

TEXAS PEACE PROJECT

PEER EDUCATORS ACTING FOR CHANGE AND EQUALITY

A PROJECT OF THE TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT

WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER

Shots of Trinity University



For more information about the Texas PEACE Project contact:

Tamara Williams
Youth Program Coordinator
twilliams@taasa.org

Ted Rutherford
Youth Outreach Specialist
trutherford@taasa.org



Building the Texas PEACE Project

By Ted Rutherford

As many of you already know, TAASA's youth program (formerly Students Taking Action for Respect) is now known as the Texas PEACE (Peer Educators Acting for Change and Equality) Project. What you may not know is that this is much more than a name change. It is also a shift in philosophy. Although the new program is still under construction, some of the important details and infrastructure are in place.

It is (and always has been) our goal to provide youth with the opportunity to take on a meaningful leadership role in reducing incidences of sexual and dating violence among Texas youth. Ten years ago, TAASA set out to develop a youth leadership program to encourage and support youth to raise awareness about sexual and dating violence. We have always held the core belief that youth have a powerful voice that can and should be used to speak out. Students Taking Action for Respect (STAR) was born out of that belief. Over the last 10 years, the program has been tweaked and improved in various ways. Yet, as our understanding of primary prevention has increased, so has our realization that raising awareness of sexual and dating violence among youth simply isn't enough. We need a program that provides youth with the knowledge and skills necessary to address the root causes of sexual and dating violence.

With this in mind, we made some changes that we believe will support youth as they take the next step toward the prevention of sexual and dating violence. Perhaps the biggest change in the program is the shift from awareness-raising to primary prevention. In addition to educating youth about sexual and dating violence, sexual harassment, drug-facilitated sexual assault and acquaintance rape, the Texas PEACE Project will guide youth and their adult allies through an in-depth exploration of the connections between various forms of oppression and sexual violence. In particular, we will focus on four specific forms of oppression:

Sexism Racism Homophobia Adulthood

[continued on page 2]

2010 Texas PEACE Summit

By Ted Rutherford

It is our great pleasure to announce that the 2010 Texas PEACE Summit (formerly the STAR Conference) will be held June 11-13 on the beautiful campus of Trinity University in San Antonio. For the last nine years the STAR Conference has taken place on various college campuses in Texas. The first STAR Conference was held at Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos. Since then we've traveled to Concordia University in Austin, Blinn College in Brenham, Stephen F. Austin University in Nacogdoches, Texas State University in San Marcos, Angelo State University in San Angelo, Navarro College in Corsicana, UT-Pan American in Edinburg and Texas Woman's University in Denton. This year, we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the conference, and with the unveiling of the Texas PEACE Project, we want to make it unforgettable. We looked at several options around the state and believe we found the perfect spot. If you have never been to Trinity University for a visit you are in for a real treat. The campus is stunning and the facilities are top notch. I can't think of [continued on page 2]

[Building continued from page 1]

While these forms of oppression are not the only ones that are connected to sexual and dating violence, they are ones that many youth have witnessed and/or experienced; therefore, they have a base of knowledge upon which to build.

The hallmark of the Texas PEACE Project will be the **Texas PEACE Summit** – our annual gathering of the most enthusiastic peer educators and their adult allies. The summit will be an opportunity for attendees to develop skills and strategies to create social change and equality in communities across Texas. Attendees will engage in activities designed to challenge their beliefs, push them out of their comfort zones and ultimately equip them with the knowledge and skills to create the change needed to end sexual violence. The summit will also help attendees realize that they are part of a larger, statewide movement to end sexual and dating violence and that their participation in the PEACE Project is making a difference in the lives of all Texans.

For those unable to attend the summit, we will provide **regional trainings** for both peer educators and adult allies throughout the year. While the locations have not yet been determined, they will most likely take place in or near the larger cities around Texas in order to maximize accessibility. Anyone wishing to participate in the Texas PEACE Project will be required to attend one of these trainings. The trainings will provide attendees with a comprehensive overview of the project and what is required in order to be an official member. Trainings will also include some skill-building activities and exercises.

Another component of the Texas PEACE Project is a series of four **statewide activist events** to address various forms of oppression. The events will help youth and their adult allies recognize that violence is a statewide problem while still emphasizing the necessity of community-focused activism. The purpose of these events is to increase visibility of the Texas PEACE Project in communities across the state in order to give local projects credibility; to generate interest in the program to aid with recruiting

new members and to give project members the opportunity to employ activism skills attained at the summit or regional trainings.

It is our hope that these statewide events will attract new participants to the project and help grow local efforts. They are an excellent opportunity to encourage businesses, schools, churches and other community members to form strong community coalitions to further the mission of the project. More information on the events is forthcoming.

The Texas PEACE Project will also include a **social media component** called Say Your PEACE. This was introduced in the 2009 STAR curriculum but has evolved for the Texas PEACE Project. Say Your PEACE will consist of two main parts. One will be a social media presence for the project (Facebook and Twitter pages, a blog, YouTube channel, etc.) and the other is that participants will be asked to create their own social media strategy to promote their local efforts that will be linked to the statewide project.

For interested parties, a **program manual** will be available at the 2010 Texas PEACE Summit and at our regional trainings afterward. The manual will provide clear directions for how to start a local chapter of the Texas PEACE Project in your community. Whether you already have a STAR program in your community or if you are starting from scratch, you will need to attend the summit or one of the regional trainings in order to get the manual and to participate in the project. In the meantime, continue using the STAR curriculum and participating in STAR activities.

If you have any questions about the Texas PEACE Project, please feel free to contact Ted Rutherford (trutherford@taasa.org) or Tamara Williams (twilliams@taasa.org) or call 512-474-7190. Please take a moment to send us a friend request on Facebook (www.facebook.com/txpeaceproject) and follow us on Twitter (www.twitter.com/txpeaceproject). We'd love to hear from you! Also, check out our YouTube Channel (www.youtube.com/texaspeaceproject).

[PEACE Summit continued from page 1]

a better place to launch the Texas PEACE Project.

Registration for the Texas PEACE Summit will open on Monday, March 1, and will remain open until Friday, May 28, or until all slots are filled. Visit www.taasa.org to register online after March 1. There are 100 slots available for peer educators and 25 slots for adult allies. Each adult ally can accompany no more than four peer educators. Additional peer educators and adult allies can

be added to a waiting list. If there are any vacant slots after May 28, they will be filled from the waiting list in the order they were received. Start making your plans to attend the summit now so that you can be a part of the exciting work of the Texas PEACE Project. This is a very exciting time for TAASA and for everyone that has been a part of our youth outreach. We hope to see you there!

