

A 20-year-old gay rights case celebrated in Salt Lake

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By Jime Spiewak



(KUTV) -- In the 1990s, students at East High School sued the School Board and won.

In the late 1990s, Leah Farrell was a senior.

"You can push back, you can question the situation that's been presented to you," Farrell said.

"Sometimes, that involve the courts which it did for us."

Friday, she spoke to a group of LGBT folks at the Utah Pride Center about the 20-year anniversary of the case. Back in the 1990s, Farrell tried creating gay-straight alliances inside the school. Because of it, every single extracurricular club was shut down.

"My entire class of 2,000 didn't have clubs. How did your college resume look? You know, it was a big deal," said Ivy Fox, who along with Farrell, were original plaintiffs.

Fox, Farrell and several other students sued claiming their civil rights were violated. It played out in court for four years.

"It was really about challenging educators, administrators and our parents" Fox said.

The two said the work is not over citing Utah has the highest teen suicide rate in the country. “We’re still seeing hundreds of trans folks here in our country murdered with zero accountability,” Fox added. The case settled out of court. There is now a nationwide network of gay-straight alliances.

