Welcome Spring 2023

A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT

JOHN ELLIS

Welcome to spring.

The Scholarship and Grants Chairmen of the Foundation are in the process of organizing this year’s awards programs. The process begins right after New Years when notices are posted for prospective award winners to apply. Then our committees are finalized to score the applications and finally the period of scoring and determining the winners ends during the month of June. This allows us to fund the awards at the beginning of our new fiscal year. Scholarship awards are made during the late summer and the grant awards are distributed twice during the year to allow the committee to assess the effectiveness of the awards.

This year our Grants process was updated to better focus on the relationship of the awards to the overall mission of the Foundation. This year also includes a focus on an “annual” priority, and this year that focus will be on AIDS support.

As always, our chairmen need the help of volunteers to work within the committees. It’s never too late to get involved. If you haven’t already, please reach out to Scott Kahle (214-577-1598) or Doug Morton (760-774-2200).

Also, we are hoping to hold a summer meeting around the time of the August “house party”, allowing guests to also attend the Foundation meeting. More on this shortly.

We wish you the best for a great spring and summer and of course thank you for your ongoing support.

SAVE THE DATE!

GAMMA MU FOUNDATION SUMMER MEETING
BEING PLANNED FOR ATLANTA GEORGIA IN
More information will be sent when plans are finalized.

Your Donations at Work!

Wyoming Equality
Cheyenne Wyoming

$11,400 Grant. Wyoming Equality has started the Wyoming GSA Network which seeks to educate, empower, and organize LGBTQ students across the state of Wyoming. We provide financial and technical support to existing GSAs, help to create new GSAs, and work to connect all Wyoming GSAs with events that foster leadership skills. Gamma Mu funds will help us to continue to provide on-site visits and financial support to students who face hostility from their classmates, administration, and elected officials, but who find resources to foster resilience and self-esteem in their GSA clubs and in their connections made with GSAs across the state.

"Celebration 2023" in Ft Lauderdale A Great Success!

There were 121 attendees at our annual event in Ft. Lauderdale. The event raised over $40,000 for the Foundation.

A very special thanks to President John Ellis, Frank McGuire, Joe Pacetti and David Andrews.

The 3 day event was highlighted by the great performance of Sir Earl Toon, from "Kool and The Gang", made possible by the generosity of Joe Pacetti and David Andrews.

Paul Gitnik, Richard Brigg-Price, Gino Palermo, Gene Svrcek, Kevin Newman
The Truth About North Dakota's Attack on Books.

By Taylor Brorby

The author of "Boys and Oil: Growing Up Gay in a Fractured Land"

Last Fall, I was the keynote speaker at the North Dakota Library Associations annual conference. The theme was "Libraries: The Place for Everyone." There were rainbow flags, paper-link chains of multicolored glitter scattered across tables. It was the safest I have ever felt back home as an out, gay man. When I was a young person, libraries were where I went to find stories that made me feel I could fit in, not only in North Dakota, but in the wider world. But two pieces of legislation that may soon be signed into law in North Dakota would make it possible to restrict libraries and in some cases, to imprison librarians.

House Bill 1205 would prohibit public libraries from keeping and lending "books that contain explicit sexual material." The bill's definition of explicit material could include "pictorial, three-dimensional or visual" depictions of anything from sex scenes in movies to educational mater meant to teach teenagers about puberty. As the bill states, libraries have until Jan 1, 2024 to create a procedure "for the development of a book collection that is appropriate for the age
and maturity of levels of individuals who may access the materials, and which is suitable for, and consistent with, the purpose of the Library." Currently, the bill contains no explanation of what "the purpose of the library" means or how to determine "appropriate" age and maturity.

The more far-reaching Senate Bill 2360 prohibits organizations open to minors from displaying "objectionable materials" whether image or text, including visuals of "nude or partially denuded human figures posed or presented in a manner to exploit sex, lust or perversion" The bill defines "nude or partially denuded human figures" as "less that completely and opaquely covered human genitals, pubic regions, female breasts, or a female breast, if the breast or breasts are exposed below a point immediately above the top of the areola, or human buttocks; and includes human male genitals in a discernibly state even if completely and opaquely covered"

By this definition, a photograph or even a description of the Venus de Milo could - depending on the eye of the beholder - be out of bounds. It's not just a matter of interpretation, though: Senate Bill 2360 would make it possible to charge offending librarians with a class B misdemeanor, punishable with up to 30 days in jail and a fine of $1500.

Growing up in the closet in North Dakota in the late "90s and early 2000s, I found sanctuary in libraries that I couldn't find anywhere else. I ate breakfast every morning in Bismarck High School, combing the stacks and reading books by authors like James Baldwin, Truman Capote and Willa Cather. When some of the school's football players circulated a petition to have one openly gay boy in my class change in the girl's locker room, I went deeper into the library shelves, tried to keep quiet and hide who I was.

The summer after graduation from college, when I was outed by my aunt, and my home was no longer a safe space, I searched the stacks of the Bismarck Veterans Memorial Library for stories of gay people disowned by family members to help me find my own way to stable ground. During those evenings, I would read authors like Kent Haruf and Amy Tam and Mary Karr. I would listen to classical CDs to try to calm myself. I was free to roam, peruse, and free to be myself.

North Dakota is part of a growing national trend. Between Jan 1 and Aug 31 of last year, the American Library Association recorded 681 attempts to ban or restrict library resources. There were 1,651 book titles targeted, up from 1,597 in 2021. According to PEN America, 41 percent of books banned throughout the 2021-22 school year contained LGBTQ themes, protagonists or prominent secondary characters. Bills similar to North Dakota's have also been introduced or passed into law in states like West Virginia, Texas, Mississippi, Montana, Iowa, Wyoming, Missouri and Indiana.

Under Missouri's new law banning the provision of "explicit sexual material" to students, school districts removed works about Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo; comics, such as "Batman" and "X-Men"; visual depictions of Shakespeare's works; and "Maus," the Pulitzer Prize-winning graphic novel about the Holocaust.

But let's be honest; It's not the Venus de Milo these laws are going to come for first. It's books with LGBTQ stories, or books by LGBTQ authors - the kind of books that have provided so many queer young people with a lifeline when they needed it the most. I don't know where I would have ended up if I couldn't read my way out of despair. My heart breaks to think of all the kids now who won't have that option.
Libraries should be places where everyone is welcome, no matter who they are, and where everyone can find themselves reflected in the stories on the shelves. Laws like these make that a lot less likely.

**Update From Foundation Grant's Committee Chairman.**

Scott Kahle

The 2023-24 grants process is well underway. The application deadline is March 31, 2023. While the process will remain the same for this year, there are a couple of significant changes which include targeted focus and the way evaluations are carried out.

First, the board has agreed that the priority for this year's grants process will be on HIV/STD education, prevention, and treatment for the LGBTQ community. While the situation has vastly improved over the years, there has been a significant uptick in the number of young people with new HIV infections, along with other STDs. Applications with other areas of focus will be considered after those considered "priority" are evaluated.

Second, the reviewer's evaluation form has been revised. Rather than the numeric 10-point scale of the past, the revised evaluation form relies more heavily on a qualitative evaluation. In addition, the questions have been weighted to ensure that those organizations awarded grants more closely align with the mission and vision of the Foundation. Eleven donors have been identified as volunteer members of the Grants Review Committee and will soon commence with their evaluation work.

**Gamma Mu Foundation Co-sponsoring Event During The Palm Springs Fly-In Thursday May 4, 2023**

The Gamma Mu Foundation is co-sponsoring the Thursday evening Fly- In event on May 4 as a donor appreciation night. The event will be at the home of John Block (Foundation vice-president) and Chuck Kuglen. All donors are welcome to this event whether or not they are participating in the fly-in. Transportation from the host hotel will be provided.

There will be an opportunity for Cliff Pettit Fellows to become current in their yearly donation and for attendees to become a Cliff Pettit Fellow.

Cliff Pettit Fellows are donors who have cumulatively donated a minimum of $1000 and donate a minimum of $350 yearly to remain an
"Active Fellow," entitling you to be a voting member of the Foundation as well as being invited to the Board's Summer Planning Meeting and Fellows Retreat.

Would you like to gain insight into the work your Foundation is doing?

Consider becoming an evaluator for the Grant and/or Scholarship applications. Join a group of dedicated donors who give their time in reviewing these applications and learning first hand how important our work is to so many people in our community. It is an extremely rewarding contribution to the Foundation.

Please contact Doug Morton, Chairman, Scholarship Committee (denverdoug@aol.com) or Scott Kahle, Chairman Grants Committee (scott@gammamufoundation.org) with any questions and to volunteer.

Gamma Mu Foundation again received Guide Star's highest rating for 2023!

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.

PLEASE USE THE WEBSITE TO MAKE DONATIONS

The board of directors thank you for the role you are playing in strengthening the LGBTQ+ community. As a donor to the Gamma Mu Foundation we are reaching out to you in hope
that you will continue your commitment to supporting the foundation.

With your help, The Gamma Mu Foundation will play an even bigger role in 2024 and beyond. The earlier your financial support, the more our Foundation can invest in helping non-profit groups and student scholarships in the LGBTQ+ rural community.

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.

To help streamline and facilitate our accounting and budgeting, please consider signing up for a "recurrent monthly donation" so that the Foundation can fulfill more of our requests.

Click on "Gamma Mu Foundation" and click on "Donate" then click on "Monthly". You will be able to cancel or modify the amount at any time.

The Gamma Mu Foundation is an "all volunteer" organization.