



Microsoft Founding Employee Leaves \$65M to Gay Organizations

By GayWebMonkey.com

Seattle, WA - Ric Weiland was one of the first five Microsoft employees, helping to launch the now giant company with friends Bill Gates and Paul Allen. Called a "quiet philanthropist" by the *Seattle Times*, Weiland committed suicide in 2006 at age 53. His final gifts to the community included a \$65 million donation to Seattle's Pride Foundation.

According to the *Seattle Times*, it was revealed this week that Weiland left \$160 million of his estate to charity on his death. The donations include a gift of \$60 million to Stanford University and \$65 million to the Pride Foundation, a gay rights organization which provides scholarships and grants for LGBT advocacy, education, HIV/AIDS prevention and other programs. Weiland served for a time on the Pride Foundation board of directors and contributed to the charity in the past.

Of the \$65 million total gift, the Pride Foundation itself will receive \$19 million to help expand its operations. The remaining \$46 million will be distributed by the Pride Foundation over the next eight years to various charitable organizations. Some of the organizations named to receive donations from the Pride Foundation include the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Network, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.

"It's a gigantic investment in our equal-rights movement," Zan McColloch-Lussier, the Pride Foundation's director of communications, told the *Seattle Times*. "It will be here long after our kids' kids are gone."

Weiland worked with Gates and Allen to help launch Microsoft, taking time off from his studies at Stanford to work on the project, according to the *Seattle Times*. He later worked as general manager for Microsoft, retiring at the age of 35 in 1988.

Weiland, who never hid his sexual orientation from his colleagues, personally fought to have sexual orientation added to the nondiscrimination policy of companies such as McDonald's, GE and Wal-Mart. He was also one of the first investors in the gay media company PlanetOut.

After years of battling depression and losing several close family members, Weiland committed suicide in 2006. He was survived by his partner, Mike Schaefer, who continues to live in Seattle.

The \$65 million dollar gift is the largest ever single bequest to a LGBT organization, according to the Associated Press.

Written By Ann Turner