



For Immediate Release

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New Organization for LGBT Youth Appoints Inaugural Board
*Community-based nonprofit serving lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth
takes next step in opening support center*

Kansas City, Mo. (December 21, 2009) Everyday throughout the Kansas City metropolitan area thousands of youth face discrimination, confusion and victimization because of their perceived or actual sexual orientation or gender identity. In order to help lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth develop into healthy, successful adults, several community members have come together to open a new support center in Kansas City.

On Saturday December 19th, the EQUAL Youth Center held its first official board meeting. The original co-founders of the organization appointed nine additional advisors to help in their effort to build Kansas City's first drop-in youth center for LGBT and allied youth. The board members include:

- Anthony Bowen, Indiana University
- Maureen Coulter, University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Alex Edelman, University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law
- Jessica Farmer, Kansas City Anti-Violence Project
- Rachel Gadd-Nelson, University of Kansas
- Ronda Hassig, Harmony Middle School
- Chai Jindasurat, Kansas City Anti-Violence Project
- Angie McGaw-Fisher, Crittenton Children's Center
- Stefany Spears, Phoenix Metals
- Wick Thomas, University of Missouri-Kansas City
- Mary Thompson, Kansas City Public Library
- Trisha Van Wig, Community Activist

In addition to these community board members, EQUAL is also led by a youth council comprised of seven area high school students who meet regularly to organize events, connect gay-straight alliances and advise the larger board. The youth council will play a central role in designing the Youth Center and its programming.

EQUAL Co-Founder, Rachel Gadd-Nelson, noted, "The organizers believe that Kansas City's LGBT and allied youth deserve a safe, fun space with daily programming provided by a fiscally strong nonprofit organization with broad-based community support. We're excited to take another step forward in opening this important new resource for youth."

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Founded in 2007 as a grassroots organization for youth and run by youth, **EQUAL** (Empowering Queer Activists and Leaders) organizes an annual summit bringing youth together from across the Kansas City metro for training around LGBT issues and the Day of Silence in area schools every April. It also encourages youth to participate in grassroots advocacy for LGBT and other social causes. It recently released "The EQUAL Resource Guide," a comprehensive report that answers questions on a variety of topics such as coming out, getting tested, advocacy, healthy relationships, mental health and more. For more information, go to www.equalcenter.org.