

County rejects civil rights bid

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

ORANGE COUNTY, NC—Orange County Commissioners have been asked to add gays to the civil rights ordinance the county adopted in December 1993. The commissioners said no.

The county obtained authorization from the General Assembly to enact an ordinance to prohibit discrimination based on sex, religion, age, race, disability, familial relationship or veteran status. The original bill included sexual orientation but was taken out by the sponsor, Sen. Howard Lee (D-Chapel Hill).

The Orange Lesbian and Gay Association (OLGA) asked commissioners to seek legislation to add sexual orientation, but at a meeting on February 16, the board told OLGA to obtain more support and come back. Orange County Republican Chair Betty Ibrahim claimed that protecting gays is not needed because, "It is not possible for the general public to discriminate against gays and lesbi-

ans because the general public does not know who the gays and lesbians are."

According to OLGA co-chair Doug Ferguson, long-time activist and UNC law student, OLGA will now consider several options, including asking the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro to either pass resolutions calling on commissioners to expand the ordinance, asking the towns to delay endorsement of the ordinance without vetoing it until gays and lesbians are added, or rejecting the ordinance outright. Ferguson told *Q-Notes* that OLGA wants to work with and continue to support advocates for other groups, and find a solution that keeps those alliances strong.

"I am very, very disappointed at what the commissioners did," he said, "particularly the resistance we got from even putting the subject on the agenda. We still have a lot of work to do, and we will continue to develop support for including us in the ordinance."

Public hearings will be held in Chapel Hill on March 2 and in Carrboro on March 8.

SC Pride moved to April

by John Scruggs
Special to Q-Notes

COLUMBIA—Dealing cards at Casino Night, marching in the Columbia St. Patrick's Day Parade, cooking out at the SC Gay and Lesbian Community Center, picnicking in the park — it sounds like an odd mix of work and recreation, but it's all helping the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (GLPM) gear up for its fifth annual Gay and Lesbian Pride March.

This year, South Carolina's Gay and Lesbian Pride March will take place in Columbia on Saturday, April 16, two months before the usual June date. "Stonewall 25 and the Gay Games were our main motivation for moving the march," says Matt Tischler, co-chair of GLPM. "We're expecting a large number of South Carolinians to head to New York for Stonewall and want to make sure people will be able to do both."

In addition to changing the date of the march, South Carolina has moved the starting time to 1:00 p.m. from its traditional noon kick-off. This too, according to Tischler, is designed to increase participation. "Each year we travel to marches in neighboring states as a show of solidarity for these organizations," he says. "We want to do everything we can to encourage participation from South Carolina as well as neighboring states."

Having the Pride March in April translates into more political recognition. Traditionally, the Pride Rally, held on the State House steps, has been a symbolic gesture of solidarity among the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities, its friends and supporters — symbolic because the General Assembly is not in session during the third week of June. This year, holding the rally while the General Assembly is in session will transform that symbolism into substance.

"There's a growing realization that the South will be the battleground in the gay and lesbian civil rights movement," says Tischler. It is this momentum that South Carolina hopes to tap into while preparing for the April march.

The theme for this year's march is "Proud To Say." The theme, presented by Bill Dalton,

GLPM's Treasurer who died of AIDS complications in December, invokes the growing sense of solidarity and commitment of South Carolina's gay and lesbian community.

As always, there's more to pride in South Carolina than the march, rally and celebration. On Sunday, April 10, at 1:00 p.m., the Land of Earlewood Neighborhood Association, one of Columbia's "family" neighborhood groups, will sponsor a cookout in Earlewood Park. The Bisexual, Gay and Lesbian Association at the University of South Carolina will hold its "B-GLAD" week April 11-16. A number of other organizations, both religious and civic, will hold events leading up to Saturday's festivities.

On Saturday, April 16, marchers are asked to assemble at noon on the corner of Main and Calhoun Streets to prepare for the march which steps off at 1:00 p.m. North Carolina's Pride Marching Band will lead participants down Columbia's Main Street to the steps of South Carolina's State House for the Gay and Lesbian Pride Rally. Mandy Carter of the Human Rights Campaign Fund will emcee this year's rally.

The featured speaker at the rally will be Mel White, former ghost writer for Oliver North and Jerry Falwell as well as a colleague of Billy Graham. That all changed when White came out as a gay man. He is now pastor at Cathedral of Hope Metropolitan Community Church in Dallas. White knows well the working of the right wing and is making his experiences known throughout the country.

As part of this year's rally, GLPM is sponsoring a number of quilt making workshops with the AIDS panels dedicated at the rally. Special tribute will be paid to Bill Dalton, GLPM's Treasurer, and to Bill Edens, executive director of PALSS, both of whom recently died of complications due to AIDS. A number of other speakers from the state and Southeast will round out the rally.

Following the rally, the annual Pride Celebration will be held from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at The Edge, 1801 Main Street. The celebration will feature local and regional entertainment, as well as vendors and information booths.



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