

## **Rainbow Chamber Foundation supports Center Queer Youth Program**

Twelve youth from local high school Gay Straight Alliances (GSAs) met with youth from throughout the state last month at the GSA Network's Youth Empowering Summit (YES), held Dec. 8 in San Francisco, thanks in part to a \$500 donation from the Sacramento Rainbow of Commerce Foundation. The San Francisco trip was organized by the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center's Queer Youth Program.

The Rainbow Chamber Foundation Board of Directors agreed at its December meeting to provide ongoing funding support for the Center youth program, which includes two weekly facilitated meetings per week, one for youth ages 13-17 and one for youth ages 17-21. The Center also hosts a 20 Somethings group (ages 20 through 29). Youth program activities include facilitated discussions, leadership and activist training, games, videos, special events such as a holiday dinner, outings to film and theater productions, arts and crafts activities, and community service projects.

"The Foundation Board met with Center staff and learned a lot about the Center and its work with LGBT youth," said Foundation Board President Josh Jacoby. "All of us on the Board understand how important our youth are to the future strength and prosperity of our community. The Board agreed that working closely with the Center to support youth programming will be our priority for the coming year."

The day-long YES conference on Dec. 8 focused on fostering safe schools and youth activism, included workshops for GSA youth, youth facilitators and adult leaders, ending with a dance and drag show from 5 to 8 p.m. Highlights of the day included a visit with pioneering lesbian activist Phyllis Lyon, who was married to her partner of 55 years, Del Martin, by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom in February 2004 and again in June following the California Supreme Court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage. Martin passed away in August.

Pam Whiteley, PFLAG Mid Pacific Regional Director; Enrique Manjarrez, program coordinator for the Center's youth program; and Center youth facilitator Shawn Yost accompanied the youth as adult chaperones.

"The youth summit was a great chance for youth to share their experiences and outlooks on current gay culture and how well it is 'tolerated' in various parts of California," Yost said. "The individual parts of the state are as eclectic and unique as the youth at the summit. I personally found it heart-warming—and I found myself a bit jealous—as the kids danced the night away after the workshops. I would have loved to have had the chance to go to a gay high school dance at that age. The youth were all very open to making new friends."

The Foundation is a 501c(3) non-profit organization established in 2007 by the Sacramento Rainbow Chamber of Commerce for the purpose of supporting LGBT youth and other charitable causes. The Foundation awarded two \$1,000 educational scholarships to LGBT youth in 2008.

For more information about the Sacramento Gay & Lesbian Center's Queer Youth Program, visit <http://saccenter.org/programs/youth-services>.