

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Action Camp: Illinois LGBTQ+ Youth
Bring to Life the World They Want to Live In**

Chicago, IL – Illinois young people who identify as LGBTQ+ enter this school year with renewed confidence after participating in Action Camp. Co-hosted by PHIMC’s Alliance Program and Youth Services’ Pride Youth Program, Action Camp has evolved from a weekend retreat at a local university in 2012 to a five-day sleepaway camp that brings together leaders from Genders and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) across the state to learn from one another and shape the safer schools movement.

Action Camp is often described as “magical” because young people see their identities reflected back to them, sharpen their critical lens, strengthen their anti-oppressive frameworks, and practice creating spaces where all identities are safe, supported, affirmed, and celebrated. At Action Camp, youth participants are not only free to express themselves fully, but they also build meaningful relationships, discover their inner strength, and find a deep sense of belonging. It is a transformative space where healing happens, voices are uplifted, and futures are imagined with hope.

In the words of one 2025 Action Camper, “This is an experience I think everyone should have, it really restores self-confidence, and love, and there's so much information we learn that's super important.” Another camper this year says, “You are sure to find your own community or grow it.”

Action Camp 2025 included both youth-led and adult-led workshops such as Latine Voices, Know Your Rights, Advocating for Migrant Communities, Joy in Creating Resistance, Activism-Peaceful Resistance, Create Your Own Community, and Queer Linguistics. Afterwards, 90% of participants reported an increased sense of self-confidence since attending camp and 88% of campers reported feeling more hopeful about their future after attending camp.

Action Camp is possible year after year because of strong community support and collaboration. This year, sponsors included Glen's Friends, Allison McDowell Fund for Mental Health Support - SRCCF, Dorothy Downstairs, GSA Network, Barbara and Barbara Salon, Equal Love Strikes - Social LGBTQ+ Ally Bowling League, and Lola and Family Beatty. Community Partners included AIDS Healthcare Foundation, Center on Halsted, Youth Outlook, and Wintrust.

To support LGBTQ+ young people in building affirming environments beyond Action Camp, educators and administrators are invited to participate in one of the Alliance’s many [professional development opportunities](#) and student allies are encouraged to [join or start a GSA](#). Together, we can bring to life the world we want to live in.

[Photo available.](#)

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[Public Health Institute of Metropolitan Chicago \(PHIMC\)](#) advances health justice and strengthens public health through innovation and partnerships that align people, strategies, and resources. PHIMC's Alliance Program promotes safety, support, and healthy development of LGBTQ+ youth in Illinois schools and communities through advocacy, education, youth organizing, and professional development.

[Youth Services](#) fosters the social and emotional growth of children and youth so that they can grow up happy, healthy and hopeful. The Pride Youth Program offers social, support, and leadership programming for LGBTQ+ youth ages 4-24 and their families from across Chicago's northern suburbs.