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**Des Moines Student Wins ACLU's Mannheimer Youth Advocacy Award
For Fighting Hate Speech With More Speech**

Roosevelt student Glori Dei Filippone led hundreds in a Love Rally to counter a planned Westboro Baptist Church demonstration at East High School.

Des Moines, Iowa -- It's not every day that the ACLU gives an award to someone who successfully counterprotests a former ACLU client. But Glori Dei Filippone did just that – and in the process demonstrated a true understanding of the First Amendment: The way to contest speech with which you disagree is not to try to stop it but instead to counter it with more speech.

For her nuanced promotion of free speech while standing up for LGBT rights, and other defending of civil liberties, Glori has been given the [2015 Robert Mannheimer Youth Advocacy Award](#). The award is given annually to an Iowan age 14 to 19 who has demonstrated a passion and advocacy for civil liberties.

Fighting Hate Speech With a "Love Rally"

Last year the Westboro Baptist Church announced plans to picket a series of Iowa locations, including East High School in Des Moines. Westboro Baptist Church, based in Kansas, protests at soldier's funerals and desecrates the flag to voice what they say is God's objection to gay people in America.

She with friend Cole Rehbein, both students at Central Campus, heard about the planned Westboro protests. So to show their support for LGBTQ rights, they organized a lunch-time "Love Rally" at East High, which drew 700 students from all over Des Moines. They chanted messages of love and support for LGBTQ equality.

The ACLU of Iowa represented Westboro in a successful lawsuit that defended church members' right to air spit, drag, and otherwise treat American flags disrespectfully. Westboro says they are protesting our country's support of LBGT rights.

The church members were threatened with arrest in three Iowa towns during protests in which they desecrated the flag. A federal district court last year ruled that Iowa's state laws prohibiting flag desecration were unconstitutional.

"Glori at a very young age has been able to embody a key element of the ACLU's work," said Jeremy Rosen, executive director of the ACLU of Iowa. "The First Amendment assures the right to free speech, no matter how distasteful the message. The ACLU has defended a number of unpopular clients on that basis. Glori's approach was not to argue that Westboro had no right to express their views, but instead rallied an impressive number of young people to show their support for equal, respectful treatment of the LGBT community. She fought hate speech not by ordering it shut down but instead by countering with more speech."

Glori has been an effective advocate for civil liberties in other ways. Earlier, she and Cole organized a Black Lives Matter protest at Central Campus. She has stood up to bullies who

were harassing a transgender classmate and respectfully spoke up during class to a teacher who was making what Glori felt were racist comments.

A senior in high school, Glori is not yet old enough to vote but also worked with friends to develop a video to encourage people to vote for candidates who support equal pay for women.

Other Winners

The runner-up in the 2015 Mannheimer Award was Kaija Carter, who has organized a number of peaceful gatherings around Des Moines to draw attention to racial disparity in Des Moines and statewide.

Devon Allerman of Des Moines and a junior at Southeast Polk high school, received an honorable mention for his work in LGBTQ advocacy. He started Ankeny's middle and high school Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) and is a leader in the Southeast Polk GSA, which received the Best Iowa High School GSA award. He also has been on the board of directors for the Iowa Pride Network.

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The ACLU of Iowa is a private, non-partisan organization that fights to advance civil liberties for all. It is the state affiliate of the national American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU prides itself in upholding everyone's civil liberties, no matter who they are or what they believe. We work to assure the rights of all Iowans – from atheists to devout Christians, from labor unions to businesspeople and more – to make sure the constitutional rights of all are preserved. For more information, please go to www.alcu-ia.org

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