

NORTHWEST news

They were just two guys with an idea. Little did they know that 25 years later, their idea would still be going strong after raising more than \$150,000 and helping dozens of students with college tuition. As one recipient put it, "Wow, a scholarship just because I'm queer."

Well, there's more to it than that, but the Pride of the Rose Scholarship is for members of the sexual minorities community and their children. Most of the recipients have a specific career path and know exactly where they are going. Some are looking for a few more dollars to get them through their last semester. Most have been involved with the queer community and when they graduate are going to make it stronger and affect the greater Portland community as well.

Rose Emperor V Frank Schreckenberger and Rose Empress XXI Allison Grey (aka Curtis Meyers) established the scholarship as a gift to the community and city. They wanted to leave a legacy of their reign, which ended in October 1979.

Since then they have seen the scholarship grow, evolve and weather tough times. During the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, most of the money the community raised went to helping people suffering from the disease. But in a sad sort of way, Pride of the Rose complemented that, Grey says.

"We had a lot of people applying who wanted to help with the AIDS situation," he recalls. "There were lots of naturopathic medical students or people who were pursuing psychology and other kinds of endeavors to help that battle."

Dollar by dollar, the scholarship kept going. The amount of money and number of recipients have fluctuated, but the trend has always been on the positive side. Last year the fund gave away

THE OLD COLLEGE TRY

Pride of the Rose Scholarship celebrates 25th anniversary

by Pat Young

a record \$12,000. This year the goal is \$25,000, and so far about \$15,000 has been raised.

Most of the money has come through fund raising from the Imperial Sovereign Rose Court, as various titleholders have designated Pride of the Rose as their charity. Plus, Grey calls "Daddy Frank" the best lobbyist in the world.

"I don't know the formula for this success, if there is one, other than we have endured and we are still here," says Grey, who notes that when they attend fundraisers, they don't see many faces in the audience from the 1970s. Instead, they see "kids in their 20s and 30s."

"It's exciting to see the enthusiasm for this continuation of this scholarship come from the next generation," Schreckenberger notes. "Here it is 25 years later. It's definitely the next generation."

Schreckenberger and Grey hold a few annual fund-raisers including Darcelle's Rags to Scholarship, in which drag queens donate their dresses and shoes to be auctioned off. "Some of us have gotten older and bigger, and we can't wear the things we used to wear, so it's a great place to donate clothes and help the scholarship," Grey says.

Another event is Valentines from Hell—or, as Schreckenberger puts it, "Flash and Trash."



Rose Empress XXI Allison Grey and Rose Emperor V Frank Schreckenberger created the Pride of the Rose Scholarship after their reign in 1979 (inset)



It's an evening of camp drag, a time for fringe and fishnets instead of Elizabethan gowns and choreographed versions of "Touch Me in the Morning." Along with Empress VI Mame, Schreckenberger and Grey started this event during the height of the AIDS crisis.

"There was so much sadness going on then, and we needed to have some fun," Schreckenberger explains. "We needed to laugh. It was a good stress release. And it's been fun to have ever since."

Through the years word of the scholarship spread through fliers at bars, friends telling friends, blurbs in newspapers and the Internet.

Casey Meredith heard about Pride of the Rose after meeting Schreckenberger through mutual friends. He received a share of the scholarship in 1998 and 1999—and just in time. A percentage of his tuition was due at Oregon Health Sciences University, but his school loan hadn't come through yet. It was down to the deadline.

"If I hadn't had that money, I would not have been able to stay in school," says Meredith, a registered nurse for Multnomah County in primary care. "Receiving this scholarship was wonderful. You really feel like the gay community is behind you. It's money generated in this community, by my people, so it was just fabulous."

Meredith gives back to the scholarship each year by attending various fund-raisers. He adds that the bulk of the cash collected comes from "\$1 donations at drag shows."

"It was our idea," Schreckenberger says. "But they are the people who have raised this kind of money and enable this to happen." □

Download PRIDE OF THE ROSE SCHOLARSHIP applications at www.equityfoundation.org. The deadline is July 31. A Touch of Class, a dinner and show with special featured entertainers, will be held 6 p.m. May 23 at Darcelle XV, 208 N.W. Third Ave. Tickets are \$15 from 503-231-5759.

PAT YOUNG is a Portland free-lance writer and gay and lesbian historian.

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