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## MEDIA ALERT

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## ACLU OF UTAH LOOKS FOR LOCAL YOUTH ACTIVISTS

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH - In its fifth year, the ACLU of Utah's Youth Activist Scholarship seeks to recognize Utah high school seniors passionate about civil liberties – and who have taken a stand in their communities to show it!

"We are getting more and more applications each year, from amazing young people who really care about protecting and promoting individual freedom," says Anna Brower, Development Director at the ACLU of Utah. "No matter how challenging our work at the ACLU gets, we always get a boost of inspiration from students who are fighting along with us in their schools and neighborhoods!"

Each year since 2008, the program has awarded \$1000 scholarships to three truly passionate young people who care about preserving civil liberties, and who have taken action to do just that. Past scholarship recipients have positively impacted their communities by advocating for women at the United Nations, standing up for LGBT peers by starting Gay-Straight Alliances, lobbying their elected officials for the protection of immigrants' rights, and championing free speech and a free press.

Cara Cerise (Highland High School, Salt Lake City) was one of the ACLU of Utah's first scholarship recipients, awarded in 2008. She spoke out for LGBT rights and social justice throughout her high school career. In addition to accepting leadership roles in her school's social justice club and lobbying against anti-LGBT bills at the state legislature, Cara also started the Utah chapter of Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere (COLAGE). COLAGE is a support group dedicated to helping children of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender parents and families.

Ingrid Asplund (Walden School, Orem), a 2010 scholarship recipient, demonstrated her passion by taking part in international service trips and teaming up with Planned Parenthood to advocate for comprehensive Sex-Ed in Utah schools. The self-described "crazy environmentalist hippie chick" even started her own blog to tackle reproductive health topic, in the hopes that the online conversation will "help supplement the lackluster sex education kids in Utah get."

Another 2010 recipient, Joel Organista (West High School, Salt Lake City), who is currently serving an LDS mission in Tokyo, Japan, focused his civil liberties activism on racial prejudice. After witnessing such injustices first-hand – and experiencing it himself – Joel became involved with the creation of a documentary called "Red Flags: Racism and Ethnic Stereotyping in Schools." Joel has presented the film, and his insights, at several national conferences. He was

appointed to the National Advisory Board of the "Education Through Liberation" Network, through which he played a pivotal drafting a National Student Bill of Rights.

"What is so impressive about these young activists," says Brower, "is the sophistication of their understanding of issues related to inequality and injustice. Our Selection Committee continually has been blown away by how much our applicants care about individual freedoms, and particularly about how other people may be prevented from exercising those freedoms."

Interested graduating seniors, currently attending Utah high schools, who plan on entering an accredited college or university can apply online at [www.acluutah.org](http://www.acluutah.org). Qualified applicants will be selected, based on specific criteria, by the volunteer Scholarship Selection Committee, which is comprised of various community members and leaders. The top three applicants receive a scholarship award of \$1000, and are honored at the ACLU of Utah's Annual Bill of Rights Celebration, which takes place each spring.

For more information about the Youth Activist scholarship and previous scholarship recipients, visit [www.acluutah.org/scholarship.html](http://www.acluutah.org/scholarship.html), or contact Anna Brower at (801) 521-9862 x100.

*The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is a nationwide, nonpartisan, membership organization dedicated to working in the courts, legislatures, and communities to defend and preserve the individual rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by both the Constitution and the laws of the United States. Founded in 1920, the ACLU now has over 550,000 members and supporters (more than 2,500 live in Utah) as well as affiliate or national chapter offices in all fifty states and Puerto Rico.*

*Chartered in 1958 and located in Salt Lake City, the ACLU of Utah is the Utah affiliate of the national ACLU. Through public education, legal advocacy, litigation, and lobbying at both the state and local levels, the ACLU of Utah seeks to protect the constitutional rights of all Utahans.*

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