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GLBT	LGBT	No Preference
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Jennifer Bailey (l), actress, and Samantha Gellar, student playwright

Banned play receives raves at free reading

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—"The play is wonderful." "It had many different levels of subtext — very impressive."

"The play is fantastic."

These comments weren't praising the latest Broadway extravaganza to visit Charlotte, but rather a student-authored play that attracted national attention when it was deemed inappropriate viewing for Charlotte-Mecklenburg middle and senior high school students because the lead characters are lesbians.

On Sunday afternoon, March 7, more than 400 people filled The Great Aunt Stella Center to see a free reading of 17-year-old Samantha Gellar's one-act play *Life Versus the Paperback Romance*. The piece was one of five chosen as part of a local playwriting competition co-sponsored by The Children's Theatre and the school system, but the only one turned down for production. Representatives of the Theatre and the district labeled the material "age inappropriate."

The audience at the reading clearly disagreed. After an extended standing ovation, supportive comments flowed during a feedback session with the actors and the young playwright. One mother, who attended with her two daughters, observed, "I can't imagine anything inappropriate about it. There isn't any difference between lesbian and gay relationships and heterosexual relationships. This is the world. This goes on every day."

The play focuses on the relationship that blooms between Sarah, who is blind, and Julie, a romance novelist, after they meet on a bus. More than a study of their sexuality, the play is an examination of each woman's isolation from the world. There are no lengthy discussions of

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Another gay man murdered in brutal hate crime

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

SYLACAUGA, AL—On February 19, Billy Jack Gaither, 39, was lured from a bar and executed by two men in Sylacauga, AL, 40 miles southeast of Birmingham. The two killers, Charles Monroe Butler, 21, and Steven Eric Mullins, 25, were arrested shortly after the murder and confessed to killing Gaither because "he was a homosexual," Coosa County Sheriff's Deputy Al Bradley told newspapers.

As reported by *The Birmingham News*, Mullins said he called Gaither and asked him to meet him at a bar. They met and eventually left together. Authorities told the newspaper that the men apparently took Gaither to a remote location, bludgeoned him to death with an ax handle, put his body on a stack of tires and set him on fire.

In statements to local police, both confessed to planning the crime two weeks in advance.

Apparently, Gaither was able to be lured into meeting Mullins at the bar because his family was friendly with Butler's family. The two alleged murderers are in Coosa County Jail on

\$500,000 bond each.

This grisly execution follows the highly publicized murder of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard last fall, who was also enticed to leave a bar, was bludgeoned and left to die tied to a wooden fence outside Laramie.

"The brutality of this crime is evidence of the pervasive violence and prejudice against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in our culture," said Tracey Conaty, communications director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "It is meaningless to say 'no' to hate but 'yes' to [discrimination]. The contradiction is killing us. Anti-gay leaders must not only disavow hate violence, but also stop promoting the prejudice and discrimination that feed it."

Alabama's hate crimes law does not cover sexual orientation. Only 21 states and the District of Columbia include sexual orientation-based crimes in their hate crimes statutes.

In a statement released by the White House, President Clinton said (in part), "I share with many Americans a sense of grief and outrage at the tragic and violent death of Billy Jack Gaither in Alabama. This heinous and cowardly crime

touches the conscience of our country, just as the terrible murders of James Byrd in Texas and Matthew Shepard in Wyoming did last year.

"In times like this, the American people pull together and speak with one voice, because the acts of hatred that led to the deaths of such innocent men are also acts of defiance against the values our society holds most dear.

"That is why I will continue to work for passage of the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which can empower the federal government, working with local authorities, to do even more to deter, investigate and help prosecute crimes of hatred. The legislation would remove needless jurisdictional requirements and give the Department of Justice the power to prosecute hate crimes committed because of the victim's sexual orientation, gender or disability."

In response to the brutal murder, the mothers of two gay men who were also victims of vicious hate-motivated murders asked that the Gaither family's request for privacy be respected in this time of tragedy.

Mrs. Lois Gaither, mother of the victim, told
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Proactive initiatives proposed by GLBT think tank

by Tracey Conaty
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—Leaders of 36 national political GLBT organizations and associations gathered at the National Policy Roundtable to develop effective collaborative initiatives on families issues, research and media. The working session, held February 25-26, was the fourth semi-annual meeting of the roundtable convened by the Policy Institute of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF).

Urvashi Vaid, director of the Policy Institute, explained, "By building a united force among our movement's national political organizations we increase our capacity for implementing coordinated proactive strategies and anticipating emergency situations."

The families initiative will be a coordinated organizing campaign among the national groups to offer strategic support to states facing anti-adoption bills. Across the country, state legislatures are faced with bills designed to make adoptions and foster parenting illegal for unmarried and gay families and single people. Kate Kendell, executive director of the National Center for Lesbian Rights will coordinate with participants of the National Policy Roundtable to launch this national organizing campaign.

A research initiative was planned after roundtable participants identified gaps in research and polling about GLBT people, public sentiment on GLBT rights and the political right-wing. Rebecca Isaacs, NGLTF's political

director and Vaid will take the lead in convening a meeting of roundtable participants, think tanks, academics and public and private sector researchers to identify studies currently underway and to develop and pursue a comprehensive research agenda.

The creation of a media strategies project was identified to increase systematic coordination in response to right-wing messages and to increase the presence of GLBT people of color in the media. Ann Northrop, ACT UP/New York member and veteran journalist, and Joan Garry, executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, will take the lead in convening a meeting among public relations and advertising specialists, media activists, communications directors and roundtable participants. "The purposes of this collaborative project are to develop hard-hitting proactive public education campaigns and to implement mechanisms to better represent the diversity of our communities in the media," said Willa Taylor, chair of the Board of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum.

National Policy Roundtable participants also began discussions on how the GLBT movement addresses racism and how to increase racial diversity in the leadership of the movement. "People of color GLBT leadership is thriving in other social justice movements and at the grassroots level, yet it is missing at the executive level in the national GLBT move-

ment," said Richard Haymes of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs. "The next National Policy Roundtable will examine structural racism and other barriers to national leadership that exclude people of color and explore how our movement can better address racism."

At the National Policy Roundtable the directors were joined by leading political analysts and activists making presentations on four issue areas: 1) public sentiment on the right wing,

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GLBT rights, and politics; 2) the right-wing's recent political mobilizations around family and race; 3) responding to biblical arguments from faith-based perspectives; and 4) public education campaign strategies utilized by other so-

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Local artists will help raise money at "Genesis" circuit party

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—To help the Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte purchase its new church home, four local artists have agreed to put a sampling of their work up for bid during "Genesis/Exodus," a fundraising circuit party scheduled for Saturday, March 27.

The pieces will be sold by silent auction during "Genesis," the portion of the event to be held at Founders Hall from 8:00pm-midnight. Attendees who are interested in purchasing any of the original works will be able to write their bids on a sheet of paper as they enter the building. At the end of the night, the highest bidder for each piece will be able to claim their new artwork.

The participating artists are Charlotte Foust; Kimberlee Garrison; Francisco Gonzales; and Jo-Ann Pinkney. Here's a little about each:

Charlotte Foust: Most of Charlotte's artwork deals with the human figure. She works intuitively — without sketching or drawing anything beforehand. This process lends itself to letting images flow from the unconscious. She says, "My most recent figures deal with the outer and inner framework/structure of the body. The work slowly — painting by painting — continues to erode the outer shell of the body, ultimately revealing the inner space of the figure."

Kimberlee Garrison: Though she is a Charlotte native, Kimberlee attended the Savannah College of Art and Design. She taught art for

10 years before embarking on the never-ending story of her "art walk through life." Over the years, she has worked in stained glass as a glazier, created window displays for various department stores and painted murals in NY.

Francisco Gonzales: As far back as Francisco can remember, he has been creative and curious. This precociousness led him to try printmaking — an endeavor that he has immersed himself in ever since. He notes, "I have always looked for ways to express my creative force and printmaking is one outlet. The colors and architecture of my native Mexico influence my work." Francisco uses a variety of mixed media techniques, including collage, chine colle and viscosity printing.

Jo-Ann Pinkney: This artist loves diversity.

Her body of work includes oil paintings, murals, air brushing, glass art, sculpture and tromp l'oeil. She has taught art for the public school system and automobile art for Central Piedmont Community College. Jo-Ann is currently working on a calendar to commemorate the millennium and will soon become the freelance art director for a film animation company.

Let the music play

While party attendees occupy themselves dancing, greeting friends, bidding on artwork and generally having a ball, DJ Hex Hector will be busy cementing his reputation as one of the top turntable artists in the country.

In New York, he has a devoted following
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