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Titleholder wants to be a role model

by Gene Poteat
Q-Notes Staff

Joe Greene, who currently holds the title of Mr. Gay NC All-American 1998, want you to know he is ready and willing to serve the needs of the gay community. "I want to go out and speak to groups about issues like coming out and stereotypes, to let people know we have the same concerns and problems as they do. It is important for people to realize that we [members of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community] can have stable relationships and contribute to the greater community," he says.

Greene, 31, takes the role of titleholder seriously. "The competition for Mr. Gay NC All-American [held at the Power Company in Durham this past July] is about presenting a positive image of professional gay men who are involved in their community and who have a social awareness who can communicate with people." He adds,

"The person who wins a title must be willing to serve as a role model, not just be an attractive person, but someone with the ability to reach others."

A York, SC native who has resided in Charlotte for the past 12 years, Greene notes that his record of service includes volunteer work with Metrolina AIDS Project, The Brother's Foundation (now closed) and Harvey Gantt's unsuccessful 1996 bid for Jesse Helms' Senate seat.

Stating that he is available for fundraising events and public appearances, Greene wants to appear wherever there is a need, but says he has a special desire to work with GLBT youth. "I knew I was gay all my life and came out as a teenager, but back then there was no one for me to come out to. I would like to appear before groups such as Time Out Youth and, re-

ally, any group willing to listen." This includes heterosexual organizations, too. "What I do in my bedroom doesn't affect them. I'm a normal person who just happens to be gay," he says.

Mr. Gay NC All-American is part of a national program of competitions. Although contestants compete in traditional categories such as personal interview, swim wear, talent [Greene clogged to a techno-pop version of "Rocky Top"] and on-stage interview, he asserts that these competitions are more than "stereotypical beauty pageants."

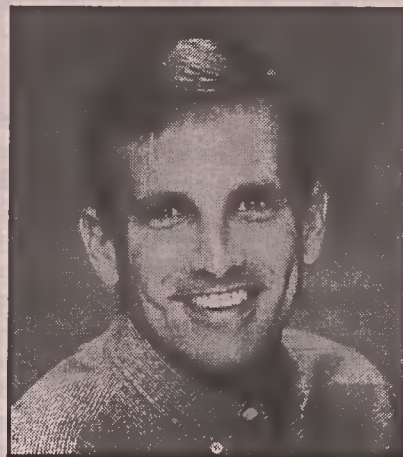
"The sponsors of these particular pageants expect you to dress as a professional, be aware of social issues and have the ability to get an audience to open up and listen. They want role models."

Greene represented the Tarheel state at the national competition, held September 16-21 in Little Rock, AK. Because the event ran long on the final night [he says it ended around 5:00am on Monday morning], non-win-

ning finalists were not announced. But Greene feels he finished in the top 12 "at least."

The experience, it seems, was a good one for Greene. "It gives a person confidence and improves self-esteem. Several former Mr. Gay All-American winners have recording contracts, have performed on Broadway and in movies and have traveled to contests all over the world." Also, many contestants formed a lasting bond through the friendly competition. "Everyone there was like a brother to each other and I felt as if I could call any contestant or anyone associated with the competition for support."

Since winning the state title in July, Greene has been busy preparing for the national competition; now that it's over, he is anxious to begin his outreach. If you would like him to appear and/or speak at an upcoming function, contact him at (704) 679-2768 (pager). ▼



Joe Greene

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