



January 30, 2007

Dear Friends,

When Jason Hungerford founded Youth Guardian Services in 1997, he was one of the first people anywhere to realize the phenomenal power of the Internet as a tool for reaching out to young people who need help but can't get it in their homes, their schools, their "real-life" communities. YGS's YOUTH lists were the only safe place online for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning youth to talk to one another, to support one another, to become family.

This week, YGS celebrates **ten years of helping gay youth**. We have been around almost as long as the World Wide Web.

Now, in 2007, many other online services serve GLBTQ youth. A Google search for "gay youth support resources" returns more than a million hits.

YGS, however, continues to be unique in several vital ways:

- **SAFETY.** We strive to maintain a youth-only atmosphere that is free of the older predators that frequent so many other places where gay youth talk online.
- **COMMUNITY.** Most of our youth stay with us for years. We provide more than just resources, we provide thriving communities – often the only queer communities our youth can access. Our lists are vibrant families, ever expanding and ever changing, but always maintaining the same culture of trust and support.
- **CARING.** Our trained peer support staff is quick to respond to youth who need more support than the lists alone can give them. This dedicated team of volunteers does what it takes to reach out to youth who are suicidal, who are homeless, who are in abusive situations at home, or who are being harassed at school.
- **LEADERSHIP.** We are run entirely by youth. Through mentoring and leadership training, we are nurturing a new generation of GLBTQ leaders and giving dozens of troubled youth the skills and sense of purpose they need to succeed.

I began my term as YGS's Executive Director on August 11th of last year, but I've been involved in Youth Guardian Services since I was 15. The YOUTH lists gave me the support I needed to make it through some very rough times. Through the many staff positions I've held over the last four years, YGS has also helped me become a dedicated and resourceful leader. I'm honored to have been

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A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization

Safe cyber spaces with the freedom to be...



given the opportunity to give back. I am currently a junior at Harvard University in Boston, where I'm studying psychology and computer science. At 20 years old, I'm proud to continue YGS's tradition of strong youth leadership.

Over the years, our organization has continued to grow and change, but we have always stayed true to our mission: to provide safe cyber spaces with the freedom to be. This year, that led us to expand into a new area of support.

A few months ago, a 15-year-old list member approached our staff to ask for help finding support resources for queer people with eating disorders. There are many online groups that provide eating disorders support, but almost all of the people in those groups are straight women. Our listee couldn't relate. She wanted a place where she could get support without having her sexual orientation be an issue.

After scouring the Internet for weeks, we were surprised to finally realize that no safe space existed for queer people with eating disorders. **So we created it.** Our new list, **LivingColor**, launched just last month and is already providing much needed support and community for queer youth with eating issues.

Though our projects are increasingly diverse, our core purpose remains the same: to create Internet resources that today's queer youth need to survive and thrive. Our dedication to this mission is as strong as ever.

We also continue to make improvements in other areas. In 2006, our new subscriptions manager helped us to implement a new subscriptions system that has dramatically reduced the amount of time between a youth's first inquiry about the lists and the moment they begin receiving support. Our Executive Directors Emeritus, Jason Hungerford and Patrick Quealy, have begun work on a subscriptions database that will make it much easier for us to keep track of crucial biographical information about the youth we serve and enable us to respond faster and more appropriately when youth are in crisis.

As Youth Guardian Services celebrates its 10th Anniversary, I am depending on you to support YGS as you always have.

Without you, we would not be able to do the work we do. We would not be able to support the safe and caring communities that have made a difference to **nearly 9,000 youth** since 1997.

No contribution is too small. Please donate whatever you can, because this year, your donation will be **DOUBLED!** A generous donor has once again pledged to match all donations we receive, up to **\$2,500!** If your employer has a donor-matching program then you could **QUADRUPLE** your donation!

Every dollar you give goes a long way towards helping GLBTQ youth all over the world and creating new leaders in our community.

Please help us reach our goal of \$2,500 in matched donations – for a total of \$5,000!

I invite you to review the documents I have enclosed with this letter and to visit our website. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me! I look forward to talking with you about the things YGS is accomplishing, our goals for the future, and how you can support us.



Your **tax-deductible** contribution of any amount will help.

On behalf of all of us at Youth Guardian Services – the dedicated youth volunteers and all of the young people we help – thank you so much for your support over the years. I look forward to continuing our partnership so that this wonderful organization can continue the work that has given hope and strength to so many youth.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Rachel Popkin'.

Rachel Popkin
Executive Director

P.S. — If you know any young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, or straight supportive and looking to learn more, encourage them to connect with like-minded people! They can join our lists at <http://www.youth-guard.org>.