



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jacob I. Wilson

[Jacob@courage-scholarship.org](mailto:Jacob@courage-scholarship.org)

515-313-3795

## MISSOURI COURAGE SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCES TRANS COURAGE AWARD

(St. Louis – September 1, 2015) **The Missouri Courage Scholarship** is proud to announce the Trans Courage Award, one of the first scholarships in the country dedicated to recognizing and supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

The recent reports of violence and discrimination against transgender people in Missouri and across the US have caused our organization deep sadness. Already this year, 20 transgender Americans have been murdered, including a trans woman of color in Kansas City. Additionally, protests are currently underway in Hillsboro, Missouri to prevent a young transgender woman from using the restroom that matches her gender identity. While the LGBT community has made great civil rights strides, there is still much work to be done, particularly to advance the rights and dignity of transgender people.

We particularly worry about transgender youth and the message sent to them by these horrific demonstrations of hate. Transgender teens experience higher rates of homelessness and research shows that transgender or gender-nonconforming people attempt suicide at a rate of nearly nine times the national average. We have decided to add a third scholarship to our previously announced annual awards to send a strong message of love and support to transgender and gender non-conforming youth across the state. While the LGB portions of the LGBT community have secured major civil rights victories, the transgender community is too often marginalized and left behind. The Trans Courage Scholarship is one small step our organization can take and we encourage schools to create inclusive climates for all students.

1. Our initial scholarship, started in support of courageous youth in rural Missouri who stand up for marginalized people, is an annual award open to students graduating from Salem High School in Dent County Missouri.
2. Our second scholarship was added to honor and reward a graduating senior from any high school in the state of Missouri who works to advance the dignity and equality of the LGBT community, the lives of people of color, religious minorities, women, immigrants, and people with disabilities.
3. Today we announce a third scholarship that will honor a graduating senior in Missouri who identifies as transgender or gender non-conforming, or who has directly worked to enhance the rights and dignity of transgender people. We believe the advancement and inclusion of any marginalized group is essential to the empowerment of all who have been marginalized.

It is due to the amazing encouragement and financial support our organization has received from throughout Missouri, and across the world, that we are able to expand our annual awards. The Courage Scholarship was founded on July 13, 2015 just two weeks after the Supreme Court handed down the marriage equality decision. On that date, Dent County Missouri gained national attention as their county commission voted unanimously to lower flags at government buildings to "mourn" the marriage equality decision handed down by the Supreme Court. Under strong pressure from the negative media the Dent County decision received, they rescinded the order just days later, though the damage was done and a message of hate was sent to LGBT youth in that community and across the state. In response, Jacob Wilson, a native of Dent County, started the Missouri Courage Scholarship for students who are helping improve their communities on behalf of LGBT people and other marginalized groups.

**Missouri Courage Scholarship TRANS COURAGE AWARD Fundraising Page:** <http://tinyurl.com/TransCourageAward>

Missouri Courage Scholarship Website: [www.courage-scholarship.org](http://www.courage-scholarship.org)

Missouri Courage Scholarship Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/CourageScholarship](https://www.facebook.com/CourageScholarship)

###