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# QNotes

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## Vigil held to remember hate crime victim Sean Kennedy

Murdered gay youth's mother calls for hate crime laws

by Melissa Moore

GREENVILLE, S.C. — At 8:00 p.m. on June 3 a Candlelight Vigil to commemorate the life and mourn the death of 20-year-old Sean Kennedy was attended by an estimated 275 members of the Upstate community. Held in downtown Greenville, members of Kennedy's family were among those in attendance.

Community outrage has skyrocketed following Kennedy's death, as evidence continues to mount that he was killed because he was a gay man.

"Sean Kennedy was a beloved child of God, and no act of violence will ever take that away," said Rev. Donna Stroud, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of the Upstate (MCCU), who led the group in an opening prayer.

"We gather at this Vigil to share the blessed memories South Carolinians have of Sean. We stand in silence, quieted by the tragedy and sadness of his death. But we also stand as a unified voice, calling out for the day when no person is harmed because of how God created them."

Kennedy was punched in the face and knocked to the ground as he was exiting a Greenville bar on May 16. When his head hit the pavement, he was fatally wounded. An investigation into the crime continues, including a probable motive that Kennedy's killer uttered anti-gay comments either before or after the attack.

A number of community organizations such as PFLAG Greenville, Upstate United, MCCU, South Carolina Equality Coalition (SCEC), AFFIRM Youth, and Greenville Technical College Gay-Straight Alliance were

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Members of South Carolina's Upstate Community joined together June 3 to commemorate the life of gay murder victim Sean Kennedy.

## Out of debt even with no follow up on promised \$30,000 donation?

Charlotte's Community Center bounds back but fights to get their act together

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE — In January *Q-Notes* reported that the Charlotte Lesbian and Gay Community Center was fighting an uphill battle to survive. It came as a surprise to most in the city's LGBT population — seemingly little mention had been made that the Center's funds were drying up.

The problems at the Center came to light during the summer of 2006 while fundraising efforts were underway for the newly revamped PRIDE Charlotte festival. On more than one occasion the Center removed money raised from the account for the PRIDE celebration to cover expenses such as payroll, utilities and even rent.

Roughly six months later, Center staffer Linda Davis was laid off and Executive Director Laura Witkowski resigned. The Center cut back on its operating hours and was then staffed by a mix of board members and community volunteers.

When it was announced that the Center was \$40,000 in debt and that funds being donated were extremely limited — the city's queer community had to face facts: some fast

action was required or the possibility that the Center would close its doors forever was a distinct and disturbing reality.

As the need for help became obvious, the community rallied. Southern Country Charlotte donated \$20,000. The Charlotte Lesbian and Gay Fund donated \$18,000 and John Crowley, the executive vice president and CFO of Fairpoint Communications, handed over a hefty individual contribution of \$10,000, with a promise of an additional \$30,000 coming down the pike.

Now — according to Joe Campos, chairperson of the Board of Trustees — the outlook for the Center has vastly improved.

"We're out of debt," says Campos. "Through the generosity of many individuals and the organizations that have donated, we're in a much better place."

At press time though, Crowley was in the dark about the latest developments at the Center. Despite the fact he told Campos about the additional donations he was ready to make, there had been no follow up from the Center's end.

"I haven't heard anything from them," says Crowley. "They asked me for \$40,000 and I understood at the time it was a bit of an emergency need for funds, so I said why don't I just give you \$10,000 right now and I'll give you the rest as we reach certain benchmarks."

Although Campos had indicated he would get back with Crowley in three weeks with a strategic plan, somehow the effort fell through the cracks.

"It was never specified what those benchmarks were,"

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## Twice fired gay sailor hired for third stint

Gay Hebrew linguist assigned to reserves

by Rebecca Sawyer

WASHINGTON, DC — The United States Navy has again

assigned an openly gay sailor to duty in the Individual Ready Reserves (IRR), according to paperwork obtained by Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN). Former Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Knight, a Hebrew linguist recently deployed to Kuwait, has been placed on IRR duty until April 2009, despite publicly "coming out" in national media outlets and being told he would receive a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" dismissal. Knight's dismissal form, also called



'I have been nothing but proud of my service in the Navy, and I'm ready to serve in the Individual Ready Reserves and to return to active duty if called.' — former Petty Officer 2nd Class Jason Knight

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