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Gay Bar Raid

Milwaukee Police Department Actions Raise Questions

By Don Hoffman and Drew Pritt

New Gay-Friendly MPS School LGBT Students Get an Understanding Welcome

By Sara Faraj

Like New York and Texas, Wisconsin school leaders will add their names to the list of education professionals who have opened their minds and are ready to act on the unique challenges facing at-risk as well as gay youth.

The Alliance School of Milwaukee (ASM), crafted with the goal of serving the needs of students who have been harassed and bullied in other school environments, is scheduled to open August 1. At that time, leaders say, 100 students in grades 9-12 will be in their seats. "Classes won't be based on grade level, but on students' interests and their needs for graduation," says Tina Owen, a planning team member and the lead teacher of the Alliance School.

The diverse student body will include LGBT kids. Organizers of the school say that ASM will establish a safe haven for students who are harassed for the way they look, the way they dress, their beliefs or their sexuality.

According to organizers, ASM received a \$50,000 planning grant from TALC (Technical Assistance and Leadership Center), the organization managing funds provided by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to encourage smaller schools in Milwaukee.

'I hear reports of teasing, harassment and threats that are based on gender identity and perceived orientation.'

The planners of the school say they have passed through one part of a two-step process. According to Eugene Jones, assistant director of the Office of School Governance, both the concept and the proposal were approved by the MPS board of school directors in June. Next, they need to have their contract approved, first in committee and then through the full school board.

Jennifer Morales, an MPS school board director, supports the school wholeheartedly. "I hear reports of teasing, harassment and threats that are based on gender identity and perceived orientation."

The school will be an MPS instrumental-ity charter, which means

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ly become a regular occurrence for area LGBT bars, the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) recently set out to identify and fine clubs that serve underage drinkers.

The most recent crackdown happened the weekend of December 10-12, 2004. Several LGBT bars and clubs were cited. However, the details surrounding what happened in each of the establishments are still unclear.

Repeated attempts to get accurate information from MPD yielded few results and even more questions. After more than a half dozen inquiries from Q Life, and additional requests from LGBT bars that were involved in the raid, to both the precinct where the incident occurred and the Public Information Office, MPD's response was minimal and often silent.

On the flip side, some LGBT bar owners were more than happy to talk.

LGBT Bar Owners' Perspectives

Craig Schoenung, owner of Switch, an area gay bar, says these raids are nothing new. "This has been going on for years.

When the local universities let out for break, we are especially on guard for this type of procedure," said Schoenung, implying that some bars may be targeted by the MPD because they are frequented by college students. Switch was not cited in the most recent raid.

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These still pictures, shown sequentially, were captured from a video security camera at Woody's Bar.