

4-11-2013

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*Bay Area Reporter*

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### Recommended Citation

Owen, Elliot, "Couple Marks 20 Years of Helping Gay Law Students" (2013). *Articles About GGU Law*. Paper 6.  
<http://digitalcommons.law.ggu.edu/aboutggulaw/6>

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## Couple marks 20 years of helping gay law students

by Elliot Owen

A gay Castro couple who has helped gay and lesbian law students for two decades recently handed out their annual scholarship and celebrated the occasion at a reception.

Golden Gate University third year law school student Kate Baldrige was awarded the Michael A. Zamperini/W. Clay Burchell Endowed Scholarship during an event last month at the Coblenz Patch Duffy and Bass LLP offices in San Francisco's Ferry Building.

The scholarship, created 20 years ago by Zamperini, a GGU law professor, and his partner Burchell, is awarded annually to one gay or lesbian law student beginning the fall semester of their third year. Recipients write a short essay about being part of the university's LGBT community, and exhibit outstanding academic achievement through their grade point average and performance in writing and research courses. This year, the scholarship was \$3,000.

Baldrige, who studies environmental law, said she was honored to be recognized for her merit-based accomplishments but more specifically, for being a member of the LGBT community.

"It makes me proud to not only represent GGU, but the LGBT community doing well in law school." Baldrige said at the March 27 event. "To be recognized for those things is something I've never experienced before."

Before enrolling at GGU, Baldrige was heavily involved in LGBT community activism in Fresno, California. Identifying LGBT visibility as a problem there, she founded a grassroots nonprofit organization called commUNITY Fresno, which worked toward getting local LGBTs involved in community service.

"The whole point was visibility," Baldrige said. "The more you expose the world to the equality of the LGBT community, the more the world will embrace it. I would like to get back involved – to be able to integrate that into a career no matter what I'm doing, would be something to strive for."

By financially supporting the education of future LGBT lawyers, Zamperini and Burchell are contributing to sustained LGBT visibility within the realm of law. Zamperini, who teaches a course called "Sexual Orientation and the Law," said gay people have historically been oppressed by the law, which underlines

the importance of out lawyers.

"People are oppressed if they're not visible," Zamperini said. "If you don't have visibility, if you don't have gay people in power positions, you might as well give up. While I'm always grateful for our straight allies who lend a hand, we also need to do it for ourselves."

Also present at the event was Julia Adams, 2002 recipient of the scholarship. Adams, who gave the keynote speech, currently works at the law offices of Kimball, Tirey and St. John. She said it was an honor to speak at the event for the school that gave her so much. Additionally, she emphasized how important it is to be an out attorney.

"The law helps people," Adams said. "Future generations need to know that there are people out there just like them, are looking out for them, and can help them in whatever situation they might be in."

Adams's wife, Rebecca Prozan, who is the director of community relations at the San Francisco District Attorney's office, also attended the event. Prozan was partnered with Adams during Adams's last year at GGU and spoke about how meaningful the scholarship was for her wife.

"That scholarship really helped her get through that last loop and she's had a close relationship to Professor Zamperini for years," Prozan said. "I think this was one of the first gay scholarships in the country. Twenty years ago, for gay lawyers, that's funding for civil rights, people on the front lines."

Baldrige is currently the 9th Circuit survey executive editor of the Golden Gate University Law Review and is looking forward to graduating later this year.

"To join the 19 other recipients that have come before me and are doing excellent things as GGU grads," she said, "is humbling."

04/11/2013