LGTC honors its founders at fifth anniversary party

By Elena Cabral

The Lesbians and Gays at Teachers College (LGTC) honored its founders and contributors last night at the group’s fifth anniversary celebration held in Grace Dodge Hall on the Teachers College campus.

“It’s important for gays and lesbians to assert their identity in the field of education,” said LGTC founder and steering committee member Bruce Ballard.

Ballard was among the four individuals honored at the celebration.

Director and co-director of the Columbia Gay Health Advocacy Project Laura Pinsky and Paul Douglass were also recognized for their contributions to the LGTC and
They have provided valuable HIV service to the entire Columbia community and beyond,” said Henry Fernandez, member of the LGTC steering committee, who awarded the two with certificates of appreciation.

Douglass and Pinsky, who co-wrote “The Essential AIDS Fact Book,” an information guide to the prevention and treatment of AIDS, were thanked for coordinating conferences on safe sex at the Teachers College campus.

Former candidate for the New York City Council and member of the Gay and Lesbian Independent Democratic Club Tom Duane spoke at the celebration about his experience as an openly gay political figure and the changes that have occurred in the gay community over the last five years.

According to Duane, the Columbia Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Coalition was the first college campus gay organization to be established in the nation. The LGBC changed its name from the Columbia Gay and Lesbian Alliance (CGLA) last year.

“What has happened to colleges and universities since then is really incredible,” he said. “The progress made has been a long time coming.”

Duane is currently the Manhattan liaison to the Comptroller of New York City.

Laura Morrison, co-founder of Queer Nation, a gay and lesbian organization founded early this year, also spoke at the celebration. Queer Nation, which promotes gay and lesbian visibility and tries to eliminate negative images of gays and lesbians in the community, has grown into a national movement,
according to Morrison.

"We were frustrated with just sitting around without a voice," Morrison said. "We needed a group to make sure changes were made."

Teachers College graduate Rick Shur, CC '75, who founded the Columbia Gay and Lesbian Alumni Association in 1984, was also recognized at the celebration.

He said that members of the Columbia gay community have consistently endured harassment.

"We weren't afraid for our lives back then," Shur said, "Things are worse now."

The Teachers College Office of Student Life recently reversed its decision to remove a display mounted by the group which displayed anti-gay graffiti found in the academic buildings and dormitories of Teachers College.