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SC Pride sponsors state conference

by Brian M. Myer
Q-Notes Staff

COLUMBIA, SC—In the midst of a year that brought a flurry of challenges to the South Carolina gay and lesbian community, the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (SCGLPM) has announced plans to hold a state networking conference on Saturday, September 12 at the University of South Carolina in Columbia.

"Working together," Tony Snell, SCGLPM president, said, "is the key to our strength. We must unite as one community, one South Carolina, one America to succeed."

Registration for the free day-long event will run from 9:00-9:30am and the conference is slated to begin thereafter with a half-hour opening session entitled "Equality Begins at Home," presented by The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Then, after a brief welcome by the SCGLPM board, participants will have the opportunity to choose from one of these concurrent workshops: "Youth Issues," "People of Color," "Health Issues," "Community of Faith," "Women's Issues" and "Organizational Development and Non-Profit Status."

The conference also includes a panel discussion on "Politics and Grassroots Organizing," networking workshops based on state geographic areas (Piedmont, Central, Coastal, Pee Dee) and organizing sessions related to the upcoming 10th anniversary pride celebration. The last event hosted at the University will be at 4:00pm — a dialogue to process, evaluate and build on the events of the day.

Later in the evening, between 6:00-8:00pm, participants are invited to attend an open house at the South Carolina Pride Center. Finally, the conference is scheduled to close with a special Pride99 Benefit Show at 11:00pm at Metropolis

nightclub, 1800 Blanding St., starring powerhouse vocalist and Broadway star Jennifer Holliday. Tickets for the show are \$12.50 and available at Metropolis' Columbia and Myrtle Beach locations; the GLPM Pride Center, 1108 Woodrow St., Columbia; from GLPM members and by mail or fax.

Recalling some of the many difficulties that erupted in South Carolina during the past year, Snell observed, "We can be very proud for producing one of the most successful Pride celebrations ever. The mayor of Myrtle Beach and the city's largest developer failed in their attempts to stop us. A candidate for the Republican nomination for Commissioner of Agriculture attacked gays — and fell to defeat. The Indigo Girls went on to perform at no charge for students, despite being canceled by a Midlands high school. Charleston's Solicitor overcame meanspirited charges from his own political party for being gay. A lesbian who was brutally attacked continues her fight for justice against an incompetent Upstate law enforcement agency. Homophobic rhetoric from the governor, attorney general and other so-called leaders will not break our spirit! We stand firm in our resolve for equal rights and justice for all people."

He added, "In the eyes of many politicians, we're seen as nothing more than the state's unofficial 'punching bag.' We've taken the blows, we're still standing tall and we're winning the fight — round by round!"

While there is no charge to attend the conference, organizers request that interested parties call to reserve space. For reservations or show tickets, write: GLPM, PO Box 6652, Columbia, SC 29260; phone: (803) 799-8727; fax: (803) 790-1222; email: scglpm@scpride98.org. ▼



Rob Morris (l) and Steve Gunderson have gone from secrecy to celebration

Openly gay former Congressman Gunderson to speak in Charlotte

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Former Wisconsin Congressman Steve Gunderson (R-WI) was outed on the floor of the House of Representatives in 1994 by then-Congressman Robert Dornan (R-CA). "The gentleman from Wisconsin didn't tell you...he has a revolving door in his closet," Dornan said. Other Congressmen shouted Dornan down, but in a *New York Times* profile, Gunderson decided to officially come out. Later that year, he was solidly re-elected.

When Gunderson came out in 1994, he was the highest-ranking, openly-gay, Republican official in US history. But Gunderson had denied his homosexuality for years. In 1991, when asked by an Associated Press reporter if he was gay, Gunderson replied, "I'm married to my job," denying his then eight-year relationship with his partner, architect Rob Morris.

Gunderson retired from Congress in 1996 after 16 years, partly because he learned that right-wing forces were conspiring to defeat him even before he announced his candidacy.

Also in 1996, he and Morris wrote about Gunderson's public coming out and their life together in *House and Home: The Political and Personal Journey of a Gay Republican Congressman*. Theirs is a story of building their relationship and an extended family and of accepting responsibility as a member of the gay community in the halls of Congress.

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Gunderson now serves as a senior consultant and manager of the Washington office of The Greystone Companies, a strategic management and communications consulting firm, but also spends a great deal of his time on the speech circuit and writing. He is quickly becoming a popular speaker who is helping people understand national politics through his close personal relationships on both sides of the political aisle, offering not only political explanation but insider expertise as well. During his time in Congress, Gunderson made his mark on Washington and the nation as a leading Republican moderate and a leader on issues from employment policy to health care to agriculture, education and human rights.

Gunderson and Morris will speak at the University of North Carolina-Charlotte on Thursday, October 22. The event is being co-sponsored by the Charlotte Business Guild and the University Program Board. The Business Guild will host a reception for them from 5:00-7:00pm. Tickets for the reception are \$18.00 and include admission to the talk. Tickets are available in Charlotte at Paper Skyscraper, White Rabbit Books & Things, Urban Evolution and Superior Feet Playhouse. For more information or for details on tickets for out-of-towners, call the Charlotte Business Guild at (704) 565-5075. ▼

Unity Festival '98 plans unveiled

by Brian M. Myer
Q-Notes Staff

DURHAM, NC—The folks who produce the Triangle-based newsletter *Out In Black* have announced the creation of a new festival to support and highlight the lives and contributions of NC GLBTs of color. As stated in promotional materials, the People of Color Unity Festival '98 will "take Raleigh-Durham by storm" September 25-27.

The first celebration of its kind in the Tarheel state, the Unity Festival is designed to salute, empower and embrace both the community and the individual. It also provides the opportunity for others to experience the full richness and diversity within these communities and build bridges of understanding throughout all communities.

The festival begins September 25 with an 11:00am-2:00pm tea. This will be a time for participants to mingle and get to know one another. A welcome reception with free buffet and cash bar is planned between 6:00-8:00pm. Immediately afterward, a candlelight vigil will be held. An "Open Mic" event — for sharing poetry, music, singing, comedy, etc. — begins at 8:30pm. The Unity Fest '98 Kick Off Party, scheduled for 11:00pm, promises to be a time of fun, relaxation and networking. Tickets to the party will be available for \$7. All of these opening-day events will be held at J & L's Restaurant & Bar, 2627 Hillsborough Rd., Durham.

Saturday's information fair, including art exhibits; open forums; entertainment; guest speakers; discussion groups; food and merchan-

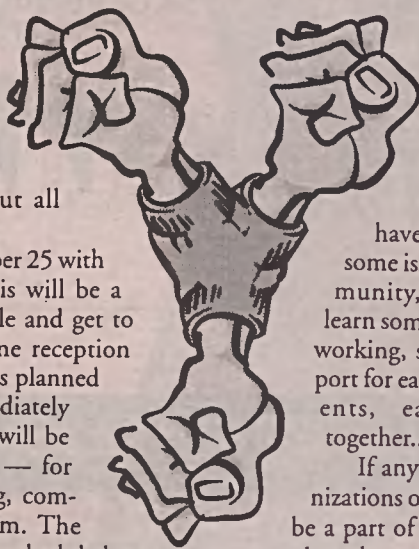
dise vendors; and health, business and financial seminars, is scheduled to take place at the prestigious and historic Hayti Center, 804 Old Fayetteville St., Durham. There will be no admission at the center. At 11:00pm, participants will return to J & L's for the Unity Fest '98 Party. Like the previous night, tickets will be \$7 each.

The weekend's events are scheduled to end Sunday, September 27 with an opportunity to "come together in worship and fellowship." The location of this free-of-charge service had yet to be finalized as *Q-Notes* was going to press.

John D. Hardy, publisher of *Out in Black*, says the event promises to be unlike anything NC has seen before. "We are going to

have lots of fun, talk about some issues concerning our community, solve some problems, learn some new stuff, do some networking, show mad love and support for each other, show off our talents, eat, party and pray together...like family!"

If any individuals, clubs, organizations or businesses would like to be a part of this landmark gathering — by volunteering, leading a workshop or discussion group, donating or showing a film, exhibiting artwork, selling products, setting up information tables or helping to sponsor the event — they should contact Unity Festival '98 at PO Box 46663, Raleigh, NC 27620; email Jd2hard@aol.com or call (919) 873-3025. For hotel and flight information, call Rainbow Travel at 1-800-633-9350. ▼



Journalist is a write to life activist

by Karen Cress
Special to Q-Notes

AIDS reporting has played a key role in the development of the AIDS activist movement. John S. James, editor of *AIDS Treatment News*, has remained one of the leading figures in this area for more than a decade. His no-nonsense approach to the epidemic has made *AIDS Treatment News* required reading for thousands of PWAs over the years. Recently, James talked about his goals as a journalist and an activist — and how he reconciles the ethics of both.

Q-Notes: You started *AIDS Treatment News* in 1986. Why did you take it on? Was something lacking in AIDS reporting or the quality of information available?

John S. James: There wasn't much of an orientation toward saving people's lives. When I got involved, the Beautiful Death idea was just on its way out. Most service organizations were basically holding people's hands on the way to death and taking care of practical matters for

them. In the beginning, there was little effort to keep people alive.

QN: What image did you have in mind for *AIDS Treatment News* when you started it?

JSJ: To some degree, I had an image of I.F. Stone's *Weekly Journal*. That was a political newsletter. Basically it focused on very thorough research of government records and bringing out information that wasn't part of the debate. I.F. Stone was a bit more oppositional than we are. He loved to show up government officials in a lie.

QN: Have you made a conscious decision not to strike that same oppositional tone in *ATN*?

JSJ: We give our readers information to make good decisions for themselves. When that means going against the prevailing view, we will; but it isn't our favorite thing. We are happy to cooperate with industry, with government and, of course, with other activists, but we will not

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