

north
& south
carolina

Notes

noted . notable . noteworthy GLBT issues

Q-Notes

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Q-POLL

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Movie viewing

- I like to see movies at the theater right away
- I wait to get movies on pay-per-view
- I wait even longer and rent movies
- I wait forever until they are free on TV

A damp proud day!

Weather didn't dampen Charlotte's Pride

by Lainey Millen

Many folks braved the elements May 4 to attend the Charlotte Pride 2002, “A Celebration of Families” at Marshall Park uptown. Camaraderie, music, speeches and just plain ole’ Southern fun filled the day despite the rain.

The Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN) started the day with their annual fundraiser, The RAIN Walk.

Out of the rain, hosted in the Great Aunt Stella center, to the choral soundings of the One Voice chorus, 20 couples were united in a mass commitment ceremony. Then the Pride festivities followed.

Food vendors kept the crowd supplied. Organizations like One Voice chorus sold baked goods to help support their efforts.

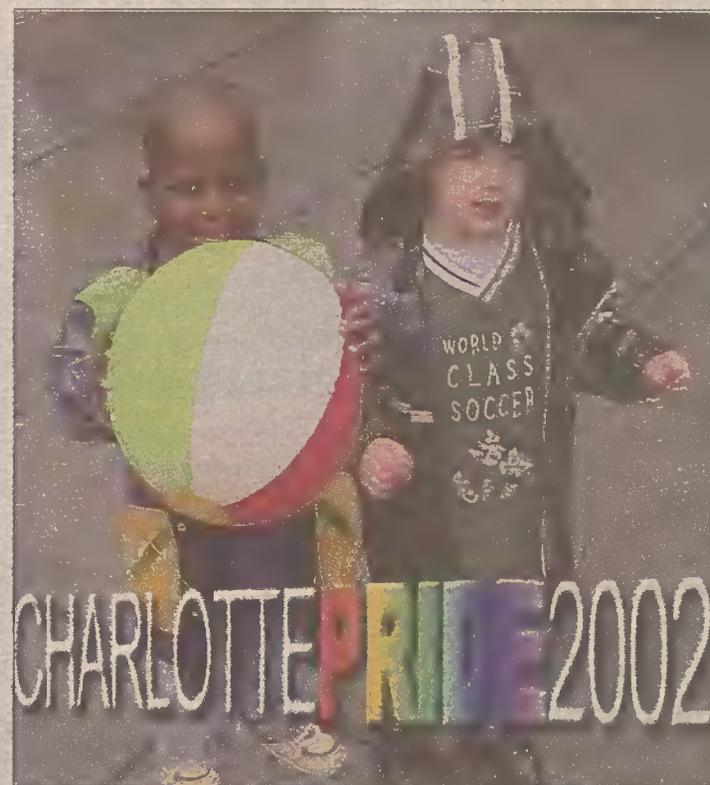
Personally, I was hooked on the shortbread cookies. I could have had a couple dozen of them!

There was a wide array of exhibitors and vendors. Among the crafts and organizational booths, even a wedding planner from Asheville. Think of it: a same-sex wedding planner in the state that wrought the likes of Jesse Helms!

The Share-a-Bear Foundation representatives explained how important new donated teddy bears were to pediatric AIDS patients at Duke University Hospital — helping them through difficult treatments.

As a volunteer at the Human Rights Campaign's booth, I was able to talk at length with Wayne Besen, from HRC's Washington, DC headquarters. He was passionate in his explanations of HRC's components and its tireless director, Elizabeth Birch.

see PRIDE on 18



Celebrating Families was theme of 2002 Charlotte Pride. What do you do when it rains on your parade? Bring a beach ball, silly. Two happy fellas in Uptown Charlotte.

Why we march — for acceptance, against intolerance

by Ed Madden

Part 2 of 2

When South Carolina held its first Gay and Lesbian Pride March in June of 1990, organizers issued nine demands for needed reforms in education, health, and civil rights. They demanded:

- the inclusion of sexual orientation in the protection of civil liberties relating to equal opportunity, employment and housing.
 - the repeal of the state's existing buggery/sodomy law as it relates to consenting adults. - the right of gay men and lesbians to be foster and adoptive parents
 - the documentation of hate crimes, including those related to sexual orientation, by state law enforcement agencies.
 - anonymous HIV counseling and testing.
 - the expansion of HIV prevention education for the gay community.
 - the amendment of the state's draconian Comprehensive Health Education Act (which governs sex education) to permit inclusion of accurate information on homosexuality. (The law limits mention of homosexuality to the context of disease prevention.)
 - equal opportunity to serve in the armed forces.
 - legal recognition of domestic partnerships between consenting same-sex adults.
- Twelve years later, most of those demands remain unmet.

At least once a month, our community center receives a call from someone who claims to have lost a job because of sexual

orientation. Almost as often we hear from a lesbian or gay entering the courts over custody issues. We know that our rights and our families are still in jeopardy in South Carolina, as in most states throughout the Southeast.

Last fall, members of the University of South Carolina's faculty asked that sexual orientation be added to the University's non-discrimination policy, only to face the resistance of the university president, vitriolic public condemnation by state officials, and the homophobic comments of a university trustee. Of the four anti-gay bills in the South Carolina legislature this year, three were direct and hostile responses to this attempt to make the state's research university a place of equal protection for gay and lesbian employees and students. (The fourth bill would prevent us from fostering or adopting children.)

In fact, gays and lesbians have no specific state or federal protections against job discrimination, though the federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act may yet reach a full vote in the US Senate. Nor do gays and lesbians have equal access to health insurance. One of the bills pending in our state legislature would punish universities that offer domestic partner health benefits by taking away state funds (including scholarships!).

In South Carolina, we also continue to live under the shadow of an outdated buggery law. Though rarely enforced, it is used to justify discrimination. Opponents of the USC proposal, such as Lt. Governor Bob Peeler, cited the law in their attacks. Peeler is

currently running as a Republican candidate for governor.

In public health, South Carolina continues to have some of the highest rates of HIV and STD infection in the nation, and a educational system unable to deal with teenage sexuality or same-sex sexuality in effective or honest ways, still bound by the homophobic and AIDS-phobic guidelines of the 1980s. A few years ago our governor briefly banned the distribution of condoms in public health clinics. Last spring the SC House of Representatives passed a bill preventing the distribution of condoms to the unmarried. The Senate rejected it, for fear of losing national health funding, but the message was clear: if you are gay or a teenager and you have sex, then you don't deserve the state's protection.

Despite a shameful rash of church burnings and other hate crimes, our legislature has refused to pass any form of hate crimes legislation rather than send forward a bill that includes sexual orientation. Again the message from the legislature is clear if you are a gay or lesbian citizen of this state: explicitly, you don't deserve protection; perhaps implicitly, you deserve to die.

We march to affirm our public voices. We march to celebrate our diversity. But in the contexts of a state like ours, we must also march to draw attention to our continued struggle for equality and dignity.

Part 1 of this series is online at www.q-notes.com

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