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## LGBT funding group presents checks to local organizations

Sapphire Fund, a local LGBT funding group, announced its 2007-08 grant recipients at a check-presentation ceremony July 29. Sapphire chose five LGBT organizations to benefit from \$34,500: The William Way Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center, Gay and Lesbian Latino AIDS Education Initiative and Calcutta House each received \$10,000; Mountain Meadow received \$3,000; and the Philadelphia International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival was chosen for a \$1,500 grant, which it contributed toward last month's event.

Sapphire Fund, founded in 2002, seeks to meet the needs of the local LGBT population by providing funding to nonprofit groups and through various other community-building services.

“Sapphire Fund exists to support the efforts of the Philadelphia GLBTQ communities and more broadly the Philadelphia HIV/AIDS community through education, events, outreach and funding,” said Sapphire president Wayne Hamilton.

The organization garnered about \$74,000 this past fiscal year through individual donations, corporate sponsorships and its three main fundraising events — Blue Ball, Emerge and Casino Night, which together brought in about \$29,000 — as well as miscellaneous donations and smaller events. In addition to the money that was presented this week, Sapphire dispersed another \$4,000 to other local organizations throughout the year.

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**SAPPHIRE FUND RECIPIENTS SPARKLE:** Representatives from four groups benefiting from Sapphire Fund grants provide smiles as big as their checks. Randi Sherman (top left) and Steve Duffy from Mountain Meadow, Eddie Ruiz and Luis Salas from GALA EL, Joe Toczki (center) and Susan Vanderburg from Calcutta House and Dolph Ward Goldenburg (bottom left) from the William Way Community Center stand with Wayne Hamilton, president of Sapphire Fund. Photo by Scott A. Drake

The grant process began last summer as Sapphire put out a call to community organizations to complete grant requests, detailing their groups' missions, accomplishments and future goals. Sapphire's all-volunteer board of directors reviewed the 20 applications, looking for organizations whose visions were compatible with Sapphire's.

"This year we wanted to have the most broad-reaching organizations as possible included," Hamilton said. "We looked for organizations that address underserved populations such as the Latino communities and the trans populations, as well as the general LGBT community."

This year's grant program dispersed about \$4,500 more than last year's, said Sapphire treasurer David Schellenberg.

"We're very happy that we were able to give out more this year, and not the same or less," Schellenberg said.

Hamilton added that this week's check presentation was "more about the community than about Sapphire Fund. It [was] an opportunity to give recognition and money to these organizations that they can in turn use to support the community."

Sapphire does ask the grant recipients to submit a report detailing how each used the funds.

Hamilton said the grants are not only an investment in the community, but also should serve to highlight the need for continued monetary and time donations to the LGBT community's numerous nonprofit organizations.

"I hope that these grants make people aware of the efforts of these organizations and the importance of returning something to the community — whether it's dollars or volunteer time," he said. "If anything, that's what I hope Sapphire accomplishes — just raising awareness of the importance of giving back to the community."

For more information about Sapphire Fund, visit [www.sapphirefund.org](http://www.sapphirefund.org).

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