

Point Foundation Honors Jones, Motorola



Frenchie Davis

PHOTO: PETER DELVECCHIO

IT WAS AN EVENING OF LAUGHTER AND POIGNANCY, inspiration and entertainment at the Point Foundation's Point Honors event at the Renaissance Hollywood Hotel Sept. 26. The legendary Lily Tomlin cut it up with Point Courage Award recipient and out Tony and Emmy award-winning actress Cherry Jones—President Allison Taylor on Fox's *24*—to roars from the packed ballroom. Broadway's Frenchie Davis belted out a number like a force of nature. Young Point Scholars told the rapt audience how they had not only survived the most appalling and heartbreaking mistreatment, abuse and abandonment, often at the hands of family, but soared above it to become LGBT leaders and academic stars.

The Point Foundation “provides scholarships, mentorship, leadership training and hope for students of merit who have been marginalized due to sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression,” according to the foundation's website. “Additionally, Point Foundation provides programs that affect social change by challenging attitudes that contribute to social stigma and its resulting prejudice, which is often experienced by those in the LGBT community.”

Point was founded in 2002 by entrepreneur Bruce Lindstrom and his partner, Carl Strickland. While based in Los Angeles, Point's focus is national, Executive Director and CEO Jorge Valencia (he goes by “George”) told *Frontiers In L.A.* magazine in a telephone interview.

The foundation “started with about 300 applicants and had eight scholars” in 2002, but those numbers rose to 2,400 completed applications and 11 scholarship recipients in the most recent cycle, Valencia said. This “brings the total number that we're supporting this year to 67 scholars, because we support them through the duration of their degree,” he added.

There is also a “new emerging Point Alumni Association” which “has grown to 72 individuals,” and will include “over 99 dynamic individuals next year,” according to a letter from Point's founders.

To be selected as Point Scholars, applicants must demonstrate “academic excellence,” which Point defines as having “maintained a 3.3 GPA or higher,” and “leadership roles that they've had in their schools and in their

communities,” Valencia said.

Point also considers applicants’ “marginalization,” which often means harassment and exclusion at school coupled with abandonment by family, but can also exist where an applicant's family is supportive, but “moved them around from school to school, because they were being harassed to the extent that they couldn't even feel safe at school,” Valencia explained. “Marginalization happens in different ways for different scholars.”

The foundation seeks to “fulfill that educational dream for those young people,” Valencia said. But “we've never seen our support as a handout, which is why we have expectations of our scholars and we encourage them to work during the summers, even work during the school year if possible, and invest in their own education and so we fulfill whatever they need.”

Point Scholars like Angela Clements and Kyle Rapinan, who spoke at the event, are perhaps Point's most effective advocates. Their stories of perseverance and triumph, with Point's support, bowled the crowd over.

Angela, a recent graduate of the University of California, Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law, told of coming out to her fundamentalist Christian parents over a college Christmas break. Her parents' reaction, she said, was “swift and tragic. My dad initially told me I wasn't his daughter anymore; my mom told me it felt like I had terminal cancer and was dying.”

Angela nonetheless went on to work for LGBT rights

at her Nebraska college, was named a Truman Scholar and graduated with honors. She worked for the Human Rights Campaign before going to law school and hopes to pursue a career in civil rights law.

Kyle left home at 15 after his violent older brother threatened to kill him and his single mom refused to intervene. “She told me that it was my fault he was trying to hurt me, and she told me that I deserved it,” Kyle said. “I knew at that moment I was really alone.”

Kyle overcame homelessness and the physical and emotional harassment he suffered throughout high school and now attends the University of Washington, which he called the school of his dreams. He, too, hopes to become a lawyer and fight for LGBT rights.

The Point Inspiration Award, which, according to a release, “recognizes a corporation that champions respect and inclusion of the LGBT community,” went to Motorola.

The Point Courage Award, which “recognizes an individual who has advocated for the future of the LGBT community and lives with the vision that investing in today's potential will produce a brighter tomorrow,” went to Cherry Jones.

“We all know that the greatest leaders in every community are those men and women who know from personal experience what it is to be given aid and comfort when most vulnerable,” Jones said, lauding both Point and its scholars.

Point accepts donations year-round and donors can choose a particular field of study to which to target their funds, Valencia said. He also stressed that no donation is too small. “I know that during difficult times, people believe that \$10 isn't going to make a difference [but] they would be surprised by the cost of books or software for one of our scholars—those \$10 donations add up and make a huge difference.”

To donate or apply to be a Point Scholar, visit pointfoundation.org.