

# PFLAG

## Scholars 2004

On behalf of Nancy McDonald, chair of the Scholarship Advisory Committee (SAC), and the thirteen SAC members, I am pleased to present to you the first PFLAG National Scholars. There are 25 PFLAG National Scholars; most are featured below and several others opted to avoid publicity around their awards. These students were chosen from the 255 scholarship applications that we received. Please join with us in congratulating them.

The 2004 PFLAG National Scholarships Program was made possible by several generous donations. The Palmer B. Carson Trust, which established the scholarships program with a substantial bequest from Mr. Carson's estate, provided the funding for 19 of this year's scholarships. We received additional funding for another four scholarships from the Dow Chemical Company employee group Gays, Lesbians and Allies at Dow (GLAD); two scholarships were funded by Mr. John Drakulich.

We used a bi-level selection process. The initial cut was made by the members of the SAC and two representatives from GLAD. The finalists were then reviewed by eight college professors. We are grateful to each of the SAC members and the college professors for their time and expertise.

In December 2004, we will announce the details of the 2005 PFLAG National Scholarship Program. If you belong to an employees' group, union, or any other group, and think that your group or company might be interested in donating to our scholarship fund, please contact Timothy Sheehan in our Development Department at [tsheehan@pflag.org](mailto:tsheehan@pflag.org), or 202.467.8180 ext. 229. Individual donations to support PFLAG's general programming including the scholarships program, our safe schools work, or other PFLAG work may be mailed in the enclosed envelope.

*-Dr. Roy Gilbert-Higginson, Scholarships Program Administrator*



*Adrianna Hutchinson*

Hometown: Shrewsbury, MA  
College: Boston University

As a high school senior, Adrianna was an out and active member of the Shrewsbury High GSA. She was instrumental in organizing the school's annual Day of Silence, a national student-led effort to raise awareness of anti-GLBT harassment in schools. Hutchinson also helped increase her GSA's visibility, which, "on a good day," she says, attracts about nine students to its

meetings. She even brought female dates to both her junior and senior proms – likely a first in the history of her suburban high school!

*Alexa Punnankuzhyil*

Hometown: Arcata, CA  
College: Oberlin College

Alexa Punnankuzhyil received PFLAG's Sakia Gunn College Scholarship for GLBT Community Involvement. The award honors the memory of Sakia Gunn, a 15 year-old African-American lesbian and hate crime victim. "I come from a rural community where it is difficult to identify with anyone about GLBT issues. For PFLAG to recognize that is a great honor," said Punnankuzhyil. "And I am especially humbled that I received the scholarship in the memory of someone so brave as Sakia."



*Nicholas Mayor*

Hometown: Birmingham, AL  
College: Oberlin College

Nicholas is straight, but remembers being uneasy with homophobia at school from a very young age. So he started the Day of Silence Project as a way to show support for his GLBT friends. For his courage, Nicholas was reprimanded by the school administration, who confiscated

his home-made signs and called his parents to report his "inappropriate conduct."

*Jeff Manassero*

Hometown: Elk Grove, CA  
College: UC at Berkley

As an openly gay student, Jeff has some big supporters: his family. "My family is amazing," he writes. "My parents are my biggest fans. After I came out, my mom contacted our Sacramento PFLAG group, where she learned that she is not a victim, but that she has a new reason to be closer to her son. I must say, PFLAG was an internal force that allowed my mom and I to form a new and stronger bond than ever before."

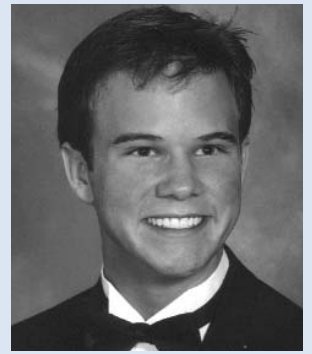




### *Clinton McQueen IV*

Hometown: Grand Blanc, MI  
College: Western Michigan

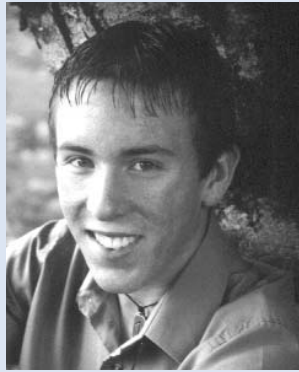
Clint faced discrimination from an organization to which he had devoted much of his life. After a picture of Clint participating in an anti-hate crimes rally appeared in a local newspaper, he received a letter from the Boy Scout Council. Clint writes, "They informed me that I was no longer welcome unless my declaration of being a homosexual was 'only a youthful effort to stand out from the crowd.'" A month away from receiving his rank of Eagle Scout, Clint was forced to leave the Boy Scouts. "I was not going to deny my sexual orientation after being totally open and honest for three years," says Clint.



### *Taylor Jewell*

Hometown: Alphretta, GA  
College: Vanderbilt University

When Taylor came out to his parents, they confiscated his car, cell phone and computer. They went through every drawer in his bedroom and every file on his computer. Taylor writes, "My mom slept most of the day. My dad wrote 'I want to die' on Post-It notes over and over. They told me there was nothing more embarrassing than having a gay son." Taylor's parents and younger sister still have not accepted him. But he is moving on. "I turned to school as an escape. I directed my energies toward my academic future, still surrounded by grief at home. I am proud to say that after coming out, I acquired a determination to excel and an inner tranquility stemming from genuine happiness and self-confidence." Taylor graduated first in his class.



### *Matthew Vail*

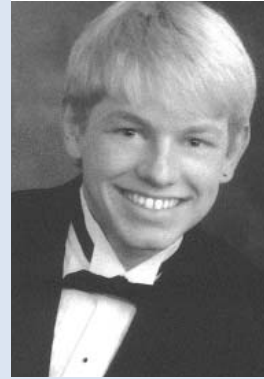
Hometown: Gresham, OR  
College: Sarah Lawrence

Matt writes, "The scholarship I received from PFLAG will make it possible for me to attend college and study psychology. With this education, I will continue my role as an advocate, devoting my life to working in the public education system or in social services. Your contributions are shaping the future."

### *Brennan Brockbank*

Hometown: Santa Rosa, CA  
College: Humboldt State University

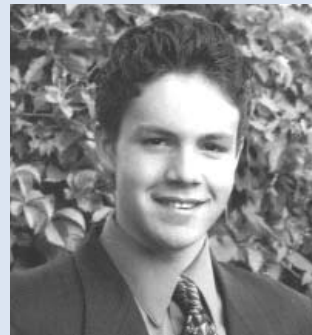
Brennan was encouraged by a lesbian friend to attend a GSA meeting his freshman year of high school. Soon he started noticing that straight kids like him used gay slurs without even realizing it, and that bothered him. As a junior Brennan was elected president of the GSA. "Soon after, I designed and ordered the GSA's first-ever club t-shirts," writes Brennan. "They read 'I went to the Santa Rosa GSA and all I got was this gay t-shirt.' We sold out immediately - everyone liked that the shirts cleverly made fun of people who call everything negative 'gay'."



### *Thomas Ingalls*

Hometown: Mandan, ND  
College: Macalester University

Growing up as a gay teen in a rural area, Thomas faced many slurs in high school; his car and property were vandalized. Writes Thomas, "The tolerance I sometimes experience is almost as bad as intolerance. Who wants to be tolerated? Not me. I want to be accepted. However, I will take tolerance if it keeps me from being hospitalized. Whether it be pleasurable or painful, my life as a gay student is what it is. I would not change any of it."



### *Susan Martin*

Hometown: Spring, TX  
College: Elmhurst College

Susan was involved in Equality Rocks as an exit polling volunteer for Texas election primaries. She is also the co-founder of Network of Houston Area Tolerance Education, an organization which brings together local GSAs. Susan hopes to be a teacher after college. "For me, teaching is more than a job; its

about helping young people find out who they are and believe in themselves."



### *Kelsey Hamilton*

Hometown: Carlsbad, CA  
College: San Francisco State University

When Kelsey was 16, she met her first girlfriend and has since faced discrimination from her family, classmates, and community. She writes, "Twenty percent of your life is what happens to you and eighty percent is how you react to it. I don't want to go through life hating everyone who opposes me."

## Katie Dolph

Hometown: Reno, NV  
College: Linfield College

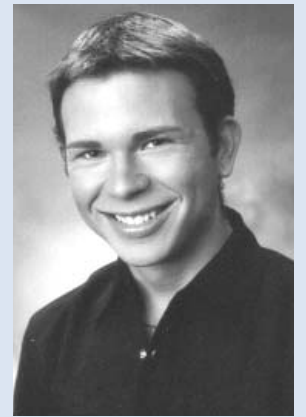
Katie is very involved in her local gay and lesbian center in Reno. In high school, she worked with donors to help fund a post-Pride dance party for GLBT kids 14-20 years old. Katie writes, "Growing up with two moms wasn't the easiest...in fourth grade my best friend's born-again Christian parents wouldn't let her spend the night." When Katie came out to her mothers in high school, they replied, "Well, at least you won't get pregnant!"



## Heathcliff Wright

Hometown: Sturgeon Bay, WI  
College: UM at Amherst

Heathcliff was the first openly gay student in the history of his 50 year-old high school. He writes that after he came out in his rural community, "I became very popular with the girls, but most of the boys were nervous around me. They pushed me and called me queer. It was hard when people insulted me and hard when my 'friends' wouldn't defend me." But by his senior year Heathcliff noticed a change at school. "People began to approach me to say, 'Thanks to you, your classmates are going to be more prepared to accept different people they will meet throughout their life.'"



## Jennifer Hsu

Hometown: Troy, MI  
College: University of Michigan

Jennie received PFLAG's Esera Tuaolo Scholarship for Athletic Achievement. Because she had faced bigotry from family and at school after coming out, Jennie was completely surprised when her teammates voted to make her captain of the basketball team. She writes, "It didn't matter that I was gay because to them I was an athlete."



## Mark Kharas

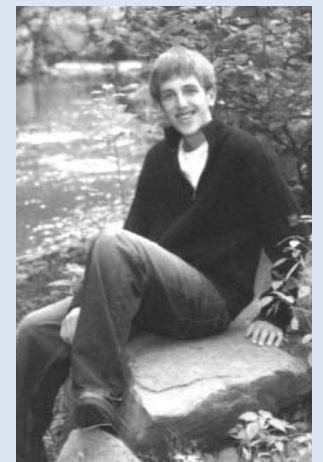
Hometown: Tulsa, OK  
College: Swarthmore College

Mark has a great sense of humor about growing up gay. He writes, "Discovering you're gay in the buckle of the Bible Belt can be an interesting experience indeed!" He didn't let his conservative surroundings stop him: Mark tried to start the first GSA in Oklahoma. When the school finally agreed, they said he could not use the word "gay" in the title.

## Brandon Arnold

Hometown: Wexford, PA  
College: New York University

Brandon was tired of hearing his classmates dismiss things they didn't like with "That's so gay." Brandon says, "If you were to say 'That's so Jewish' or 'That's so Black', there would be backlash." So he started a GSA at his school to promote a more tolerant and safe environment. When he announced the GSA, other students called it "deplorable." Brandon says, "Their reaction was proof to me that we needed a club like this."



## Julian Cyr

Hometown: Truro, MA  
College: New York University

Julian loves the arts. He spent his high school years singing in the chorus and raising money for his school's arts program. "Singing has helped me push the limits of my teenage insecurities," writes Julian. "In five or ten years, I see myself hopefully in love and working for a non-profit organization that inspires young people through the arts. Perhaps I will develop a program that links youth struggling with their sexual identities, like I did, with an expressive art form."



## Alice Cheung

Hometown: Columbia, SC College: Georgia Tech

"I have known from my childhood what it is like to be shunned for being different," Alice writes. "At first it was my race, being Chinese. My fears of being isolated again because of my sexuality made me hide in middle school. When the subjects of 'gay' or 'lesbian' came up, I could only grit my teeth. In high school I made a resolution to be more open. Now, as the majority of society wants to keep the liberty of marriage from the gay community, I have further resolved to speak out to others. I'm not giving up without a fight."

## Laura Miller

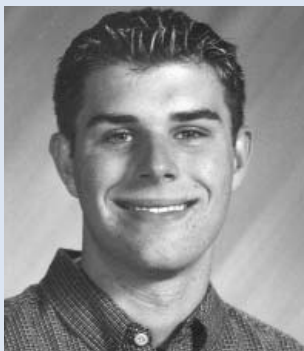
Hometown: Bolingbrook, IL College: St. Norbert College

In high school, Laura directed a play called "Bang, Bang You're Dead" about bullying and school violence. Early audiences were so impressed that Laura was asked to present the play 14 times around the community.

## Brent Winner

Hometown: Sand Springs, OK  
College: Northern Oklahoma

Brent came out to his parents as a freshman in high school and soon afterward was outed at school by someone he considered a close friend. Being in a school with mostly fundamentalist Christians (as his family was), Brent needed an outlet from the discrimination he faced...and he found it, as editor of the school newspaper. "I discovered that I could take out my frustrations as a writer for the school newspaper, writing fierce opinion columns and writing about my hopes for the school." Though his openness in his writing resulted in other students vandalizing his car and physically attacking him, he was also able to change his school for the better. Brent helped bring HIV education to biology classes, GLBT couples to the prom, and a GSA to his school.



## Travis Wagoner

Hometown: Gainesville, FL      College: University of South Florida

Travis was kicked out of his parents' house at age 16 – because he was gay. He spent the next few years supporting himself with full-time jobs – paying his own rent, buying his own clothes and food – and finishing high school. "My parents may not have given me support and nurture," he writes. "but they certainly did give me self-motivation! I know I will do extremely well in everything I do." Travis has already started his college life by attending summer school and he plans to study art.

## Jacob Wilcock

Hometown: Baltimore, MD      College: Carnegie Mellon

A few eyebrows raised when a U.S. Senator presented PFLAG's Jeanne Manford Scholarship for GLBT Advocacy to his former intern, Jacob Wilcock. Why? The senator was Wayne Allard, sponsor of the recently defeated Federal Marriage Amendment. Senator Allard made no mention of Jacob's sexuality or his advocacy work during the presentation. But Jacob understands how damaging his former boss' legislation is to his future, "The amendment is taking a group of people and saying 'You don't deserve to have equal rights,'" Jacob said. "That's homophobic, and I cannot wrap my mind around why someone would support that." He did feel that his time spent in Allard's office served a good purpose, "I hope I took the mystery out of (being gay) for some of his staff. I hope I cleared up some stereotypes." *Jacob is pictured on page one.*



## PFLAG's National Conference

Join us for PFLAG's 19th National Conference "Family Voices for Equality: Celebrating 30 Years of Support, Education, and Advocacy" October 22-24, 2004 in beautiful Salt Lake City, Utah. With highly regarded speakers, informative workshops, the 30th Anniversary celebration banquet and the company of other PFLAGers, this year's conference an extraordinary experience. Register by visiting [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

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## Waco PFLAG Opens Community Center

PFLAG congratulates PFLAG Waco and the Dwyer family on the opening of the Eddie and Velma Dwyer PFLAG Community Center. The center is named after Dr. Dwyer, an ordained Baptist minister and professor of religion at Baylor University. As a Baptist, Dr. Dwyer condemned homosexuality...until his son come out in the 1980s. In the following years, PFLAG was a great support to the Dwyers. Velma Dwyer, 87, says, "It has meant so much to us just to be part of the group." Dr. Dwyer, 92, said, "I was pleased to no end with the honor." The building was donated by Waco couple Joe and Thomas Johnson. *Pictured above: Velma Dwyer with her children.*

Register to Vote Today! Go to:

[www.registrationbyworkingassets.com/PFLAG](http://www.registrationbyworkingassets.com/PFLAG)