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**Mathew Kleiner “Create Change: Health Leadership Award”  
May 2010 Awardee**

**SARA FURGUSON ‘11**

Gannett Health Services is pleased to announce the 2010 recipient of the “Create Change: Health Leadership Award”: Sara Furguson. 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. Sara’s leadership to establish the Cornell University Disabilities Service Team is a fitting tribute to both Matt and his many family members and friends whose love and generosity created this award.

Gannett Health Services works closely with the Office of Student Disability Services to provide support for students with a wide range of disabilities who seek to enjoy the benefits and challenges of full participation in the Cornell experience. We also provide direct medical and/or mental health services for some of these students, whether they are living with a short-term or life-long disability. A student with disabilities herself, Sara was in a unique position to understand the needs of her fellow students and the gaps in support and services that students are in a unique position to fill. Like Matt Kleiner, Sara saw in her personal challenges an opportunity to raise awareness and concern for her fellow students and to enrich the larger Cornell community. No words convey as clearly the reason she was chosen to receive the Mathew Kleiner Create Change Health Leadership Award:

“As a student with disabilities, I realized that many students may experience some of the same challenges as I do. Regardless of the severity of an individual’s disability, completing daily tasks may become an arduous chore when coupled with the rigors of the Cornell curriculum. Whether a temporary injury or permanent disability, Cornellians must depend on family or friends to help them but this is not always possible when away at college. The Disabilities Service Team (DST) strives to fill this gap and give students in need a helping hand when they most need it. We offer a variety of services such as picking up groceries, opening doors, carrying books to class, getting materials from the library, typing papers, etc.

I have been fortunate to have family support throughout my time at Cornell, but other students have simply figured out ways to get by. Thus, DST gives all students a fair opportunity to excel at Cornell by enabling a student with a disability to focus on his/her studies instead of trivial tasks that may be time consuming.

Since starting in the winter of 2010, DST has recruited nearly 60 student volunteers and helped several students, including some who require services multiple times throughout the day. Our motto ‘Cornellians helping Cornellians’ has received widespread support from campus organizations such as the Public Service Center, Gannett Health Services, Student Assembly, Cornell Tradition, Student Disability Services, and the Cornell Union for Disability Awareness. With a diverse volunteer base, we have successfully conquered this challenge and students have realized the importance of helping their fellow peers.

While helping students in need has been a personally satisfying experience, DST has enabled dozens of other students to experience the feeling that comes from selfless contribution. The feeling that you made a difference is unique and unexplainable but has life changing results. Overall, DST demonstrates the importance of helping those in need and proves that people truly care about others and are willing to help during challenging times.

A future hurdle will be getting students to realize that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It's only normal for students to take pride in self-sufficiency and independence but DST works to show students that asking for help is acceptable. I believe DST will have many opportunities available as we continue to expand. One way to further develop is to offer educational training sessions to students about issues related to disability. Currently, we are organizing several sessions for student leaders on how to plan fully accessible events and meetings. This will aid in the development of an inclusive campus.

Mathew A Kleiner was a remarkable Cornellian and his legacy continues to live on. He is a true inspiration and has given many students the courage to become leaders and implement change on campus. As a "pre-law" student, I intend to continue making change in terms of disability rights, giving everyone an equal opportunity to reach their highest potential. As evident in Matt's success, he created a compassionate and caring community which is the exact goal of DST. A person will never achieve total success without selflessly giving to others and making change in areas that most need it.

I would like to thank you for carrying on Matt's legacy by creating this award. DST will now be able to expand our services and provide assistance to students located off campus. Further, we will implement several educational events because of this award. We sincerely appreciate the award and are honored to be selected."

Sara Ferguson '11

***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](http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/campushealth/HealthLeadershipAward.html).*

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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.