

Samara Foundation Awards \$28,500

BY TED LOOBY AND EUAN BEAR

The Samara Foundation of Vermont has awarded scholarships and grants totaling \$28,500 to five high school seniors and 13 organizations serving the Vermont LGBT community. Samara first awarded grants in 1998 and now has awarded over \$175,000 throughout the state. While there is a core of community organizations that apply every year, recipients and amounts change from year to year.

Five Vermont high school seniors – three were honored last year – will each receive \$1,000 Samara Scholarships for 2004. The five scholarship recipients include: Elise Corbally, Claire Benjamin, Christopher Stowell, Nicole Couillard, and Robin Sunquiet. To celebrate the fifth anniversary of their Scholarship Program, the Samara Scholarship Committee, along with Board and staff members, gathered at the Waiting Room in Burlington to announce the 2004 recipients. Also present was 2000 recipient Hannah Hafter who recently graduated from Mount Holyoke.

The Samara Scholarship was established as an investment in the future of Vermont students who oppose discrimination and prejudice and who stand for the elimination of homophobia in our society. Nineteen Vermont high school seniors have been recognized as Samara Scholars since the awards were estab-

lished in 2000.

This year's grants show a slight shift in emphasis, if emphasis can be inferred by looking at the amounts given. One factor in the shift, according to both Samara Foundation Director Bill Lippert and long-time Grants Committee member Howdy Russell, involved the Unity Project. AIDS services organizations are not eligible to apply for direct-service funding from the Unity Project, a restriction instituted by the donors. Therefore, the Samara Foundation put a little more emphasis on that area of need, said Lippert, without abandoning other groups that were eligible to apply for Unity Project funding.

Another priority, according to Lippert, was "to put money where it would really make a difference in people's lives being saved." Russell mentioned under-served populations, including lesbians, elderly, and transgenders, as priorities set by the foundation's board. "There's always youth as a priority, and that's due to the wishes of the giver of the original funds. But we define that fairly broadly," he explained.

HIV prevention outreach to men in Bennington County was the focus of a \$1,500 (\$100 less than last year) grant awarded to the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont. Serving 10 of the 14 counties in Vermont, Vermont CARES was also awarded \$1,500 (\$100 less than in 2003). The Vermont People with AIDS Coalition was awarded \$3,000 (up \$1750 over last

year's grant) to help fund scholarships for people who are HIV-positive. \$1,200 was awarded to the AIDS Community Resource Network's (ACORN) Hepatitis C counseling and Testing Program.

Outright Vermont was awarded \$4,500 (the same amount as last year) to be used to leverage matching gifts in their 2004 major donor campaign.

A \$3,000 grant to Mountain Pride Media (\$1,000 less than in 2003), publishers of *Out in the Mountains*, aims to support fair media coverage and enhance communication for the LGBT community of Vermont.

The Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force received \$1,750 for the redesign of their fair booths and updating their handouts.

A \$1,000 grant (\$300 less than last year) was awarded to SafeSpace, a social change and social service organization working to end physical, sexual, and emotional violence in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning people.

Transgender Day of Remembrance received \$1,200 to support their goals of building community awareness around transgender issues, creating opportunities to recognize and mourn transgender people lost to violence and discrimination, and to empower transgender community members and other members of the LGBT and general communities.

Education and outreach was the

focus of a \$750 to Equality Vermont to work with organizations on educating their members on transgender issues.

The R.U.1.2? Community Center received \$1,500 (\$400 less than last year) to help in their transition to a their new facility and support the further development of the David Bohnett Cyber Center.

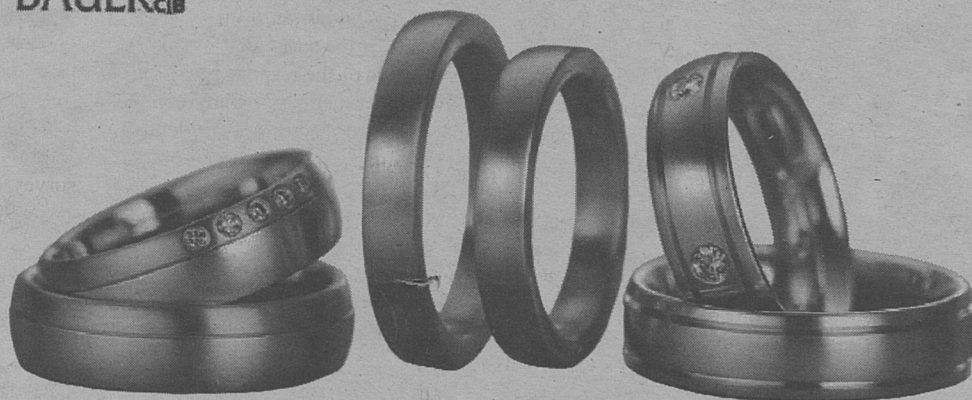
Celebrating our communities' achievements was supported by a \$1,800 grant to P.R.I.D.E. Vermont (\$800 more than last year), while the Amelia Earhart Underground Flying Society received \$800 to support their 25th anniversary gala in the Upper Valley.

The Samara Foundation, with offices in Burlington, is one of a network of gay and lesbian community foundations across the county. Samara Foundation is a charitable foundation whose mission is "to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow." ▼

For further information about giving or granting opportunities contact Bill Lippert, Executive Director, Samara Foundation of Vermont, P.O. Box 1263, Burlington, Vermont 05402. Call 802.860.6236 or email at bill@samarafoundation.org.

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