

For Release: Immediate

Contact:

Fred Elia

A Thousand Moms

www.athousandmoms.org

518 322-0607



A Thousand Moms’ “Network of Support” Addresses Holiday Season Pressures for Gay Youth in Foster/Adoptive Care

As the holidays approach, unfortunately one group of young people do not automatically join in the spirit of the season: the thousands of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Questioning (LGBT/Q) youth in foster/adoptive care in New York. “Many of these youth feel trauma upon trauma and the holidays can add pressure with the feeling of ‘forced happiness,’” said Marcia B. Novey, MEd, LMSW, network facilitator for A Thousand Moms. In time for the holidays, the recently organized, non-profit community organization launched its inaugural “Network of Support” teleconference, Thursday, December 10, across New York State. Participants addressed “Home and the Holidays for LGBT/Q Youth in Foster/Adoptive Care.”

The issue of gay youth in foster care is especially dire in light of recent statistics. According to New York State, gay young people or those questioning their sexual identity make up to 30% of the population in group homes or residential settings. It is a disproportionate number, considering that 10% of the general population is considered LGBT/Q. In addition, gay teens are eight times as likely to attempt suicide compared to the teen population as a whole, according to a 2009 study by San Francisco State University’s Family Acceptance Project. Drug abuse, homelessness and incarceration are also at disproportionately high levels in this population.

A Thousand Moms “Network of Support” brought together for the first time committed community members representing various professions with those responsible for the care of LGBT/Q youth in the child welfare system. Member “Moms,” foster/adoptive parents, advocates, agency staff (public and private), and interested professionals from related fields took part in the event. Participants, representing all regions of New York State, offered practical advice and strategies to help foster/adoptive families, agency staff and youth cope with the stresses of the holiday season.

--more--

“Developmental processes for gay youth are often different and delayed. These youth can be delayed, emotionally. Feelings of being gay, etc., are layered on top,” said Fred Elia, MS, president of A Thousand Moms. Elia grew up in foster care and is gay. “These youth have to deal with a triple loss: loss of childhood innocence due to neglect and/or abuse, loss of birth family due to foster care placement, and now feeling ‘I’m not what people think I am.’ Behavior is the language of emotions and the reason for a behavior is there someplace: loss of contact with siblings and friends, developing an alternative sexuality.”

The next “Network of Support” teleconference will be held in late January. Please visit www.athousandmoms.org to check for date, time, and topic.

A Thousand Moms Mission Statement

A Thousand Moms will help our communities in New York State organize, educate, and mobilize in order that we may meet the emotional, physical, and social needs of youth in our child welfare systems who may be Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, or Questioning their sexual identity so they may reach their full potential.