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Microsoft pioneer gives \$65M for gay rights, HIV/AIDS groups

By ELIZABETH M. GILLESPIE
ASSOCIATED PRESS WRITER

SEATTLE -- The estate of Ric Weiland, a high school classmate of Bill Gates and Paul Allen and one of the first five people to work at Microsoft Corp., has left \$65 million to several gay rights and HIV/AIDS organizations.

The Pride Foundation of Seattle, where Weiland served as a board member for several years, announced Sunday that the philanthropist's estate had established a fund at the organization that would give \$46 million over the next eight years to 10 national gay rights and HIV/AIDS groups:

- amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research
- Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
- Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network
- In the Life
- International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
- Lambda Legal
- National Gay and Lesbian Task Force
- Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays
- Project Inform
- Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

Weiland's estate also bequeathed \$19 million directly to the Pride Foundation for scholarships and grants supporting the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community in the Pacific Northwest.

The Pride Foundation called the \$65 million in gifts the largest single bequest ever given to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender causes.

All told, Weiland gave about \$160 million - the bulk of his estate- to various charities, according to an estimate provided by the Pride Foundation.

In addition to the bequest Pride Foundation announced Sunday, Weiland gave millions to Stanford University, his undergraduate alma mater; Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle; Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center in Seattle; The United Way of King County; The Nature Conservancy of Washington State; The Environmental Defense Fund; The Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Federation; and Lakeside School, where he went to high school with Gates and Allen.

Known as a brilliant computer programmer and a modest, yet tremendously generous philanthropist, Weiland donated tens of millions to various organizations before he committed suicide at age 53 two years ago after a long battle with depression.

Gates and Allen, Microsoft's co-founders, hired Weiland in 1975, the year they founded the software maker. He worked as a project leader for the Microsoft Works word processing and spreadsheet software, and was a lead programmer and developer for the company's BASIC and COBOL systems, two of the first personal computing interfaces.

Weiland dedicated most of his time to philanthropy after leaving Microsoft in 1988. He is survived by his partner, Mike Schaefer of Seattle, and nieces and nephews.

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