

After nearly 10 years, the Tempest Smith Foundation (TSF) will end their mission of promoting tolerance and understanding for diversity. Annette Crossman, Executive Director, said that it was time to return to normal life and, although Tempest and Denessa Smith will never be forgotten, board members and assistants needed to focus on other issues and situations in their own lives.

Crossman's spouse was Denessa Smith, mother of Tempest Smith. Smith started TSF in February 2003; two years after her daughter had committed suicide. Tempest, at age 12, had an interest in Wicca and Gothic clothing. She took her own life after suffering several years of teasing and bullying in a Lincoln Park, Michigan public school. The sad situation made local and national news.

The Foundation's opening event was the Tempest Smith Memorial Ritual, performed by Oberon, Banshee, and the Circle of Wondrous Stories, a member group of the Covenant of the Goddess. The ritual in 2003, at Magical Education Council's Convocation, drew over 100 people (Witches, Pagans, Tempest's doctors, Denessa's lawyers, journalists, and Denessa's friends and family). It was a cathartic experience for many of those present.

Banshee became a member of the first TSF Board. Oberon and other volunteers offered Denessa and the TSF Board their support in workshops and events, such as Tie-Dye for Tolerance, and other Tolerance-teaching exercises. Denessa spoke at a number of schools and other institutions and events to help promote anti-bullying measures in Michigan and across the country.

Denessa Smith died in July 2008, due to complications of a surgery. A strong community grieved but grew with the challenges. Denessa's assistant, Lisa Jarvis joined the board and became acting Chairperson. She began coordinating the various projects and works of the Foundation. She chaired the board meetings and did the main share of networking with corollary organizations, kept the Web sites running, and more.

Oberon became a board trustee and, along with Lisa, Annette, and Banshee, worked together to fulfill a final dream of Denessa's. A college scholarship award was set up to recognize young adults who demonstrated how they practiced tolerance in their day-to-day lives. They submitted essays and winners were selected. To date, three rounds of scholarships were awarded. A very successful raffle was held every year at Convocation, which helped to fund these scholarships. The Midwest Witches' Ball also contributed to the Foundation.

While TSF is ending, some of its activities will continue for about another year. TSF will be a sponsor for the Midwest Witches Ball, which is the weekend of October 19. There will be one final raffle at Convocation in February 2014. Annette has made arrangements for the scholarship next year to be awarded to high school students from Roosevelt High School in Wyandotte, Michigan following previous award guidelines.

"It's time for the torch to be passed on," said Crossman. TSF wishes to thank MEC for the many years of hosting the raffle, which contributed greatly to its successful fundraising. Finally, TSF wishes to thank Lisa, Oberon, and Banshee for their years of service, and also the many other supporting assistants and volunteers: Chelsea, Brian, Jeanette, Katie, Roland, Kyle, Barb Wild, and the many others who either assisted or kept the story of Denessa and Tempest alive.