Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

Special Fund Helps LGBT Dreamers Get Work Permits and Relief from Deportation

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Feb. 19, 2013

San Francisco, CA, February 19th, 2013—Nearly 200 lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) undocumented young people have either received or are in the process of receiving two-year work permits and reprieves from the threat of deportation, thanks to a fund made possible by over three-dozen LGBT organizations, including Gay-Straight Alliance Network.

Late last summer, President Obama created the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program to enable people who came to the United States as children—commonly known as "Dreamers"—to apply for work permits and relief from deportation.

In response, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), the LA Gay & Lesbian Center, and the Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund launched the "LGBT Dreamers Fund" at the Liberty Hill Foundation to help LGBT Dreamers pay the $465 in fees required to apply for relief under the DACA program (a list of organizations contributing to the fund appears at the end of this release). The $465 in fees poses a steep hurdle for most Dreamers because neither they nor their parents are able to obtain lawful employment due to their undocumented status.

"Young people start and lead Gay-Straight Alliance clubs because they dream of a country where all LGBT youth can grow up without fear. This fund will empower youth to continue working toward that dream," said Carolyn Laub, Executive Director of Gay-Straight Alliance Network, one of the organizations contributing to the fund.

To date, more than $100,000 has been raised and 160 LGBT Dreamers have received financial assistance. At least another 40 will get help from the fund. LGBT Dreamers who would like assistance from the fund may apply at www.LibertyHill.org/LGBTDreamersFund [1].

“These young people are part of the LGBT community and we knew we had to find a way to give them a hand,” said NCLR Executive Director Kate Kendell, one of the fund’s co-founders. “We are thrilled that so many LGBT organizations across the nation stepped forward.”

One of the recipients of aid from the fund, Jose Mendoza, recently received his work permit. Jose’s dream is to become a nurse and he is now taking classes that will allow him to apply to a nursing program. “Getting this kind of support and help means so much, and it’s great to see the gay community stepping in and saying that what I am doing is important,” he said.

Marco Quiroga, who wants to be a surgeon, said he was “thrilled” to have the support of the LGBT Dreamers Fund so that he could submit his DACA application. “Immigrant and LGBT issues have always been separate in my mind, and it is wonderful to see these two communities come together to work on a common cause,” he said. “Receiving these funds creates a sense of community with other gay immigrants who are in my situation."

“In spite of having to deal with the stresses of being both undocumented and LGBT, these young people have persevered and emerged as leaders of the national reform movement,” said LA Gay & Lesbian Center CEO Lorri L. Jean, another fund co-founder. “All of us are so pleased to be able to show our support and gratitude to them.”

There is widespread agreement that the DACA program is only a temporary fix and that creating a direct pathway to citizenship for Dreamers is one of the key elements of comprehensive immigration reform. The framework for reform recently announced by President Obama as well as the one put forward by the bipartisan “Gang of 8” in the U.S. Senate specifically included Dreamers. On February 5, House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, who helped sink the federal DREAM Act in 2010, also endorsed citizenship for Dreamers.

Current contributors to the LGBT Dreamers Fund:
• Aaron Belkin, Executive Director of the Palm Center
• Center on Halsted (Chicago)
• The Center/GLBT Community Center of Colorado
• Cream City Foundation
• The Gay and Lesbian Community Center of Southern Nevada
• Centerlink
• Equality Federation
• Equality Maine
• Family Equality Council
• Freedom to Marry
• Gay City Health Project (Seattle)
• Gay Community Center of Richmond
• Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC)

- Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD)
- Greater Palm Springs Pride
- GSA Network
- Horizons Foundation
- Human Rights Campaign (HRC)
- Immigration Equality
- Paul Kawata, Executive Director of the National Minority AIDS Council
- L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center
- Lambda Legal
- LGBT Center of Central PA
- LGBT Center of Raleigh
- LGBT Project of the ACLU
- Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition
- MassEquality
- Mautner Project Board and Staff
- Metropolitan Charities
- National Center for Lesbian Rights
- National Coalition for LGBT Health
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
- National Stonewall Democrats
- The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center (New York City)
- One Colorado
- Out & Equal Workplace Advocates
- The OUTreach Center (Madison, WI)
- Pride Foundation
- Pridelines Youth Services (Miami Shores, FL)
- Q Center (Portland, OR)
- Rainbow Community Center (Contra Costa, CA)
- Ruth Ellis Center, Inc. (Detroit)
- San Diego LGBT Community Center
- Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders (SAGE)
- Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN)
- San Francisco LGBT Community Center
- Transgender Law Center
- The Trevor Project
- True Colors
- Several Anonymous Donors

You can learn about other fund recipients at www.LGBTDreamersStories.com [2].
LGBT Dreamers who would like assistance from the LGBT Dreamers fund may apply at www.LibertyHill.org/LGBTDreamersFund [1].

http://lgbtdreamersstories.com/ [3]
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