

Q Notes

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper

The Latest Q-POLL Results

Which of the following songs is the best gay musical anthem?

"We Are Family" by Sister Sledge 59%	"YMCA" by The Village People 23%	"I'm Coming Out" by Diana Ross 18%
--	--	--

Vote at www.q-notes.com

Published Every Two Weeks On Recycled Paper • Volume 15, Number 8 • September 2, 2000 • FREE

NC delegates represent gays at convention

by Shane Wolf
Special to Q-Notes

LOS ANGELES, CA—Rainbow flags and pink triangles waved proudly at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles, and some of those waving them were from North Carolina.

On the floor of the Staples Center or watching on television, the openness of this year's convention was evident. From Melissa Etheridge's stirring rendition of the "Star Spangled Banner" to Rep. Tammy Baldwin's (D-WI) touching story about health care, gays and lesbians were out front.

"This [convention] was an unprecedented opportunity to bring our issues into focus for the entire nation and show we are a vital part of the American family," said Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Executive Director Elizabeth Birch. Appearing during primetime on Tuesday, August 15, Birch was the first leader of a gay and lesbian organization to speak at a national political convention.

At the podium, nine openly gay officials spoke on issues ranging from civil rights and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA) to health insurance and economic leadership. Five of those speakers were elected officials and included Andrew Tobias, Treasurer of the Democratic National Committee.

"There were over 200 openly gay and lesbian delegates to the Convention, and Al Gore, Richard Gephardt and Bill Clinton addressed our issues," said Mecklenburg County Democratic Party Chair Andrew Reyes, who serves on the board of HRC and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), and was one of five openly gay delegates from North Carolina.

"These were important steps for the Democratic Party to embrace our community as a vital part of its constituency," Reyes added.

North Carolina has had gay and lesbian delegates in the past. Carrboro Mayor Michael Nelson has served as a delegate since 1992. Mandy Carter of Durham serves as an at-large member of the Democratic National Committee and was a delegate for the first time this



Mecklenburg County Democratic Party Chair Reyes (l) and NC Governor Hunt

year along with Reyes, Gary Palmer of Greensboro and Shannon Bennett of Burlington.

"There has been a National Gay Caucus at different times all the way back to the '70s," said Nelson. "The biggest change I have noticed in the three conventions I've attended is how the party structure has grown to embrace the gay delegates and the issues we really care about."

"While the Clinton-Gore ticket always was very inclusive of us, the party took a bit more time to embrace us," continued Nelson. "This year we were completely included, completely a part of the planning, activities and issues. The inclusion and embracing of our constituency was incredible."

Nelson attributed this gradual inclusion to a learning process about our community and a recognition of why the GLBT caucus was in attendance and what issues were important to them. He cited as an example the high-profile list of speakers who addressed the Gay and Lesbian Caucus.

"In 1992 we had the more liberal party members speaking to us," said Nelson. "We had Jesse Jackson and Ted Kennedy that year. Then the next convention we had Tipper Gore, which was great because she was the wife of the Vice President. And then this year we had Hillary Clinton and Joe Lieberman. So you can see that the party felt it was more and more important to send bigger names to speak to us because they have grown to understand the importance of our constituency." ▼

[Shane Wolf serves as Communications Director for the Mecklenburg County Democratic Party.]

Upcoming conference will address issues of lesbians and cancer

by Bob Witeck
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—The Mary-Helen Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer will present "Healing Works: The First National Conference on Lesbians and Cancer" September 21-23 in the nation's capital.

"Healing Works is an unprecedented advance in the field of lesbian health," says Mautner Project Executive Director Kathleen DeBold. "For the first time ever we are bringing together the many constituencies who share a common vision of increasing care, services, research, programming and organizations for lesbians with cancer, their partners and caregivers."

Featured speakers at Healing Works will include Assistant US Surgeon General Marilyn Gaston, MD; breast cancer surgeon and author Susan Love, MD; National Black Women's Health Project founder Bylye Avery; GLBT youth issues expert Caitlin Ryan, MSW; gynecological oncology surgeon Kate O'Hanlan,

MD; National Lesbian Herstory Archives founder/cancer survivor Joan Nestle and Lesbian Senior Health Advocates Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon.

Additionally, the conference will convene scores of panels, roundtables and workshops that enable cancer survivors, healthcare providers, researchers, activists, public policy advocates, and government officials from around the country to share their information and experience.

Workshop topics will include "Creating a Grassroots Lesbian Cancer Project," "African-American Lesbians and Cancer," "Outreach to Latino Lesbians," "Gender Identity as an Obstacle to Healthcare," "Senior Lesbian Health," and "Removing the Barriers to Quality Healthcare for Women Who Partner With Women."

For more information on Healing Works or to register, contact the Mautner Project at (202) 332-5536, email mautner@mautnerproject.org or access www.mautnerproject.org. ▼

Justice Dept. supports anti-bias law

by Eric Ferrero
Special to Q-Notes

LOUISVILLE, KY—For the first time in history, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) has offered official support to a law barring discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In what has become the national focal point of the debate over whether personal religious beliefs trump local civil rights laws, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has asked a state court to dismiss a challenge to Louisville's Fairness Ordinance. The Justice Department filed a brief August 15 supporting ACLU's position.

Representing a broad coalition of GLBT people and their allies, the ACLU told a state court that there is no merit to a lawsuit filed by Dr. J. Barrett Hyman, a Louisville gynecologist who claims his religious beliefs compel him to engage in job discrimination. Hyman's lawsuit seeks to overturn the non-discrimination ordinance.

The Justice Department brief marks the first time the federal government has actively supported a local law barring discrimination against GLBT people.

In its brief, DOJ noted that if Hyman's lawsuit were successful, it could jeopardize the basic civil rights of a broad range of Americans — including people of color, women and dis-

abled people.

"This case is about equality for all Americans," said Michael Adams, associate director of the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project. "Reasonable provisions were made to ensure that these ordinances protect religious liberties. This case uses religious freedom as a smokescreen for discrimination."

Local non-discrimination laws currently are receiving wide attention. Recently, a federal court of appeals struck down a lawsuit in Alaska, where a landlord claimed that his religion prohibited him from renting to unmarried couples. In August, anti-gay groups failed to gather enough signatures to qualify for ballot initiatives repealing similar laws in four Michigan cities. On August 11, a legal challenge to the non-discrimination law in Henderson, KY, was dismissed when it was revealed that the plaintiffs in the case knew very little about the ordinance, and that it did not apply to them. That lawsuit was nearly identical to the one in Louisville, and Hyman's attorney was also representing the former plaintiffs in Henderson.

"These recent developments should leave no question that whether they're challenged at the ballot box or in the courtroom, these ordinances will prevail because they ensure basic fairness," Adams said. ▼

[The ACLU and US DOJ briefs can be viewed online at www.aclu.org.]

Olympics closing will be a real drag

by Clay Ollis
Q-Notes Staff

SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA—The 2000 Olympic Games open this month in Sydney, but their October 1 closing is getting most of the attention. Closing ceremonies will feature drag queens, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported August 23, touting the "first open display of homosexuality" at the Olympics.

Sydney's drag queens got a casting call of sorts from Olympic organizers looking for local performers to participate. Wearing original costumes from the Australian-made hit, *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, they will recreate scenes from the 1995 story of a group of drag queens on a bus trip through the outback. The film won an Oscar for best costume design.

Performers from other Australian cities praised the decision, but expressed disappointment that they had not been told. Melbourne performer Barbra Quicksand said, "I would have jumped at the chance had I known about it."

Picked up by local radio and other newspapers, the story set off a barrage of calls to talk radio shows. "The people one might expect to object" — as Melbourne's *The Age* aptly put it — were quick to weigh in. The Rev. Fred Nile, a Christian Democrat representing New South Wales in Australia's Parliament, said that "homosexual and lesbian behavior is not a true representation of Australian culture and lifestyle." He predicted the "blatant condoning of public homosexual display during the closing ceremony" would embarrass many Australians.

David Oldfield, representing One Nation, another right-wing group, said Olympic organizers were "out of their minds," and Parliamentarian Bob Katter said it would make Sydney "a world sleaze capital." Some feared it would make Sydney the "homosexual capital

of the world."

Many in the gay and lesbian community find that ironic. Since Sydney is home to the world's largest gay parade — which attracts up to a million people each February and brings in about \$100 million (Australian; \$60 million US), more than any other single cultural event on the continent. Some feel that Sydney is already the world's gay capital; they are elated at the opportunity, calling it a breakthrough in the acceptance of gay and lesbian people.

Olympic Ceremonies Director Ric Birch remarked, "There is a Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras parade...[which is] watched by hundreds

of thousands of Sydneysiders and which attracts a huge international contingent. That's part of Sydney life whether they like it or not."

As for the outrage, Birch said the segment was "only a tiny part of a huge celebration and, for

whatever part of a community is outraged, they're always going to be outraged."

Newspaper commentators and some of the public also applauded the idea, noting that along with Australia's macho, sporting image, drag is an important part of the nation's arts culture.

Olympic Minister Michael Knight tried to smooth the ruffled feathers: "There is no celebration of drag or drag queens or the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras or homosexuality in the closing ceremony." There is only a tribute to Australian film, he emphasized, confirming that it would include *Priscilla*. He declined to say what other movies would be represented, but mentioned *Crocodile Dundee* and *Babe* as possibilities.

Birch promised a spectacular show, in keeping with Olympic tradition, saying, "Everyone who's ever seen an Olympic ceremony knows they are massive cavalcades of color, movement, and celebration." ▼

Newspaper commentators applauded the idea, noting that along with Australia's macho, sporting image, drag is an important part of the nation's arts culture.