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Nelson's mayoral bid is successful

by Darryl R. Williams
Q-Notes Staff

In an election year that saw lots of fizzle and little sizzle, with voter interest and turnout at record lows in many areas, openly gay Carrboro alderman Michael Nelson and Charlotte activist Sue Henry made their marks on history with their respective mayoral bids.

Nelson handily defeated two opponents, both by an approximate 2:1 margin. Nelson garnered 1,272 votes, compared to fellow alderman Randy Marshall with 699 votes and conservative candidate Charles Riggsbee with 600 votes. The victory keeps Nelson as the only openly gay elected official in North Carolina and one of five openly gay mayors in the country.

While Nelson's accomplishments will earn him a place in the gay and lesbian historical archives, he reiterated his long-held position that he is not a gay politician, but a politician who happens to be gay.

"I don't think the voters gave a rat's rump about my sexual orientation," Nelson said, still elated about his win. "They cared about the issues and voted for me because my posi-

tion on the issues was superior to those of my opponents."

In his transition from alderman to mayor, Nelson will focus on the same issues — just in a different capacity. "What is important to me is what's important to the people of Carrboro," Nelson said. "I plan to work with the Board to fine tune our open space ordinance and develop a coherent plan for development that manages growth and protects the environment."

It's certain that a lot of gay and lesbian jaws dropped across the country when they heard a gay man was elected mayor in North Carolina, which is unfortunate according to Kathleen DeBold of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund.

"People write off the whole state as being homophobic because of Jesse Helms," DeBold



Mike Nelson

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GOP tries to gut Medicaid

WASHINGTON, DC—The Human Rights Campaign (HRC), recently spoke out strongly against the House Republican leadership which, through its actions and inactions, has demonstrated a complete disregard for the lives of men, women and children with HIV and AIDS. The group announced efforts to overcome an apparent stalling of the Ryan White CARE Act by the House leadership. The group also plans to bolster support for a presidential veto of the current version of the Budget Reconciliation Act recently passed by Congress, denouncing the bill's dismantling of Medicaid. Nearly half of all people with AIDS rely on Medicaid — including more than 90 percent of children with the disease.

The group warned that American voters will look harshly at the direction Republican House leaders have taken on these issues, citing polling data that shows strong support for federal efforts to care for people with AIDS. A recent poll commissioned by the HRC found that, of citizens of Cobb County, Georgia — which is part of House Speaker Newt Gingrich's congressional district — 69 percent supported the Ryan White CARE Act, and 75 percent favored maintaining or increasing federal efforts to care for people with AIDS.

Elizabeth Birch, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign — citing the Budget Reconciliation Act, which slashes \$182 billion from Medicaid, and converts the program to block grants to the states where there will be no guarantee of coverage — said, "the actions of the Republican leadership on these issues is far more extreme than what most Americans want or bargained for in the 1994 elections. They are balancing the budget on the nation's weakest and most vulnerable

citizens, including men, women and children with AIDS."

The dismantling of Medicaid, contained in the current version of the Budget Reconciliation Act, would eliminate guaranteed health coverage for all Americans who meet the program's eligibility guidelines. If enacted, the Budget Reconciliation Act would deny health care to the millions of Americans who need it most. The Act would slash \$182 billion from Medicaid over the next seven years and make states responsible for providing health care for the poor, while cutting the funds they need to do it. Health experts also warn that the bill threatens to pass hidden costs along to taxpayers, as Americans who lost their health coverage would be forced to turn to more expensive care in hospital emergency rooms — at public expense.

In addition, HRC charged the Republican leadership with deliberately holding up the Ryan White CARE Act and other legislation in an effort to push moderate Republicans in the Senate to enact legislation contained in the Contract with America. House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) has stalled the Ryan White CARE Act, which enables local community efforts to care for men, women, and children with AIDS, by failing to appoint House conferees. The Ryan White CARE Act passed the Senate earlier this year by a vote of 97 to 3, and easily passed the House by a voice vote. "The only explanation for this failure to move forward," said Daniel Zingale, political director for HRC, "is that the Republican leadership is holding Ryan White... hostage in an attempt to expedite action on their Contract with America currently working its way through the Senate."

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Amnesty breaks the silence

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

NEW YORK—Amnesty International, the world's largest grassroots human rights organization, boasting a membership of more than one million, has just launched a massive drive to raise funds and awareness for its gay human rights campaign. Amnesty International (AI) understands that the mistreatment of homosexuals continues unabated in most countries because of the silence of its citizens — and the group is intent on "Breaking the Silence," the name they have given this effort.

AI is known for its constant intercession on behalf of political prisoners who have been threatened, jailed, beaten or killed for their dissident beliefs and non-violent actions. Little more than a year ago, after several years of seemingly fruitless dialogue, progressive AI members were able to convince the organization's hierarchy to extend "prisoner of conscience" status to homosexuals. AI's recognition of political abuses against gays was a major victory over homophobia because many in the group were vehemently opposed to the idea of such acknowledgement.

Human rights abuses against gays and lesbians now lead to the same type of publicity and mobilization that AI is known for — and lauded for, having previously received the Nobel Peace prize for its humanitarian efforts.

William Schulz, AI Executive Director, says that human rights violations against homosexuals is one of the most insidious forms of political perversion. "...[T]he routine and violent oppression inflicted by governments on peaceful citizens solely because they happen to be gay, lesbian or bisexual...[is] one of the most tragically ignored human rights abuses

in the world today." He also acknowledges that actions against sexual minority citizens are often the most severe, recounting one particularly brutal incident. "...[O]n March 14, 1993, Renildo Jose dos Santos, a bisexual councilor of Coqueiro Seco, Brazil, was violently abducted from his home by heavily armed men believed to be government agents in plain clothes disguise. A family member at the scene vividly described the victim's shattering screams of terror. Two days later, Renildo Jose dos Santos' head was found in a garbage dump. It bore the hideous marks of torture. Basic human dignity and justice cry out against this barbarism!"

But things will change, asserts Schulz, once the veil of indifference has been snatched from the world's collective eyes by Amnesty International. "In many nations worldwide, oppressive governments create debasing stereotypes, perpetuate popular ignorance and intentionally aggravate homophobia.

That fear leads to the smoldering hatred that results in the local populace ignoring the cold-blooded murders and persecution of gay men and lesbians. Thus, the tragic brutality and even killings inflicted on gay men and lesbians are often carried out with complete impunity — because governments simply do not fear any public outrage. But I can tell you, with certainty, that governments from Argentina to Zaire are in for a rude awakening."

To support Amnesty International's efforts to protect gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender citizens around the world, send a tax-deductible donation to: Breaking the Silence, AIUSA, PO Box 96756, Washington, DC 20077-7131. For additional information or to report an abuse, write: Breaking the Silence, AIUSA, 322 Eighth Avenue, New York, NY 10001 or call (212) 807-8400.



NC Pride '96 plans are well underway

WINSTON-SALEM— North Carolina Pride '96 will be held June 7-9, 1996 in downtown Winston-Salem. The weekend will include entertainment, workshops, a dance and other events, as well as the traditional parade and rally. Want to help with Pride '96? You may be able to help from your home anywhere in North Carolina. Help is needed in many ways, big and small.

For instance, Pride '96 t-shirts are now available, and they need help in finding retail outlets in every community in North Carolina to sell them. They need help in advertising sales for the Pride Guide, and potential advertisers are everywhere. They urgently need people to help in fundraising, media relations, data entry, clerical work, mailings, and to take over the Pride newsletter (and in this era of e-mail and fax, that could be anywhere). They also need help in organizing the Performing Arts series, sports events, the art contest, entertainment, merchandising and vendors.

As well as volunteers, Pride '96 needs funds to make the event everything you expect. Their first fundraising effort is called "Holiday Parties for Pride," modeled on the successful "Dining for Friends" held each May in the Triad to support various AIDS agencies. The difference is that rather than occurring on a fixed day at a relatively fixed hour, you can have any sort of party you choose for any holiday you choose at any time you choose.

People already are signing up for parties varying from intimate sitdown dinners to beer and chips free-for-all. Some are for Christmas, some for Hanukkah, some for New Year's, some for the winter solstice, and some

are converting a party they've been giving for years into a Party for Pride.

Pride '96 will supply festive invitations explaining that the party is a fundraiser for Pride '96. You can set the amount your guests are expected to donate, or you can let them give whatever they want.

The Pride '96 Local Organizing Committee is hoping that supporters of Pride will stage parties across North Carolina, and see them as a way to begin to build enthusiasm for Pride events that will begin occurring in early May and extend through Pride weekend.

Another fundraising event already underway is the selling of Pride '96 t-shirts. Volunteers are selling them throughout the Triad and at selected events around the state.

The white t-shirts are emblazoned, "I'm coming out for Pride '96" and feature the multicolored Pride '96 logo: a pink triangle superimposed over a map of the state, centered around the dot representing Winston-Salem — the site for Pride '96.

The logo also includes the dates: June 7-9, 1996 and the motto: Celebrate, Activate, Educate!

The shirts are available in sizes L, XL, 2XL and 3XL at a cost of \$12 each.

To order shirts by mail, simply send a check or money order (or your MasterCard or Visa number and expiration date) to Pride '96, PO Box 30338, Winston-Salem NC 27130. There is a \$3 shipping fee in addition to the \$12 for each t-shirt.

To sign up for a holiday party, call Mark Smith at (910) 722-2026 or to volunteer your help with any of the other projects, call the Prideline at (910) 750-0052, ext 1996.