of-view.
- Activism Project - keeping youth up-to-date on social/political issues that affect the LGBTQ community through workshops, retreats, and out-of-town exchanges with other organizations.
- Youth Council - youth have the opportunity to decide what events they want. Youth can play an important role and see their ideas happen at the JASMYN house.

JASMYN WISH LIST:

Your service group to help refurbish and improve the JASMYN House

Minority Contractors for Building Repairs and Maintenance (Including LGBT)

Sponsors for JASMYN House Cable TV costs (for the Logo Channel)

Soft Drinks for our thirsty youth and canned food for the Food Pantry

Cash for our Last Resort Fund - for emergency medicines, fees for IDs, etc.

Magazine Subscriptions (The Advocate, Ms. Magazine, Curve, YGA-Young Gay America, and Klik are all favorites)

Gift Cards (\$10) and Bus Tokens for youth

Pledges to JASMYN through United Way (write in JASMYN), CFC #96552, and YOUR bank EFT

Coming Out Day Quotes

The Coming Out Breakfast in October allowed participants a chance to imagine the future in Jacksonville. Here are some of those visions.

I imagine a Jacksonville where.....

- I will feel safe to be myself and express my being anywhere, not just Five Points or UNE. I imagine a Jacksonville where all business will be inclusive and nurturing of the LGBT community - not just these amazing companies at the Breakfast today.
- I can walk down the street with my family free of fear or disrespect and hold my partner's hand for all to see.
- My children will be able to proudly say, "I am LGBT" without consequences. I imagine that marriage will be accepted between two people of the same sex because of their love and not their gender.
- Everyone is accepted, safe, and honored for being who they are and free to express their true selves.
- All people are valued for their contributions they bring to the community, regardless of their race, sexual orientation, gender identity, or beliefs.

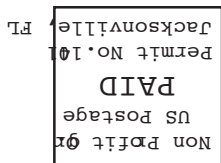
JASMYN's mission is to build safe space for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth that will nurture their health and well-being and enhance pride and self-esteem.

JASMYN 2007 – By the Numbers

- 306 Youth Enrolled at the JASMYN House Drop In Center
- 54 % were African American Youth; 33% were White Youth; 12% were Other Youth of Color
- 63% were Males; 26% were Females, 4% were Transgender
- 86% identify as gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth
- 30 youth were seen in the JASMYN health clinic
- 93 youth were given HIV tests
- 8 agencies and 109 professionals have received education, training, and consultation from JASMYN staff on issues related to LGBT youth

Future JASMYN Articles!

- Gay? Fine by Me™ Campaign
- National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day
- 5K Stonewall Run - June 28, 2008



JASMYN, Inc.
P.O. Box 380103
Jacksonville, FL 32205



SAVE THESE DATES:

- March 19, 2008, 12:00 noon** JASMYN House Tour - See what makes JASMYN so unique and exciting for our LGBT youth.
- April 3, 2008, 5:30 PM** Corporate Groups House Tour - Find out how your Affinity Group can get involved
- May 21, 2008 noon** JASMYN House Tour - See what makes JASMYN so unique and exciting for our LGBT youth.
- May 31, 2008** Alternative Youth Prom - Sponsorship opportunities available
- June 28, 2008** 5K Stonewall Run with UNF LGBT Resource Center and JASMYN

For more information about these events, call 904-389-3857, ext. 205.