

## PHILANTHROPY

# Samara Announces 2006 Gifts

## Foundation Awards \$21,500 to Nine Organizations, Two Students

BURLINGTON – Samara Foundation of Vermont has awarded scholarships and grants totaling \$21,500 to two high school seniors and nine organizations serving the Vermont LGBT community. Samara first awarded grants in 1998 and now has awarded over \$219,000 throughout the state.

Two graduating high school seniors, one from South Burlington and the other from Rutland, have been awarded year 2006 Samara Foundation Scholarships of \$2,000.

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.

Organizations funded in Samara Foundation's Year 2006 granting cycle benefit the Vermont gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities in a wide range of areas including HIV prevention, youth services, education, media development, health and community service, social service and initiatives to address same sex domestic violence.

HIV prevention outreach to men in Bennington County was the focus of a \$1,500 grant awarded to the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont. Easter Seals Vermont, as lead agency for the Vermont adoption consortium, received \$1,300 to support the Northwestern Vermont Gay and Lesbian Foster and Adoptive Parent Group.

Expanded youth services for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth throughout Vermont was supported by a \$6,000 grant to Outright Vermont. Pride Vermont received \$1,700 to support publication of a "Pride Guide and Directory" to be distributed at this year's Pride Celebration.

A \$2,750 grant 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 \$1,250 to support its goal 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 in drawing common linkages in fighting injustice and building a stronger community for everyone.

The R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center received \$3,000 to support its general operations with a focus on LGBTQ elders. It also was awarded an additional \$500 to help with transition expenses in its merger with SafeSpace. Vermont PWA (People with AIDS) Coalition received \$2,500 to provide scholarships to a retreat/conference for people living with HIV, as well as scholarships for Vermont PWAs Buyers' Coop. WGDR 91.1 FM, Goddard College's radio station, received \$1,000 in support of its "Woman-Stirred Radio" program.

Also, an award to *OITM* of up to \$4,000 in a matching funds campaign is pending. Samara has extended the campaign to August 31st. ▼

➔ Press release from the Samara Foundation, which has offices in Burlington and 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 Suzanne D. Stofflet, President, Samara Foundation of Vermont, P.O. Box 1263, Burlington, Vermont 05402, call 802.860.6236, or email [suzanne@samarafoundation.org](mailto:suzanne@samarafoundation.org).

## Deaths

### Equal Rights Activist ERIC ROFES Dies

WASHINGTON - Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese made the following statement on the passing of Eric Rofes, a longtime leader in the movement for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender equality. Rofes, 51, died in June of an apparent heart attack in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

"Eric Rofes was a leader in the best sense of the word and his loss will be deeply felt by the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender movement," said Human Rights Campaign President Joe Solmonese. "Our profound sympathy goes to Eric's partner, family and friends. The mark Eric left on this world made us all better activists and his contributions will be remembered for their enormous impact on the movement."

Rofes was a prolific author, an organizer for more than 30 years and a political pioneer on HIV/AIDS and GLBT issues. ▼

### LGBT Community Leaders Mourn Death of RIC WEILAND

NEW YORK - Leaders of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender civil rights organizations today mourned the death on June 24 of Seattle-based philanthropist and Microsoft pioneer Ric Weiland.

"Ric was an exceptionally generous man who made extraordinary contributions to our work," said Kevin Cathcart, Executive Director of Lambda Legal. "We are grateful for the significant impact his philanthropy made in Lambda Legal's mission and in the broader LGBT movement. His quiet commitment made the work of so many organizations possible - and our community is better off for it."

Matt Foreman, Executive Director, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, said "We are profoundly saddened by the death of Ric Weiland. Ric is someone who quietly, and with great humility, supported the work of many organizations dedicated to advancing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender equality. The breadth and scope of this commitment was immense and unwavering. Our community has lost a wonderful friend and leader, and the Task Force extends its deepest sympathies to Ric's partner Mike Schaefer and all those who knew and loved Ric." ▼

## QUEER SOCIAL SPACE IN THE MAKING

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about the impact of having a queer social space in Vermont and thoughts about the community integrating into the larger nightclub scene in Burlington:

"Integration is bullshit. We are already integrated. We need a place where it's cool to be yourself."

"Integration should be a choice."

"Assimilation is bad. The uniqueness of the queer community will be lost."

"There needs to be a queer culture in Burlington."

"We need substance-free spaces as well as bars/other social venues, just like any other community."

"Queer spaces provide safety for multiple alternative-minded people."

"While I'm not a B-town resident, I feel that knowing that EVERY night of EVERY WEEK there's a dedicated queer space available is INVALUABLE. Ladies' nights/mens' nights can fill the gap but are not enough."

"Although I think outreach and

political work are really important, it's good to have a space where that's not the major piece of it."

"We are a fractured community."

"It helps people connect and come out."

"Maybe when trans folk and GLB folks can dance and be sexy without noticing anything odd - then we don't need it. A safe space is crucial."

"I, as a femme, feel unsafe in straight bars, as men often get overly affectionate with me as I 'pass' for straight."

"Support, solidarity, and love."

There was a strong feeling among respondents that the community wants more out of a new space than a typical nightclub offers. Many expressed interest in a space that increases visibility and provides a safe space for all sexualities, genders, and generations to come together.

Most recently, folks gathered at the Langdon Street Café in Montpelier at an event called Stitch & Flicks (held every 3rd

Tuesday of the month). About 25 people came to the event, and watched the film *After Stonewall*. Following the film, we all participated in an open dialogue about the lack of queer social space in Vermont.

People agreed with those surveyed in Burlington, and added their concern over the following points: lack of visibility, publicity, and a sense of community (as one woman said, "it's like you need a secret password to find the lesbians"). Participants also expressed the need to have social spaces scattered throughout the state, including spaces accessible for those who are disabled or who don't drive.

The difficulty in building numerous spaces spread throughout the state is clear, but as one individual expressed, "If we get one place started, it will be inspirational for everyone." The need for these spaces is equally clear. As one of the hosts of the Stitch & Flicks said, "Our lack of space is affecting our ability to organize."

Building a new social space will take time. In the interim, the potential in the queer community in Vermont is enormous. We encourage everyone to cultivate the excitement and ideas expressed by the crowd at Pride and the discussion at Langdon St. Café by organizing events in your own local communities. For example, a professor at Goddard College offered the school as a space for a queer event, a student at the New England Culinary Institute was excited about the formation of a new gay-straight alliance, and the new groups' potential to cater or host events; and many people identified the possibility of utilizing spaces, such as bars and cafes, to bring the community together for queer events at least once a month.

By encouraging dialogue and providing mediums for discussion (such as the new blog space at [qssvermont.blogspot.com](http://qssvermont.blogspot.com) and the email list at [qssvermont@gmail.com](mailto:qssvermont@gmail.com)), we hope local com-

munities will take ownership of this project, and feel empowered to begin creating the social space you envision. ▼

➔ Jen Berger is a community activist and student at Burlington College, Liz Blocker is a playwright and community activist, and Connie Beal is a queer community/anti-violence activist.

➔ For those of you who would like to stay connected, the next Burlington-based Queer Social Space meeting will be on Thursday, August 24th from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at the Peace and Justice Center, 21 Church Street in Burlington. Light refreshments will be provided. Also, thank you to all of you who filled out the community surveys at Pride and for those who attended Stitch & Flicks at Langdon Street Café. To receive regular updates, please email [qssvermont@gmail.com](mailto:qssvermont@gmail.com).