

PRESS RELEASE

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**Pride Foundation Awards \$403,850 to
124 LGBTQ and Allied Students Across the Northwest**
Provides Important Financial and Community Support to Student Leaders

Seattle, WA—While much has changed for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) community since Pride Foundation’s scholarship program was established more than two decades ago, the program continues to provide essential financial resources and community support to LGBTQ and allied students across the Northwest.

In 2015, Pride Foundation awarded \$403,850 to 124 student leaders in Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Since the program began in 1993, Pride Foundation has awarded nearly \$4 million and more than 1,500 scholarships—making it one of the largest LGBTQ scholarship programs in the country.

“Our scholarship program acknowledges the pivotal role that community plays in allowing each student to achieve their dreams,” said Kris Hermanns, Executive Director of Pride Foundation. “Thanks to the generosity of our donors and volunteers, we are able to signal to LGBTQ and allied students that they matter not in spite of who they are, but *because* of who they are.”

Pride Foundation’s emphasis on increasing access to educational opportunities for LGBTQ students fills a unique need in the community. According to a [recent report](#) by the Center for American Progress and the Movement Advancement Project, LGBTQ students often face hostile, unsafe, and unwelcoming school environments, as well as discrimination in accessing financial aid and other support. As a result, LGBTQ young people and the children of LGBTQ parents are more likely to perform poorly in school and face challenges pursuing postsecondary educational opportunities.

Many of Pride Foundation’s scholars have experienced stigma or isolation because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. When this reality is coupled with high rates of family rejection—[half of LGBT youth experienced a negative reaction from their parents when they came out](#)—and homelessness—[20-40% of homeless youth are LGBTQ](#)—it paints a startling picture of the challenges and barriers facing LGBTQ students.

“As an immigrant, I have encountered many challenges like culture shock, language barriers, and a lack of financial stability,” said Rigoberto Garcia, a 2015 Pride Foundation scholar who attends Seattle University. “And being gay and Latino, is even worse. Derogatory comments from other people used to make me feel like I didn’t belong either here or in my country. This scholarship gives me hope and allows me to continue my dream of becoming a Certified Public Accountant.”

Without the support of Pride Foundation, Rigoberto noted that he would need to work multiple jobs to pay for tuition—making it almost impossible for him to succeed in school.

Pride Foundation 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. Scholars are pursuing a wide variety of degrees from Health and Medical, to Arts and Humanities, to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math, among others.

As the country eagerly awaits the upcoming Supreme Court decision on marriage equality, Pride Foundation will continue working to ensure that all students have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

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Over the next two months, Pride Foundation will host celebrations throughout the region to honor their 2015 scholars. Click here for a full listing of events throughout the region: <http://www.pridefoundation.org/what-we-do/scholarships/scholarship-events/>.

If you're interested in profiling the story of a Pride Foundation scholar, please contact: Rachael@pridefoundation.org. Read more about our 2015 scholars here: <http://www.pridefoundation.org/scholars/2015/>.

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.