

February 1, 2005

Dear Friend,

As a recognized leader in the University of Florida community who commands the respect of students, faculty, and staff, I am writing to ask for your support as a “Celebrity Hand Holder” for the 5th annual celebration of Same-Sex Handholding Days to be held this year on February 16 and 17.

As you know, individuals in our culture are taught to be very careful about simple public displays of affection for members of the same-sex, such as holding hands. Personal and institutional homophobia and the fear of repercussions limit lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender *and* heterosexual individuals from being publicly open and expressive about their caring for an individual of the same-sex, whether that person is a significant other, just a friend, or even a sibling. The purpose of Same-Sex Handholding Day is to show visible support and acceptance of same-sex displays of affection and to acknowledge such displays as valid and normal by creating a safe space for LGBT and straight individuals to hold hands with members of the same sex.

Same Sex Hand Holding Day (SSHHD) was initiated at the University of Florida by the Gator Gay-Straight Alliance (GGSA). This year, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Affairs, as part of the Dean of Students Office, is co-sponsoring the event with the GGSA and the Pride Student Union. With Valentine’s Day -- a day on which we can expect many open displays of affection among couples of the opposite sex, just a few days before SSHHD this year, the event will be an important opportunity for students, faculty and staff to take a moment to think about those members of the UF community who are limited and restrained in their expression of affection because of persistent negative attitudes and the threat of harassment. As an added incentive to participate, the Pride Student Union will be granting a special “Inclusiveness” award and a \$50 gift certificate to the student organization, fraternity or sorority who brings out the most hand holders this year.

We hope you will consider participating in supporting an inclusive environment on campus by joining us as one of our “Celebrity Hand-holders.” The role of the “Celebrity Hand-holders” is to show support from different parts of the campus community by volunteering to hold hands with any student, faculty, or staff member who wishes to participate. For the greatest amount of visibility, we hope for as much participation as possible from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm in Turlington Plaza on February 16 and 17th, but will greatly appreciate any time you can give during these two days. Please mark below when it would be most convenient for you to participate and return the form to me in my mailbox or email your response and any questions to lgbt@dso.ufl.edu.

Thank you,

Tamara Cohen
Director of LGBT Affairs



**Same Sex Hand Holding Days
Participation Form**

Name: _____

Email: _____

Availability:

Day(s): Wednesday, February 16th Thursday, February, 17th

Times:

9:00 9:30 10:00 10:30 11:00 11:30
 12:00 12:30 1:00 1:30 2:00 2:30
 3:00 3:30 4:00 4:30

Length of Shift:

30 min. shift 45 min. shift 1 hour shift Other: _____