

Gay Dems Honor Own

Gertrude Stein Democratic Club observes work of four DC community leaders at 30th Leadership Awards

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by Will O'Bryan

The Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, the city's primary organization for GLBT Democrats, has chosen four recipients for its 30th Anniversary Leadership Awards.

Eric Stern, former executive director of the National Stonewall Democrats, won the Wanda Alston Democratic Service Award, created last year in honor the slain, local woman who served as director of the mayor's Office of GLBT Affairs. The award recognizes an individual who had performed outstanding work in promoting the principles of the Democratic Party, particularly among the GLBT community.

The Heil-Balin Community Service Award went to Toni Collins, chair of Transgender Health Empowerment, a local group. Collins also serves as vice-chair on Mayor Anthony Williams's Advisory Council on GLBT Affairs. The Heil-Balin award marks volunteer efforts in advancing the rights of the GLBT community locally.

Jerry Clark, former co-chair of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Board of Directors, earned the group's Justice Award for working within an organization to advance GLBT rights at the national level.

The Wanda's Will Project, a pro-bono project named for Alston from Women in the Life Association that helps same-sex couples create the documents they need in case of death or other tragic circumstances, received the Equality Award. This award honors a group or individual creating a program or initiative that promotes GLBT equality.

The three individuals honored are all local members of the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club. "Certainly we want to see our members have national prominence, but we also want their work to have local perspective," says Mario Acosta-Vélez, the group's president.

To mark this 30th year of the club's awards, Acosta-Vélez says they hoped to raise \$30,000 through sponsorships and tickets to the awards ceremony, which was to be held Wednesday, Sept. 6, at the Women's National Democratic Club. As of *Metro Weekly* deadline, just prior the event, the group had raised more than \$20,000 of that goal.

For more information about the Gertrude Stein Democratic Club, visit www.steindemocrats.org.

