

**Petition to the Superintendent
Ottoson Middle School, Arlington, 2013**

This is a petition for permanent club status and inclusion in the annual district budget for the Ottoson Middle School Gay/Straight Alliance (OMS GSA).

The OMS GSA was formed in the spring of 2011, and currently meets every Monday from 2:30 to 3:30. The current staff advisor is Mr. Patrick Greeley (6th grade inclusion teacher), with assistance from Ms. Melissa Keller (8th grade English teacher). Attendance varies from 5 to 15 students weekly.

Students of all sexualities and gender presentations are welcome to attend. GSA meetings are safe, fun, gatherings where members discuss current issues pertaining to LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning) civil rights and ways to combat homophobia, view videos of interest, make posters to publicize the GSA and educate the school community, and plan events. In March, 2012, the GSA attended GLSEN's annual conference (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Educators Network), and sponsored a popular and educational production by the youth troupe, True Colors, which was viewed by GSA members, Peer Leaders, and an 8th grade drama class. In 2012, the OMS GSA received an Every Day Heroes award from the Arlington Human Rights Commission, an honor it shared with the Building Respect Peer Leaders Program.

The presence of a GSA in a school indicates to everyone, students, staff and the wider community, that the school administration is supportive and aware of all people, not just the straight majority. This presence can literally be life saving. Also, the GSA works closely with other anti-bullying initiatives, most importantly, with the Building Respect Peer Leaders Program.

Stipend money for GSA staff advisors has been provided by OPAC (Ottoson Parent Advisory Counsel), the principal's discretionary fund, and by a grant received from the AEF (Arlington Education Foundation). These sources have also provided funds for the events mentioned above, as well as for GSA staff advisor training. Volunteer parents and community members have worked hard to secure these funds, but this volunteer pool varies from year to year. Permanent club status and inclusion in the annual district budget would insure the GSA an ongoing and secure position at Ottoson Middle School.

Anna Watson
Chair, Friends of the GSA

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3.1 Workshop April 5, 2014
Starting a Middle School GSA

**TIMELINE of the OTTOSON MIDDLE SCHOOL GAY/STRAIGHT ALLIANCE
2010 to Present**

Fall 2010	Began talking with the principal	<i>O.K. Absolutely</i>
Spring 2011	GSA established; meets every other week Grant to Arlington Education Fund submitted	<i>Have a Speaker 6th - 8th graders Come to organizing meeting</i>
Fall 2011	Grant awarded; stipend and outside activities funded GSA meets every week from now on	
Spring 2012	Arlington Human Rights "Everyday Heroes" Award	
Fall 2012 - Spring 2013	Stipend paid by principal and PTO	
Fall 2013	GSA has permanent club status; stipend is a line item in school budget	

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*GLSEN
April 5, 2014*