



Pride Foundation

Building a Foundation for All

PRESS RELEASE

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Pride Foundation Supports the Educational Dreams of Over 100 Students in 2014 *Awards nearly \$400,000 in Scholarships to LGBTQ and Ally Students in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington*

Seattle, WA—For twenty one years, Pride Foundation’s scholarship program has been supporting the educational dreams and aspirations of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), and straight ally students. This year’s scholarship cycle awarded \$395,200 to 105 students in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

“It is an honor to be able to support LGBTQ students in reaching their full potential,” said Kris Hermanns, Executive Director of Pride Foundation. “Each year, our scholarship program continues to expand and grow thanks to the dedication and generosity of our donors and volunteers. The future is bright, and each student that we invest in is working to create a better tomorrow for LGBTQ youth and families.”

Seven new scholarship funds were established this year to meet the growing and diverse needs of LGBTQ and ally students. The foundation’s scholarship program also passed a significant milestone this year, exceeding \$3.5 million awarded since 1993. With a total of nearly 1,400 scholarships awarded to LGBTQ and ally students since the program’s inception, it is one of the largest LGBTQ and allied-focused scholarship programs in the world.

Pride Foundation’s scholarship recipients come from incredibly varied personal and lived experiences and are representative of the diversity within the community. This year’s scholars will be receiving degrees in a wide range of topics, including Social Sciences (28.5 percent), Health and Medical (20 percent), Arts and Humanities (19 percent), and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (14.28 percent), among others.

All too often LGBTQ students do not have the family, financial, and community support in place to pursue their education. With tuition continuing to increase at a rapid rate—in Washington State higher education cuts recently led to the [second largest tuition increase in the nation](#)—financial aid has become even more important for students pursuing higher education.

“I was raised in a single parent home in Section 8 with no way to pay for school,” said Lane Kaiser, a 2014 Pride Foundation scholar from Bremerton, Washington. “If it were not for the scholarship Pride Foundation blessed me with, I would not have been able to pursue my dreams. I went from a high-risk, suicide-risk transgender teen to a passionate social work major in a thriving environment because of Pride Foundation.”

In addition to the financial support that Pride Foundation scholarships provide, the program also provides encouragement and fosters a sense of community. Many Pride Foundation scholars have been bullied or isolated—in some cases forced out of their homes—because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Receiving a Pride Foundation scholarship connects students to a wider LGBTQ and ally community of supporters, providing important affirmation and support.

“When I made the decision to stay in Missoula for my undergraduate degree I found immense solace in Pride Foundation. They stood behind me, financially and emotionally, and made me feel that I was a part of a larger community,” said Jeff Verlanic, a former Pride Foundation scholar from Montana. “Without Pride Foundation I would not have had the courage to move to Chicago, to create complex gay characters on stage, to have applied to NYU. Pride Foundation has helped me in making so many dreams come true.”

Pride Foundation relies upon a community volunteer review process that takes into account the unique experiences and contributions of LGBTQ and ally students. Scholars use their awards to help fund their studies in post-secondary educational pursuits, including two- and four-year degrees, vocational programs, and graduate studies.

While there have been many recent victories in the LGBTQ community, there is still much work to be done to reach full equality. Pride Foundation scholars play an important role in expanding understanding of LGBTQ issues, supporting the LGBTQ community, and advocating for cultural change.

In the next month, Pride Foundation will host celebrations throughout the region to honor the 2014 scholars and acknowledge their dedicated donors and volunteers.

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Pride Foundation is a regional community foundation that inspires giving to expand opportunities and advance full equality for LGBTQ people across the Northwest. Learn more at www.pridefoundation.org.