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SC capitol nears civil rights vote

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

COLUMBIA—If all goes well, South Carolina's capitol city, home to an estimated 10,000 gays and lesbians, could enact civil rights protection for homosexuals as early as March 1993.

While this timeframe represents an optimistic viewpoint, it does not undermine the fact that a city in this very conservative state is willing to address the issue at all.

The fact that Columbia's City Council will be looking at the proposal is jointly attributable to the SC Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (GLPM) and the town's Mayor, Bob Coble.

After several preliminary meetings, GLPM's Political Committee met with Mayor Coble in 1991 to discuss areas of importance to the gay and lesbian community with the passage of city mandated civil protection being the primary focus.

According to Matt Tischler, GLPM co-chair, Mayor Coble agreed that the request warranted study, and as a result, charged the Greater Columbia Community Relations Council (CRC) with investigating the need for such legislation.

Culling participants from both its own members, and from the GLPM Political Committee, the CRC formed the Committee on Civil and Human Rights for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals in October 1991 to scrutinize the condition of gays in Columbia and to submit recommendations it found appropriate.

The Committee spent the next year analyzing the complex living situations of Columbia's homosexual community culminating in the presentation of a fifty-plus page report to the full CRC in the summer of 1992, calling for some surprisingly liberal legislation.

The most progressive recommendation,

which went even further than those submitted by Charlotte's CRC sub-committee on the same issue, called for the city to recognize domestic partnerships between same and opposite sex couples. Other recommendations noted in the report were: 1) adding gays, lesbians and bisexuals to the Housing Code; 2) extending public accommodations protection to gays, lesbians and bisexuals; 3) offering public and private employment protection to gays, lesbians and bisexuals; and 4) ensuring equal treatment of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in all credit transactions.

When the full CRC met to review the sweeping recommendations in September of 1992 they decided to delete the most far-reaching, and endorsed those more realistically passable. In the end, the CRC sent a letter to Mayor Coble requesting that the city council mandate equal protection for gays, lesbians and bisexuals in the areas of public

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MCSP to take over hate crimes reporting project

by David Prybylo
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE — First Tuesday Association for Lesbian and Gay Equality, which formally ceased operations last month, has turned over operation of the Documentation Project to Metrolina Community Service Project (MCSP). The Documentation Project had been a joint effort between First Tuesday and the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard, which is operated by MCSP, to document local hate crimes against lesbians and gay men. All information received has been compiled and released to the state agencies responsible for keeping track of hate crimes as well as other interested persons.

Robert Propst, president of MCSP, said the group was pleased to take over responsibility of the Documentation Project, saying that documenting hate crimes against lesbians and gay men had become more important than ever.

"With the [Charlotte] City Council defeating the public accommodations amendment," said Propst, "it is more important than ever to document discrimination based on sexual orientation." Propst went on to say that he had heard a number of City Council representatives, both in the November meeting and in the press beforehand, say that they did not believe the proposed amendment was necessary because they did not believe that discrimination against gays and lesbians occurred in Charlotte.

"So it is now more important than ever that we document incidents of discrimination or perceived discrimination. It is important to note that you don't have to get beat up to document. If you are called a faggot on the street, document it. If you are getting poor service in a restaurant because you are gay or lesbian, document it."

Propst said that, while those who report hate crimes are urged to identify themselves so that their cases can be followed up, he said that such identification is not necessary and that, in fact, anonymity can be guaranteed. He urged all people who believe that they have been discriminated against, abused, or victimized because they are homosexual to report such incidents to the Gay and Lesbian Switchboard. He emphasized that no matter how old the incident is, MCSP would still like to hear about it.

Propst said the group had already been in contact with the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) and that they have agreed to work with MCSP in trying to get documentation to the Charlotte City Council. Among other things, Propst said NCCGLE will come to Charlotte to train MCSP volunteers in gathering statistics. Propst also said that Don King, formerly head of the Documentation Project for First Tuesday, has agreed to assist in the transition.

Queer Nation mourns sailor slain by crewmates

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Gay activist organization Queer Nation held a somber candlelight memorial on January 18 for murdered Navy seaman Allen Schindler.

The vigil, a conscious, stark contrast to the multitude of merry functions being held around the nation's capitol during inauguration week, was timed to bring heightened awareness to the circumstances surrounding Schindler's death and to keep pressure on President Clinton to repeal the ban on gays in the military.

Petty Officer Schindler, 22, was brutally killed October 27 by two shipmates in a public park restroom in Sasebo, Japan where they were stationed.

Schindler died of extensive brain injuries resulting from his head being bashed repeatedly into a sink.

In fact, the attack was so vicious that the victim's mother, Dorothy Hajdys, could hardly identify him. "I viewed my son's body,

All that was left was the tip of his nose sticking out."

The Navy charged two men in the murder. Airman Apprentice Charles Vins, 20, was convicted November 23 of concealing a crime and resisting arrest. He was sentenced to one year in custody, but will only have to serve four months. Airman Apprentice Terry Helvey, 20, is charged with murder and has a pending trial date.

While naval officials say that homosexuality is only one possible motive, gay activists point out that Schindler had come out to his captain a month earlier because he was being victimized by his shipmates. Furthermore, Schindler's uncle stated that he was told of the abuse during a phone conversation with his nephew.

Queer Nation spokesman Michael Petrelis said that mistreatment of homosexuals is widespread in the armed services. "We know that gays are harassed and treated brutally by the military. This time the difference is we found out about it."



President Clinton (above) promised to repeal the military's ban on gays. Gay activists cite cases such as Schindler's murder as a need for urgency.

Asheville center begins operation

by Brent L. Pack
Special to Q-Notes

ASHEVILLE—The hopes and dreams of the Asheville gay and lesbian community were realized recently with the opening of North Carolina's first gay and lesbian community center. After more than two years of organization, planning and hard work, the Asheville Gay and Lesbian Community Center officially opened its doors to the public on January 15, 1993.

The Asheville Gay and Lesbian Community Center aims to consolidate many of the services available to the community. In addition to housing the offices of the Southern Appalachian Gay and Lesbian Alliance (SALGA) and Community Connections, the Asheville area's gay and lesbian publication, the community center also includes a resource center. The resource center will provide information to the community concerning the purpose and events of the various gay and lesbian organizations in Western North

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Anonymous HIV testing restored to all NC counties

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH — With one simple sentence - "Mr. Fisher, I am granting your request." - Wake County District Court Judge Orlando Hudson restored anonymous HIV testing to all 100 county health departments in North Carolina on January 4, 1993.

Several members of ACT UP/Triangle who were sitting in the courtroom wept quietly.

Stuart Fisher, ACT UP/Triangle's attorney, immediately presented Judge Hudson with a 12-page draft of a written order. The judge signed it, making the order effective as of noon that same day.

The state health department sent a fax that afternoon to county health departments notifying them of the decision.

It was the second time that a North Carolina judge rejected explicitly the arguments made by the state health department in its seemingly desperate crusade to end anonymous HIV testing. And it was the second time

that ACT UP triumphed in court.

In the written order, Judge Hudson ruled that the state's policy of restricting access to anonymous testing was a violation of the equal protection provisions of the US and North Carolina constitutions because it created a special class of persons who did not have access to anonymous HIV testing based on where they live.

He also agreed with Administrative Law Judge Brenda Becton, who ruled in favor of ACT UP earlier, that the state had not presented a sound public health rationale for restricting access to anonymous testing. Further, the court ruled that the manner in which counties were selected to retain anonymous testing was arbitrary and capricious.

The court also found that the state had not demonstrated that partner notification - contacting the sex or needle partners of persons who know they are HIV-positive - is really effective.

Judge Hudson's ruling was a preliminary
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To Report A Hate Crime
Call the Gay/Lesbian Switchboard in your area (in Charlotte, call 704/ 535-MCSP {535-6277} between 6:30 and 10:30 p.m., 7 days a week.)
Your report will be confidential, and will help local, state, and federal government officials understand the need for gay and lesbian civil rights legislation.