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## Congratulations to the Winners of the 2011 eQuality Scholarship!

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A proud member of the eQuality Scholarship Collaborative, GSA Network is excited to congratulate the fourteen high school seniors who earned a 2011 eQuality Scholarship! The winners will receive a \$5,000 scholarship, which is awarded each year to students in Northern and Central California who have promoted understanding of and equality for the LGBTQ community. The collaborative also awards a \$5,000 scholarship to one nursing student and a \$2,000 scholarship to one medical student.

Nearly every high school senior to receive the award was the president or founder of their school's Gay-Straight Alliance club, a testament to the importance of GSA organizing in shaping LGBTQ activism for today's youth. The awards dinner also featured a keynote address from **Ken Savage**, a 2010 eQuality Scholar who won the James P. Ricciardelli Memorial Scholarship and currently attends Stanford University, where he is a mentor for incoming LGBT freshman.



The 22nd Annual eQuality Scholarship Awards Event took place on Friday, May 20, 2011 in San Francisco at Hotel Nikko. The ceremony is a special event where the scholars are honored by their friends, family and community members for their commitment to service in the LGBTQ community. Each recipient chose someone who has made a difference in their lives to introduce them and their accomplishments.

Amanda Harris, GSA Network Northern California Program Coordinator, introduced Menlo-Atherton High School GSA President Max Philp. Amanda spoke about Max's leadership on the NorCal Youth Council; his role speaking out for youth through the Make It Better Project; his most recent award, KQED Public Radio's 2011 LGBT Unsung Heroes; and his killer dance skills at GSA Network's Youth Empowerment Summit. In his acceptance speech, Max said that although youth are told to wait out high school until it gets better, youth like him and the other scholarship winners prove that youth can take action to make it better. "This award is going to help me go to college and allow me to reach my goals for the LGBT community in the future, and maybe run for Congress or run a non-profit organization."

**Irene Rojas-Carroll** from El Cerrito High School chose community member Dr. Mark Wilson, Youth Program Coordinator of the Pacific Center in Berkeley, to introduce her. Dr. Wilson highlighted her leadership among her peers and the lessons of empowerment that she had taught him since 6th grade. "It's really amazing to have this award because I feel that my activism means something to others," said Irene. "It will allow me to continue my activism and my education at Brown."

Other award winners, like **Zac Toomay** of Arroyo Grande High School and Hunter Reardon of Cabrillo High School, were introduced by their parents who spoke of how much they have each grown into their activism and the change they are creating in their conservative hometowns. When asked what the award meant to him, Hunter said, "I feel I am being repaid for my work with the LGBTQ community, not only in seeing the safety of my queer friends every day, but also directly and financially. Now I can continue my education and learn to contribute to oppressed communities in ways beyond the safe schools movement." Zac echoed these sentiments, stating, "This scholarship makes me feel proud to do what I do. It shows that people believe in me so much that they want to invest in my future. It's an honor."

In their acceptance speeches, each scholar talked about continuing their activism in college and in their careers. **Hayley Hanley**, graduating from Placer High School in Auburn, plans to go to Sierra Community College and become a teacher. "This scholarship means that I can further my education and go into teaching," Hayley says. "I want to teach younger classes and I feel that it's important for kids to be taught that people are people, no matter who they are." **Justin Kamimoto** of Clovis North High School earns double congratulations: in addition to winning an eQuality Scholarship, he was this year's Bulldog Pride Fund Scholarship's "GSA Network Awardee". Founder of the GSA at his school, Justin is planning to study Business Administration at California State University Fresno. Additionally, GSA Network Youth Board Member and Aragon High School senior **Jason Galisatus** was awarded the PG&E George Kronenberger Memorial Scholar and plans to use his scholarship at Stanford University in the fall.

GSA Network is proud of all of the youth and the hard work and leadership they have shown in

their communities. We know they will continue to empower youth and their peers in the future. Congratulations to all of the winners!

- **Kevin Baum**, Summerville Union High School, Tuolumne
- **Jason Galisatus**, Aragon High School, San Mateo
- **Hayley Hanley**, Placer High School, Auburn
- **Kelsey Johnson**, Saint Joseph Notre Dame High School, Alameda
- **Justin Kamimoto**, Clovis North High School, Clovis
- **Erika Kreeger**, York School, Monterey
- **Maya Lord**, San Luis Obispo High School, San Luis Obispo
- **Max Philp**, Menlo-Atherton High School, Menlo Park
- **Hunter Reardon**, Cabrillo High School, Lompoc
- **Irene Rojas-Carroll**, El Cerrito High School, El Cerrito
- **Syd Salsman**, Acalanes High School, Lafayette
- **Cyrus Sinai**, Santa Clara High School, Santa Clara
- **Zac Toomay**, Arroyo Grande High School, Arroyo Grande

The fourteenth high school scholar could not be named because she is not out to her parents; she will be graduating from KIPP King Collegiate High School in San Lorenzo in June.

**Ann Soliday**, Kaiser Permanente Nursing Scholar, California State University Sacramento

**Keshav Khanijow**, University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, The Permanente Medical Group Scholar

The eQuality Scholarship Collaborative is the joint effort of LGBT employee resource groups at PG&E, Kaiser Permanente, Genentech, KPMG, and AAA of Northern California, Nevada, and Utah, and nonprofit organizations Out & Equal Workplace Advocates, Gay-Straight Alliance Network, and Golden Gate Business Association. The scholarship program was created in 1989 by PG&E's lesbian and gay employee association (now PG&E PrideNetwork). To date, the Collaborative has given over \$525,000 to more than 200 youth.

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