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Wheaton, Illinois – Wheaton College LGBTQ group receives grant from Madeleine L’Engle Fund

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Wheaton College LGBTQ group receives grant from the Crosswicks Foundation’s Madeleine L’Engle Fund and looks to the future

Wheaton, IL (June 5, 2015) -- [OneWheaton](#) recently received a \$5,000 Crosswicks Foundation grant, which will be used to help fund public discussions and forums about topics such as the intersection of LGBTQ identity and Evangelical Christian culture.

OneWheaton, the grassroots network of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) and allied alumni and students of Wheaton College, received the grant after an unexpected email from Charlotte Jones Voiklis, granddaughter of famed author Madeleine L’Engle. Voiklis learned about OneWheaton, and she and other family members wanted to support the group and its mission with a grant from the Crosswicks Foundation, founded by Madeleine L’Engle and her husband, Hugh Franklin.

“We are beyond thrilled to receive this grant,” says Iliana Wood, who heads up fundraising as a member of OneWheaton’s board. “It came to us unsolicited, which is amazing. But the fact that it comes from the Crosswicks Foundation Madeleine L’Engle Fund is deeply meaningful and exciting. Using the grant to fund discussions that embrace differing points of view seems like a great way to honor L’Engle’s intellectual legacy while furthering OneWheaton’s mission.”

Wheaton College, an Evangelical Christian college in Illinois, is home to a large collection of Madeleine L'Engle's manuscripts, letters, awards and other mementos. The author was a frequent visitor to the college -- often speaking at conferences and events, and approaching theological issues in a way that was typical of L'Engle, coloring outside the traditional lines of Evangelical thinking.

"For many in the Wheaton College and broader Evangelical community, reading and discussing Madeleine L'Engle's works helped with wrestling through tough theological questions," Wood explains. "A key theme that runs through much of L'Engle's work is that the world is not so easily divided between black and white, that engaging multiple viewpoints leads to a richer experience, and that it's critical to have the freedom to deviate from the majority view."

One of the most prominent Evangelical Christian colleges in the United States, Wheaton College has consistently ranked as one of the least LGBTQ-friendly campuses in the country by The Princeton Review. OneWheaton was founded, in part, to promote healthier conversations and affirming perspectives about LGBTQ identity for students at Wheaton, as well as with alumni.

"My grandmother had a long and deep relationship with Wheaton College and its English Department, and she was enriched by some of the vigorous debates she had with faculty and students there," says Jones Voiklis. "I believe that the kinds of conversations OneWheaton is seeking to have reflect where she would be if she were still here."

The grant comes to OneWheaton as it enters its fifth year of existence. Last year, OneWheaton obtained its 501(c)(3) non-profit designation, and began the process of defining its future.

"Since we were first established in 2011, we have changed the conversation about LGBTQ-related issues on the Wheaton College campus and within the alumni community. This work has had a ripple effect that has inspired similar conversations and movements at other Christian colleges and universities as well as within the broader Evangelical Christian community as a whole," says Lora Wiens, Chair of OneWheaton's board. "We are very excited to enter the next phase of our development with a grant from the Crosswicks Foundation Madeleine L'Engle Fund."

About OneWheaton

OneWheaton is a grassroots network of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, queer/questioning (LGBTQ) and allied alumni and students of Wheaton College. Its mission is to be an open, inclusive and safe community that provides compassion, counsel and resources for LGBTQ and allied alumni and students of Wheaton College so that they can live full, vibrant lives. OneWheaton affirms LGBTQ individuals and the

relationships that are a natural expression of their identity. OneWheaton is run entirely by volunteers and operates on a small budget of donations from its enthusiastic network of supporters. The number of Wheaton alumni who have signed their names in support of the group's mission has surpassed 1,000 and continues to climb.

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OneWheaton's Impact:

- **Inspired a movement:** More than 40 LGBTQ groups have formed on Christian campuses since OneWheaton was formed, many adopting the "One__" name (such as OneGordon or OneGeorgeFox).
- **Inspired a documentary:** "[Queers in the Kingdom: Let Your Light Shine](#)" is a documentary written, directed and produced by two Wheaton College alumni. The film uses the founding of OneWheaton as a jumping off point to examine the history of the U.S. Evangelical movement, the role that Christian colleges have played as standard-bearers of Evangelical thought and culture, and the impact that culturally ingrained homophobia at these institutions has had on the lives of its students. The documentary continues to be shown at festivals, on college campuses and in churches throughout the United States.
- **Support:** Provides ongoing support to current LGBTQ students by helping them connect and grow into a supportive community for each other.
- **Travel Scholarships:** OneWheaton has funded more than \$4,000 in travel scholarships to help alumni return to campus for homecoming and reconnect with an important part of their personal history in a way they did not previously think was possible.
- **Virtual communities:** Created and maintains an active social media presence, monthly newsletter and website, reaching more than 10,000 people per month.
- **Advocacy:** Serves as an advocate for LGBTQ alumni in their struggle for equal recognition by the Wheaton College Alumni Association, providing resources and recognition to alumni that the Wheaton College Alumni Association does not.
- **Information resources:** Has become a go-to informational resource for media and individuals seeking perspective about the experience of LGBTQ students on Christian college campuses. Prospective students and their parents often seek our advice and perspective.