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By DAVID TAFFET

CCGLA says North Texas Equality Foundation will Focus first on scholarships to leadership programs

PLANO — Collin County Gay and Lesbian Alliance has established the North Texas Equality Foundation, receiving notification in late February from the Internal Revenue Service that the new organization has been approved for non-profit status.

Morris Garcia, president of CCGLA, said the new foundation has “a broad mission,” and that organizers are “going to start strategizing soon.”

CCGLA board members will also serve as the board of trustees for NTxEF.

He said the mission includes charitable services, educational programs and scholarships for the LGBT community “to promote understanding, equality and diversity.”



Morris Garcia

Garcia said he expects the organization to begin with scholarships, and he expects those first scholarships will be for city leadership programs.

Cities in Collin County offer classes to provide “a diverse group of individuals, representing all sectors of our community, who are committed to assuming a greater responsibility for the future or our city through leadership,” according to the McKinney Chamber of Commerce Web site.

Garcia said those classes come at a high price — up to \$900 for the McKinney program. But he said the CCGLA board believes that participation in this program is important. “We want to give back to the community,” Garcia said.

He said that CCGLA has been working with city leaders in a number of the fast-growing cities in Collin County. Two goals of the group are targeting fair-minded elected officials and changing employment policies.

“We have penetrated the barrier of conservative administrations here,” Garcia said.

When he told Plano Mayor Phil Dyer that his city has the fourth-fastest-growing LGBT community in the country, he said, Dyer took notice.

Garcia said that his group has developed strong working relationships with the human resource departments of some of the major Plano-based companies, including Frito-Lay. Having HR executives appear at city council meetings alongside community members, he said, is a more effective approach than CCGLA members speaking alone.

“We’re good citizens and we want to be treated fairly,” he said.

Garcia said he thinks strides can be made with the county’s school districts as well as in employment practices in the area’s city governments.

Garcia said the idea for the nonprofit organization came from Dallas Gay and Lesbian Alliance’s Don Baker Fund. But he didn’t want to compare the two organizations other than to say they have a good working relationship.

“We’re younger than DGLA. We’re still taking baby steps,” he said. “We’re taking time, cultivating relationships.”

He said that advances will be made as more people in Plano, Frisco and other Collin County cities get to know them.

CCGLA is in its seventh year and was founded with the help of DGLA. The group partnered with another Dallas organization to bring additional services to the northern suburb.

Youth First Texas Collin County is a program of CCGLA and provides a place for LGBT and questioning youth and allies to meet in a safe environment. They meet Sundays and two Wednesday evenings a month.

The victory committee of CCGLA has a five-year goal of establishing a community center in the county.

And NTxEF is accepting tax-deductible donations so that it can begin awarding scholarships to area leadership programs and to LGBT students to continue their education.

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