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| | | |
|--------|---------|--------|
| Parent | Sibling | Friend |
| 17% | 14% | 69% |

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Photo by Bruce Barikscale

New party chairman Andrew Reyes (r) greets supporters after the election

Gay man elected by Democrats

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Openly gay, Charlotte businessman Andrew Reyes was elected party chairman of the Mecklenburg County Democratic Party on Saturday, April 17. In an unofficial count, Reyes, 32, beat former state Senate candidate Jim Alexander, 60, by a vote of 226 to 84.

Reyes is the second minority to hold the job, as well as the first Hispanic and first gay man. "It's a definite turnaround from the good old boy school of politics. He's not your basic white male," said Jeannette Manning, chair of Precinct 35.

Some Reyes supporters described his election as a wake-up call for old-school activists.

The county convention was held at Dilworth Elementary School with more than 300 party members in attendance. Sen. John Edwards (D-NC) delivered the keynote address

and Reyes was nominated by Bob Davis, the first minority to hold the party chairman job.

The two candidates drew few distinctions between themselves and Reyes, after the vote, indicated no radical departures for the party.

Encouraging a diversity of people to become active in the party is important, he said, but "keeping the party financially stable" is a higher priority. Reyes wants every precinct in the county to organize a Democratic committee. Only about a fourth of county precincts sent delegations to the convention.

As the Democrat most responsible for keeping the county party healthy, Reyes' success will be measured in terms of successful Democratic candidates.

Reyes brings financial muscle and an impressive list of connections to the job. Reyes has several businesses, including his accounting firm, a construction company and a weekly

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Defense strategies revealed for second Shepard murder trial

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

LARAMIE, WY—After the guilty plea and sentencing of Russell Henderson in the Matthew Shepard murder case, lawyers for the second defendant, Aaron McKinney, have hinted at their defensive strategies for the August 9 trial.

McKinney's lawyers want to see where McKinney could likely spend the remainder of his life: the Wyoming State Penitentiary in Rawlins.

A motion filed on his behalf asks that his lawyers be allowed "to tour and videotape the cell, recreation yard and other areas of access where the defendant would reside...if he received a death sentence."

McKinney, 21, remains at the Albany County jail in Laramie. He is charged with first-degree murder, kidnapping and aggravated robbery in the beating death of Shepard.

In addition to the tour, McKinney's lawyers, Dion Custis and Jason Tangeman, requested "out-of state options available to the state of Wyoming for the confinement of Mr. McKinney" and "a description of the physical confinement setting...representing the highest level of security within the Department of Corrections for management of inmate violence."

The attorneys wrote that access to the prison is "absolutely necessary" for McKinney's de-

fense. They said the information is "critical" for presenting mitigating evidence in the case, "so the jury will accurately and more completely know the effect of a sentence of life imprisonment."

Senior Assistant Attorney General Lori Gorseth filed an objection on behalf of the Corrections Department, encouraging 8th District Judge Barton Voigt to deny the request, saying the motion was inappropriate.

McKinney's lawyers may also focus on Shepard's homosexuality in an effort to show he was not lured from a bar the night of his murder. They are seeking evidence of Shepard's lifestyle, including whether he routinely picked up other men in bars.

Public defender Custis told Judge Voigt that the defense needs to know how prosecutors concluded that Shepard was taken against his will.

"If they're saying he was kidnapped from this bar, any information concerning his background, leaving with other males, getting involved in similar types of situations...that information is particularly relevant," Custis said.

He also asked for any evidence prosecutor Cal Rerucha may possess that showed "flirtatious conduct" by Shepard at the bar or after leaving.

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Gender activists plan lobby days

by Brian M. Myer
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON, DC—GenderPAC, the national advocacy group dedicated to pursuing "gender, affectional, and racial equality," will hold its Fourth National Lobby Day on Capitol Hill from Sunday - Tuesday, May 23 - 25.

Because the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) and the Hate Crimes Prevention Act (HCPA) are edging closer to critical votes, gender activists feel this is a pivotal point in time. GenderPAC believes that unless the voices of the GLBT community are heard, Congress may fail to include coverage for gender-different people in these bills. Historically, votes for inclusion have carried great political risks for Congressional representatives — most of whom operate with a critical lack of knowledge of issues surrounding gender-difference.

The last three Lobby Days have each drawn nearly 100 grassroots activists to Capitol Hill on a variety of issues. This year, GenderPAC will continue to protest, educate and advocate for all those who identify or express gender differently, especially those who cannot speak for themselves.

GenderPAC's Lobby Day begins with an intensive workshop on national policy (what national queer groups are doing and why) and skills training sessions like "Getting your story in the news," "How to lobby 101," and "Press

releases that work."

Two days of lobbying follow — which includes educating and advocacy. GenderPAC stresses that no lobbying experience is necessary and most visits are made with groups of people from a common tri-state area.

The host hotel is the Holiday Inn on the Hill, 415 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20001. This location is a 10-minute walk from the Capitol building, and a similar distance from Union Station, the local Amtrak and subway-to-airport hub — not to mention pubs, parks, museums, monuments, restaurants, a multiplex theater and shopping. The phone number for reservations is 1-800-638-1116.

Everything except rooms and associated hotel charges is free. Some limited scholarships are available for those who are students or un/underemployed. Participants are responsible for calling and booking their own room, or doubling, tripling, or quadrupling up with others. To find someone to share a room, try utilizing the feedback section of the GenderPAC website (www.gpac.org) to make your needs known. When calling for hotel reservations, be sure to mention that you are with GenderPAC for the group rate.

For more information, or to sign up, contact GenderPAC members Riki Wilchins or Carrie Davis at (212) 645-1753 or email Carrie@gpac.org or LobbyDay@gpac.org. ▼

PBS affiliate rejects broadcast

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—When "Gang of Five" Mecklenburg County Commissioner Bill James (R-District 6) learned that right-wing religious groups were mobilizing to stop PBS stations around the country from airing a gay-themed documentary in June, he wasted no time in letting local public television affiliate WTVI know that he was staunchly opposed to a broadcast in the Charlotte region. In reply, the head of the station was equally quick in assuring him that it would not be shown here.

The program in question is an award-winning documentary called *It's Elementary: Talking about Gay Issues in School*. Co-produced by Academy Award-winning documentary filmmaker Debra Chasnoff (*Deadly Deception: General Electric, Nuclear Weapons, and Our Environment*) and Helen S. Cohen, it shows teachers talking about gay and lesbian issues with their K-8 students in six public and independent schools across the nation.

Since its 1996 release, the film has won numerous awards, including the Silver Apple from the National Educational Media Network; been shown at nearly 500 teacher training programs and hundreds of schools, churches and synagogues; and received endorsements from the National Education Association and the American School Counselors Association for its usefulness in breaking harmful stereotypes.

However, in an April 8 faxed letter — written on Commission stationery — to WTVI Station Manager Hal Bouton, James describes *It's Elementary* quite differently. "I viewed this film at the Mint Museum in 1997 as I weighed funding the arts in Charlotte and am personally familiar with its content. The film is a piece of pro-homosexual dogma designed to teach the

moral acceptability of homosexuality to children beginning in the [first] grade. It is not about tolerance but about reversing moral values taught at home that the author disagrees with. What better way to rid society of traditional morality, Hal, than to indoctrinate [first] graders and up with an alternative morality at odds with their parents' beliefs. Teaching 'perversity as diversity' is the basis on which this movie was made."

In a later paragraph, he adds, "This film is neither objective nor news. It is not a documentary, as it does not present a rational and logical discussion of the opposite opinion. It does not discuss North Carolina law (and the law of some 20 other states) that make homosexual conduct a felony, or the medical reasons why homosexual conduct is so dangerous. It is pure indoctrination of the worst kind attacking those least able to logically defend against them, [first] graders."

James closes his letter with what seems to be a thinly-veiled funding threat. "I would ask that you review your current policy on this matter and determine if a show calling for the indoctrination of [first] graders on homosexuality (without their parents' knowledge) is worthy of your valuable airtime. There will be those who will say that

this 'documentary' will be shown at a late hour and not available to children. I would contend that the [sic] presenting this show on a taxpayer subsidized station during a budget year with many conflicting needs and a bond request for \$10 million this fall is not wise at ANY HOUR. Clearly, it is not the kind of show WTVI, with its proud history, should be associated with."

In a post-script, he says that he is sending copies of his letter to US Rep. Sue Myrick (R-District 9) and Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) to

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Photo by Chris Raebok

Commissioner Bill James