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New Law Scholarship Founded for Lesbian and Gay Students at GGU

SAN FRANCISCO — Brooke Oliver of Berkeley, a third-year student at the Golden Gate University School of Law, is the first recipient of a scholarship designed to benefit lesbian and gay students at the local law school. The Michael A. Zamperini-W. Clay Burchell Law Scholarship, the first of its kind at the GGU Law School, is awarded annually on the basis of academic merit.

The scholarship was established by a \$15,000 grant to the law school by Director of Writing and Research Professor Michael Zamperini and his partner W. Clay Burchell, a former official with the federal government. "It was something that needed to be done," Zamperini said. "There are very few things that have been institutionally set up to deal with long-term aspirations of gays and lesbians. Much of the money that a lot of people in our community have given has been for defensive motions, such as stopping the (anti-gay) initiative in Oregon, or for AIDS research. We felt that we would like to do something that was more of an 'offensive' posture, so to speak, of planning for the future."

Oliver, the editor-in-chief of the Golden Gate Law Review, works as a law clerk for Farella, Braun & Martel, and has served on the board of Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom (BALIF), an organization of gay, lesbian and bisexual lawyers and legal workers. She began law school after a 15-year career in business. She is a graduate of the University of California, Davis, and the mother of a college-age daughter.

"Michael and Clay are reinforcing activism and professionalism," she said. "Both are excellent models of how to be an activist and a professional with dignity. I'm really honored to have been selected to receive the scholarship," Oliver said. "It's great to know there are people out there pulling for you."

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And I appreciate what Michael and Clay have done. The scholarship offers some support and encouragement about being out as a lesbian and being a professional. That kind of support is valuable, particularly in the difficult job market we're facing right now."

In addition to the \$15,000 contributed by the two men to create the endowment, they also donated an additional \$500 so that the first scholarship in that amount could be awarded this year. "I hope others in the community will contribute to the scholarship fund as well," Oliver said, "so that other students can receive the same kind of encouragement and support."

Scholarship applicants were evaluated on the basis of grade point average, grades in first-year writing and research classes, and an essay on "How Being Gay/Lesbian Has Affected My Law School Career."

The Golden Gate University School of Law is located at 536 Mission St. It is approved by the American Bar Association.