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**Mathew Kleiner “Create Change: Health Leadership Award”
2011 Awardee**

VISHESH KOTHARY ‘12

Gannett Health Services is pleased to announce the 2011 recipient of the "Create Change: Health Leadership Award": Vishesh Kothary. This award is established to honor and carry forward the legacy of Mathew A. Kleiner '93. It is awarded to Cornell University students who demonstrate the courage and commitment to create change that will enhance the health of the Cornell community, as Matt did as a student leader at Cornell. Vishesh's leadership to establish "Come Out for Health!" is a fitting tribute to both Matt and his many family members and friends whose love and generosity created this award.

Gannett Health Services has a long-standing commitment to providing high quality, accessible services that meet the health needs of the Cornell lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community/ies. Other campus programs and organizations (EARS, the LGBT Resource Center, the Dean of Students Office of Student Support, the Public Service Center) also have been active in addressing various concerns affecting LGBT health. Vishesh recognized that all of these efforts would be stronger with greater student participation and input. He was inspired to work to find a way to create change and promote student awareness of LGBT health issues on campus and contribute to a healthier campus for all students.

Thus was born the idea for a new student organization -- "Come Out for Health!" -- that would bring together students from diverse backgrounds and interests who would work together to raise awareness of LGBT health issues, liaise with key stakeholders, and contribute towards improved health outcomes for LGBT students. Vishesh quickly found a core group of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students who shared his enthusiasm. In a matter of months, they solidified relationships with key campus partners, researched key issues in LGBT health generally and on campuses, did the work to become recognized as an official student organization, and held their first very visible and successful event.

Vishesh is a very busy student, juggling research and a demanding pre-med curriculum; but his deep commitments to LGBT health in general and to his fellow Cornellians in particular seemed to create the energy and leadership necessary to inspire new attention to important, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations.

Diversity and Inclusion are a part of Cornell University's heritage. We are a recognized employer and educator valuing AA/EEO, Protected Veterans, and Individuals with Disabilities.

In this, he is clearly following in Matt's footsteps, and is appropriately recognized with the Mathew Kleiner Create Change Health Leadership Award.

In Vishesh's own words:

“Come Out for Health!” carries on the spirit of leadership, community action, and public health awareness that Matt Kleiner inspired, by engaging students...to educate the community about LGBT health issues and to make Cornell a healthier place for everyone. Matt worked tirelessly to raise awareness about HIV and to dispel prejudice and stigma, yet as a true activist ‘he fought just as hard against homophobia and sexism.’

“Matt has served as an inspiration and role model for me as I continue to mold myself into a spirited activist and effective leader. In many ways, our project is a logical segue to Matt's work; the successful efforts of Matt and countless other leaders has dramatically transformed the way HIV affects the LGBT community, yet the challenge now is to holistically address LGBT health issues other than sexual health. Our project seeks to carry forward Matt's legacy, engage with partners on campus and in the Ithaca community, and take positive action on a public health issue that we are passionate about.

“As a premedical student, I am determined to continue working for LGBT health and wellness throughout my medical career. Receiving this award will be a tremendous personal honor for me and will be the greatest possible validation of my abilities, qualities, and actions as a student, leader, and as a conscientious citizen. It will also allow our organization to expand its scope and further establish its presence, while forwarding the cause of health and wellness for all regardless of sexual orientation and gender identity.”

Mathew P. Kleiner "Create Change: Health Leadership Award"

The “Create Change: Health Leadership Award” was established to honor and carry forward the legacy of Mathew A. Kleiner, CU '93. It is awarded to Cornell University students who demonstrate the courage and commitment to create change that will enhance the health of the Cornell community. The award recognizes the personal investment of time, energy, dedication, and vision that effective leadership requires. Made possible by the generosity of Matt's family and friends, this award will be administered by Gannett Health Services, Matt's partners in creating change during his years at Cornell.

For more information, visit: www.gannett.cornell.edu/campushealth/HealthLeadershipAward.html.

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February, 2012