



Summer 2020 Newsletter



A message from the GMF President John Ellis

As we head into summer, we hope you are responding well to the changes we have gone through during the past few months, and hopefully we will begin to see a return to normalcy as we go forward.

The Foundation Grants and Scholarship committees have submitted their award recommendations for the next year, which have been approved by the Board of Directors. As you read this, the Grant and Scholarship recipients are being notified, and funding will begin shortly. During this period we experienced huge swings in our corpus, but the value had returned to a safe level to award nearly a record amount.

We were genuinely concerned about the effect of the COVID - 19 on the projects of our applicants. Several of our grant applicants described their need to rethink their projects, and the Grants Committee gave preference to those who were adapting to change.

The quality of the grant and scholarship winning applications was exceptional. Grant applications for very worthy projects and students with excellent records attending or applying to top tier schools resulted in high winning scores in both categories.

As always, we appreciate and rely on your ongoing support. Our ability to fund these awards is due to our very generous donor base, and in these difficult times for non-profits, your donations are critical for the Foundation going forward.

2019-2020 Grantee Spotlight

WAVES AHEAD-PUERTO RICO



**Peter Harvey
Chairman, Grants Committee**

Puerto Rico has been hard hit by sequential hurricanes in recent years and a large earthquake in recent months. In 2017 a non-profit was formed to help LGBT aging populations badly in need of support and community services.

In 2018 the *Gamma Mu Foundation* received a compelling application from *WAVES AHEAD* which became one of the grants awarded that year. It was the first recipient of the **Jones-Kahle Award in honor of Martin Culbreth**, which is awarded to a grantee focused on the older LGBT members of our community. *WAVES AHEAD* qualified for a second grant in 2019.

WAVES AHEAD is dedicated to working with marginalized and vulnerable sectors of Puerto Rican society by providing support in their needed areas in order to reestablish and strengthen them. Namely to provide support in the development and formation of stronger segments of the LGBT community, among them, seniors, homeless, and others; in order for them to improve their quality of living; to promote an inclusive public policy for all; and to provide the skills necessary in order to empower them as individuals, families, and community-as-a-whole.

The *Gamma Mu Foundation* funding this year is going towards a program called PIPES (an acronym in Spanish that means, Integral Program for a Healthier Older Adult). This program is focused on supporting the LGBT+ older adults and other marginalized segments of the community who are homeless, living with HIV/AIDS and many living with PTSD. Our funds are used for qualified personnel to provide counseling and other case management services. Some is done in face to face group sessions and some via a web based platform.

The *Gamma Mu Foundation* is proud to support the founder and people behind *WAVES AHEAD* in their selfless efforts to help and support the LGBT+ society in PR, especially the older members of their community.

IN SUPPORT OF THE GAMMA MU FOUNDATION

**John D. Block
Gamma Mu Foundation Vice-President**

I write to you as a volunteer of *The Gamma Mu Foundation's* Board of Directors.

It's a privilege to be part of this vital institution helping the LGBTQ community. One of the Foundation's great features is the fact that it is an all volunteer non-profit with extremely low expenses. Gold Star, a national organization for rating non-profits, has given the Gamma Mu Foundation its highest rating. Our investments provide all our operating expenses so that every dollar donated is directly distributed to our Grant and Scholarship recipients.

Your support for the *Gamma Mu Foundation* has helped make our 32 years possible. More importantly, it's made possible all of the *Gamma Mu Foundation's* tremendous impact over the decades - and today. It is because your support matters that I'm personally urging you to become a member of the *Gamma Mu Foundation Legacy Society*.

This year alone, *The Gamma Mu Foundation* will make \$221,000 in grants and scholarships to support every part of the LGBTQ community with emphasis on rural and underserved parts of the United States. The numbers of Grant and Scholarship applications far exceed our ability to fund more than a small percentage of worthy requests.

All told, the foundation has awarded more than \$3 million in grants and scholarships since 1988.

You are helping us continue to make history. The future of the *Gamma Mu Foundation* is dependent on generous donors like you joining the *Legacy Society*. Our work of helping the LGBTQ community only increases every year.

Thank you for considering participation in the *Legacy Society*, one of the most vital and critical programs of the *Gamma Mu Foundation*.

Please join the over 50 members who are currently in the *Legacy Society*.



LGBTQ Pride Month in the era of COVID-19

The month of June was chosen for LGBTQ Pride Month to commemorate the riots held by members of the LGBTQ community against a police raid that took place at the Stonewall Inn in New York City on June

28, 1969.

The so-called Stonewall riots were a "tipping point" for the gay liberation movement in the United States, according to the Library of Congress. The uproar also paved the way for the modern fight for LGBTQ rights.

Pride Month events have drawn millions of participants from around the world each year. Typically, there are month-long celebrations and in-person gatherings that take place across the nation. Memorials are also often held for members of the LGBTQ community who have lost their lives to hate crimes or HIV/AIDS.

The rainbow LGBTQ flag is prominently displayed throughout the month.

Gilbert Baker, an American artist, gay rights activist and U.S. Army Veteran created the flag in 1978 as a new symbol for the gay and lesbian political movement at the suggestion of his friends and colleagues, including Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official in California. Milk was assassinated later that year. According to Baker's website, the colors of the LGBTQ flag each have a meaning: red for life, orange for healing, yellow for sunlight, green for nature, blue for harmony and violet for spirit.

Baker died at the age of 65 on March 31, 2017, though his rainbow flag remains an iconic, powerful symbol for LGBTQ pride.

This year's Pride Month is being celebrated differently due to the coronavirus pandemic. All LGBTQ Pride Month parades and marches planned for June were - and remain- cancelled.

The LGBTQ community and allies have been able to connect virtually though, thanks to a slew of online events in every state.

YOUR DONATIONS AT WORK!

This year the Foundation had Grant Applications from 37 organizations. 24 Organizations qualified for a Grant and \$161,000 has been awarded to these organizations.

The Foundation received 131 applications for Scholarships from rural areas in Iowa, South Carolina, Florida, and Minnesota to name a few. Of the 131 applications 22 scholarships of \$2500 have been awarded for a total of \$60,000.

The total awarded this year for Grants and Scholarships is \$221,000.

Our Grant and Scholarship applications greatly exceed our ability to fund many that are qualified.



Plan to join Donors and Friends at the Gamma Mu Foundation Annual Summer Meeting in Burlington Vermont

The Annual Summer Meeting of the Gamma Mu Foundation to be held ***July 11-12, 2020*** in beautiful Burlington Vermont has been ***CANCELLED*** due to the COVID-19 virus.

The same arrangements have been made for the Summer Meeting in ***2021*** at the same location. All donors and friends of the Foundation are welcome to attend. Detailed information will be sent at a later date.

A Teacher: I was fired for Being Gay. Now it Can't Happen to Anyone Else

Oregon's 2014 Teacher of the Year shares his story.

By Brett Bigham
Education Week June 23, 2020



The simple truth of the recent U.S. Supreme Court case of ***Bostock v. Clayton County*** is that, for the first time ever, it has been ruled that all the United States have equal-employment protections. There may not

be true equality in this country, but we are equal on paper for the very first time.

When I was born in 1964, Illinois was the only state that did not have an anti-sodomy law that criminalized gay relationships. Some states kept these laws until they were overturned by the Supreme Court in 2003. As a student, I never heard a teacher say a positive thing about lesbian, bisexual, gay, or transgender people. But as my own high school graduation loomed, an incredible teacher taught me one of the most valuable lessons I have ever learned from a teacher: how to step up when students are in danger.

As AIDS burned its way across the country, he found the bravery to warn a friend of mine of the growing epidemic and urged my friend to share the information with me. In 1992, in my conservative ultra-christian Oregon town, this teacher risked everything to keep us safe. I'm probably alive today because of him.

Shortly after I became the Oregon State Teacher of the Year in 2014, I was fired for not being able to keep my mouth shut after my school warned me not to say in public that I was gay. But I knew I couldn't stay in the classroom closet. As a gay man, I can make the life of Ls,Gs,Bs, and Ts better by having a picture of my family on my desk. It might be the only time in their K-12 school experience when a student sees that gay people have normal lives with dogs and barbecues in the backyard.

I want students to see these normal futures because I have seen the suicide rates of LGBT students. I personally know the costs of those statistics.

When I was 15, my best friend came out to me. I can't remember everything I said, but I know I told him that I loved him. I'm thankful for that, because it was the last thing I said to him. He died by suicide that weekend. He didn't see a future he could live with.

I fought back in court and eventually accepted a financial settlement from the district. I walked away, battered, bruised, but a winner. But I won for losing.

My district fired the superintendent only the week before reinstating me. The school board never publicly said why.

I wrote a social-media post last week about how the Southern Poverty Law Center had *included my story in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court for this case.*

The court has now ruled that that what happened to me violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. I poured out my feelings about the historic ruling on Twitter, and within several days, that Twitter thread had received over 40 million impressions.

Victory, to be honest, feels dirty. It tastes bad. It doesn't take away the hurt of losing my students in a cold February, never to see them again. I think of my autistic student who was blind. He liked my voice, and sometimes it was the only thing that would calm him. One day I just disappeared.

Where is the apology to him?



Amazon has donated \$169,850,767. to charities registered on **AMAZONSmile**. *The Gamma Mu Foundation* has received \$993.51 from **AMAZON** for donors and friends buying through **AMAZONSmile**, so please remember to shop through **AMAZONPrime** and choosing *The Gamma Mu Foundation* as your favorite charity.

Forum looks at Covid 19 and people with HIV

By Liz Highleyman
B.A.R. May 2020

People living with HIV in San Francisco are not contracting the new coronavirus or developing severe COVID 19 more than - HIV negative people.

Three hundred people with HIV have been tested for the coronavirus and 36 were positive, accounting for just under 3% of all cases in the city. Hardly anyone has developed severe illness and none have died. Low rates of severe illness among HIV-positive people with COVID 19 have also been reported in China, Spain, and New York City.

Although people with badly compromised immune systems are more likely to become seriously ill, experts say this doesn't apply to HIV-positive people who have an undetectable viral load and near-normal CD4 T-cell count.

It's possible that people with somewhat weaker immunity could have less severe COVID 19 lung damage, which is caused by the immune system's response rather than by the virus itself. In the most severe cases, an immune overreaction known as a cytokine storm can trigger inflammation that harms organs throughout the body.

"Maybe if you're a little bit immunosuppressed, your inflammatory response may not be as crazy and out of control," Dr. Monica Gandhi suggested.



Recipient of the steinhilber WEISER Foundation Scholarship

Jude Stone attending University of Oregon to pursue a BA of Political Science

The following are a few of the questions on the Scholarship Applications and Jude Stone's responses.

Describe how you plan to use your education to increase respect for the individual and/or human difference in society

"I am extremely passionate about social justice issues, and want to dedicate my life and career to battling social inequalities in law, communities, and everyday life. As such, I have focused my academic career on how human differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, and class are regulated and oppressed. I am writing my senior thesis to raise awareness and problematize how the intersection of race and Queer identities impacts how seriously courts take violence against Trans women. My thesis will examine how it influences degrees of conviction and whether or not hate crime changes are applied to violence against Trans women depending on both her race and the perpetrator's race. When I graduate, I intend to use my degree as a paralegal for an intersectional social justice nonprofit with an

emphasis on LGBTQ+ rights, like Lambda Legal, the ACLU, and other similar organizations. I believe that the courts are a critical facet of advocacy, want to spend my career fighting within them for more universal human rights"

Describe any challenges you have had with discrimination and how it has made you a stronger individual today. Which experience has made you the most proud and reflects your passions?

"My high school was quite conservative with unofficial yet powerful Christian undertones and we were strongly discouraged from discussing anything that deviated from cis - and heteronormative values. Growing up in Virginia and Arizona, I never knew what it was like to exist as a gay man in a supportive community. My journey to realizing my true identity was a painful one, and I struggled with severe depression, anxiety, and self-harm all throughout high school. By my junior year, I was suicidal and required professional treatment. When I finally came out, my dad's side of my family stopped talking to me entirely despite how involved they were in my childhood. Thankfully I was able to get help and came to school in Oregon for a fresh start. I am extremely proud of my story, particularly my mental health challenges, and the path I have overcome to be myself instead of succumbing to the hateful things I experienced. I grew stronger and now use that passion to advocate for other LGBTQ+ people who do not have the resources to defend themselves. I am very grateful for my journey because it has made me a more resilient and compassionate person and taught me that love is not conditional.



GuideStar awards The Gamma Mu Foundation it's highest rating!

GuideStar, the largest non-profit rating organization, has awarded the Gamma Mu Foundation it's highest rating for transparency.

How does this help the Foundation?

- Demonstrates that we are an organization that is focused on measuring our progress and results.
- Gives potential funders information they crave, so it's good for fundraising.
- Shows our improvement and results year over year.
- Provides a concrete alternative to donors evaluating us using our overhead ratio.



Join the great group of donors who volunteer time to the operations of the Gamma Mu Foundation.

The Foundation welcomes anyone who wishes to participate in the operations of our great organization. Many donors and friends of the Foundation have expertise that could be a benefit to the Foundation. As we set up our Regional Directors, please do not hesitate to contact your local Director or any member of the Board of Directors for information on how you can volunteer and contribute your time and knowledge. **Anyone interested in becoming an evaluator for either Grants or Scholarships, please contact Doug Morton (denverdoug@aol.com) for Scholarships or Peter Harvey (pharvey@sbcglobal.net) for Grants.**

PLEASE USE THE WEBSITE TO MAKE DONATIONS

Our **Foundation** is receiving an unprecedented number of requests for Grants and Scholarships and we are only able to fund a small fraction of our requests.

Please consider making an **"Extra"** donation during these uncertain times so that the **Foundation** can fulfill more requests.

The **Foundation** is an **all volunteer** organization and *every dollar that you donate is awarded to current Grants or Scholarships.*

PLEASE BE CAREFUL AND STAY HEALTHY

[Visit our website](#)

PLEASE LET US KNOW IF YOU HAVE A CHANGE IN YOUR CONTACT INFORMATION OR A CHANGE IN YOUR HOUSEHOLD

