

# Growth changing gay rights groups

By Nancy Feigenbaum  
Staff Writer

A year after the U.S. Supreme Court opened the doors of Texas A&M to Gay Student Services, 10 years after GSS was founded, the gay community continues to operate with a peculiar combination of activism and secrecy.

GSS helps with Gayline, runs a roommate service and invites speakers like Dr. Donna Davenport of Student Counseling to address the group.

It also quietly "recommends" (rather than endorses) a candidate for student body president and plans a packed Gay Week schedule with almost no advance publicity.

Like any minority group, GSS has two roles. One is to turn inward and provide a safe haven for the members of its community. The other is to reach out and establish its place on campus.

GSS is having its fair share of trouble with both.

"It's been normal to lose flyers at a higher rate than other groups do," says Marco Roberts, president of GSS.

The group has put up flyers at 11 p.m. only to find them gone in an hour — all of them.

"It was beginning to cost us an enormous amount of money," Roberts says.

Finally GSS organized a patrol of several people armed with walkie-talkies and a camera to walk around campus after posters were distributed. They have done this three times so far, Roberts says, and the problem has eased since then.

The group's posters also have been vandalized. On one poster "Womens' Rap Group" became "Women's Rape Group" and

"Gay Student Services" became "Gay Stud Vices."

If GSS has trouble getting its service messages through on campus, it has the opposite problem with political candidates. The group recommends Brett Shine for student body president, but both Shine and Roberts fear the effect of publicizing the recommendation.

Roberts is afraid that if publicity hurts Shine's chances in the election it will discourage

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future candidates from seeking a GSS backing.

At the same time, though, he hopes publicity will encourage liberal voters on campus to follow GSS's lead and create a stronger voting block to attract politicians.

"The fact that we endorsed a candidate last year (Mike Cook) and he managed to come in second place at least proved that we're not that much a liability," he says.

The question is, will liberal groups be willing to follow the man Roberts has picked?

GSS was approached by more than one student body presidential candidate. At a March 26 meeting candidate Jim Cleary told the group he is proud of the student senate resolution admitting recognition of GSS. Cleary voted in favor of the resolution.

Shine says he did not.

A student who was a Davis Gary Hall floor representative

remembers when Shine campaigned at the dormitory in 1985.

"He definitely was anti-gay," says Tom Tagliabue.

Shine says he "can't condone" the gay lifestyle but says his attitude towards gay rights changed in the last year and he supports the right of GSS to participate on campus.

Other candidates for student body president say they did not seek a GSS recommendation, either because of the group's small size or simply because they were not seeking endorse-

ments of any kind. Gay rights, themselves, were not mentioned as a reason.

Roberts expects a block vote of 100-200, although the group has a membership of 40. At the March 26 meeting Roberts asked members of GSS to spread the word during the Tuesday gathering at The Crossing, a gay bar.

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In the Fall 1985 semester a new group was formed. Lesbian-Gay Activists is so young it's difficult to characterize. The group has somewhere between eight and 12 members and is currently involved in raising money to repeal Section 21.06, a Texas criminal statute

which outlaws homosexual activity.

LGA's president did not want to be interviewed but another member agreed to speak on the condition that her pen name, Kate Weaver, be used.

Weaver, who left GSS to join LGA, says the main problem was GSS's refusal to use the word "lesbian" in its name.

"Men and women are very different," she says. "We don't feel that we're the same lifestyle at all."

Weaver says that GSS seemed anti-woman and anti-feminist. Women were discouraged from contributing anything that wasn't strictly about homosexuality to the group's newsletter, Weaver says.

Roberts sees the difference in the groups as "pro-unity versus pro-representation."

However, members of both groups say that despite their differences they get along and often work together. Graduate student Ramsey Sealy, a member of both GSS and LGA, says there has been no split in the gay community, but the two groups serve different purposes. LGA members characterize their group as the more political of the two.

Sealy says the creation of LGA was a natural outgrowth of the recognition of GSS.

"After GSS was recognized," Sealy says, "the next step was to have a political organization that dealt with gay issues."

The conservative atmosphere at A&M has had two effects on gays, he says. It can cause them to be "more closety" or get them more politically involved. Most people come under the first category, he says, though some have had both reactions.