

# Q Notes

The Carolinas' Most Comprehensive Gay & Lesbian Newspaper

## The Latest Q-POLL Results

Which of the following would you choose to be the first inductee into the Straight-But-Not-Narrow Hall of Fame?

Roseanne	Dennis Rodman	Judy Garland
61%	28%	11%

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Photo: Brian M. Myer

## Diverse crowd comes out for Pride

by Clay Ollis  
Q-Notes Staff

The rainbow flags were abundant around Duke's east campus on Saturday, June 10 as GLBT activists, straight allies, closeted homosexuals and John Queer Public from all over North Carolina converged on Durham for Pride 2000.

Watching the crowd — comprising leather mommies, stroller daddies, drag queens, differently-abled, clergy, lipstick lesbians, buff-boys, PFLAGers, transgender folks, fag-hags, beer-bellies, and one mildly annoying intoxicated individual — enjoy themselves while Duke students and campus police watched unconcerned was good for the soul.

The 15th consecutive year of Pride in North Carolina, it was fitting that the event returned to Durham, where the first two marches were held, in 1981 and 1985 respectively.

The theme, "It's time: come out for pride," recalled the great strides that have been made in GLBT visibility since those first events, while recognizing the work yet to be done. Unlike some events of its type, the heat at the march was generated by the sun, rather than an abundance of half-naked gym gods — though they

can be nice, too.

Despite an understaffed and overextended organizing committee, and a schedule that was revised right up to the week before the event, the celebration appeared on the surface to flow smoothly, and blended a political call for action with a celebration of freedom and diversity. According to estimates from the Duke University Police, 2000 to 2500 people attended the event, while the *Raleigh News and Observer* reported attendance around 3000.

The day before the main parade and festival, a special screening of the Independent Television Service documentary *Our House* — about kids of gay and lesbian parents — was presented followed by a reception with the filmmaker, Meema Spadola. For those inclined to a different sort of culture, The Butchies were featured in a performance at Visions nightclub, and proceeds benefited the Rape Crisis Center of Durham. Following these events, Insomnia Dance Club of Chapel Hill welcomed all who wanted to party.

For those who were able to drag their tired selves out of bed on Saturday morning, there were workshops for gay and lesbian parents, *See PRIDE on page 25*

## Big 3 automakers to offer benefits

by David Elliot and Thomas Coleman  
Special to Q-Notes

DETROIT—In a dramatic advance for equity in the workplace, the nation's leading automobile manufacturers — Chrysler Corp., Ford Motor Company and General Motors Corp. — announced they are offering domestic partner benefits to employees' same-sex partners, effective August 1, 2000.

This historic announcement means that one of the nation's largest blue-collar industries will now join a growing number of Fortune 500 companies in offering such benefits as medical, prescription drug and dental coverage to same-sex domestic partners of eligible active employees.

"Because benefits comprise nearly 40 percent of an employee's overall compensation, domestic partner benefits is a major step toward promoting equality in the workplace," said Elizabeth Toledo, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Today we celebrate the fact that one of the nation's bedrock industries has joined the fight for basic fairness."

Toledo, who met last year with top Ford executives to discuss domestic partner benefits and other workplace issues, noted that the number of companies offering domestic partner benefits is rapidly increasing. In 1990, there were less than two dozen companies offering such benefits. Today, there are more than 2500,

more than a 1000 percent increase in 11 years.

The announcement comes as the number of households occupied by unmarried partners continues to increase significantly in the United States. Between 1994 and 1998, for example, the number of unmarried partner households increased by 11 percent, compared with a two percent increase in the number of married couple households.

"Our definition of family is changing and the reality of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender families today is what makes domestic partner benefits necessary," Toledo said. "Employers that recognize the evolving needs of their workforce by offering domestic partner benefits will be able to recruit and retain the best employees and will ensure that their employees' health and well-being outside of the workplace is maintained."

While the new benefits plans will allow workers to add same-sex partners to health programs at the three companies, unlike similar programs in Canada which are open to both gay and heterosexual domestic partners, the American plans are limited to gay and lesbian couples.

The American Association for Single People is concerned about the restrictions that apply the benefits only to same-sex unmarried couples. They argue that excluding unmarried heterosexual couples shows disrespect for personal family choices. ▼

## Schwacke apparently loses in SC

by Sloan C. Wiesen  
Special to Q-Notes

CHARLESTON, SC — According to unofficial election returns, David Schwacke, South Carolina's 9th Judicial Circuit Solicitor, narrowly lost a closely-fought Republican primary in a campaign rife with anti-gay tactics.

Schwacke is the openly gay GOP chief prosecutor for Charleston and Berkeley counties who had been targeted by local party officials because of his sexual orientation. He appears to have fallen short of victory by less than one percent of the vote, but the closeness of the vote has triggered a state law requiring a recount.

"The fact is that David Schwacke is an excellent prosecutor. It is unfortunate that anti-gay activists and Schwacke's opponent have apparently misled a bare majority of the voters to buy into the politics of fear over fact," said Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund Executive Director Brian K. Bond. "Throughout the country, and especially in the South, we have a long way to go before all candidates are judged on their merits and anti-gay attacks are no longer effective in any race. Still, it is somewhat encouraging that Schwacke pulled off such a strong showing in a GOP primary in a conservative state — despite all the anti-gay tactics and despite being outspent by nearly four to one."

The unofficial results indicate that Schwacke carried Charleston County by more than 1000 votes, but lost Berkeley County by more than 1200.

Schwacke has been a prosecutor since 1983. He has served in his current post as head prosecutor for South Carolina's 9th Circuit for the past eight years, during which time he secured 40,000 adult convictions and 5000 juvenile adjudications — improving his office's total conviction rate by 10 percent over the record of his predecessor.

This race was Schwacke's first attempt at re-

election since he came out and acknowledged his orientation three years ago. When it became clear to local GOP officials that he was gay, they initiated an investigation against him — claiming that he had made inappropriate personal use of an office computer. He was completely cleared of any wrongdoing, but anti-gay activists continued to oppose him ever since.

Fueled by well-funded right-wing backers, Schwacke's opponent, Charleston attorney Ralph Hoisington, was able to spend \$120,000 on the race — compared to only \$34,000 for Schwacke.

Hoisington, apparently seeking to make sexual orientation an issue — but in a way subtle enough to avoid being accused of overt negative campaigning on the issue — dubbed himself the candidate who was "for our families." He used the "For Our Families" slogan on his campaign signs.

With somewhat less subtlety, he also aired television ads in the final days of the campaign touting himself as the candidate who would crack down on sexual predators.

The Christian Coalition, which mounted an intense phone banking and get-out-the-vote drive against Schwacke, also sent out a mailing echoing Hoisington's "For Our Families" slogan and accusing Schwacke of mishandling a case involving a sexual predator. According to the Victory Fund, the campaign piece unquestionably played upon a longstanding anti-gay myth that gay people are somehow a threat to children.

"It is shameful that a group purporting to speak for Christians would deliberately spread some of the most dangerous and insidious falsehoods ever used to smear gay people," said Bond. "And it is regrettable that so many families in South Carolina are apparently about to lose a good prosecutor because of the prejudices of a few misguided people. Clearly, we have much work to do." ▼

## House members call for military accountability after anti-gay murder

by Steve Ralls  
Special to Q-Notes

WASHINGTON, DC—Thirty members of Congress have co-sponsored a letter demanding accountability from Secretary of Defense William Cohen and the White House regarding leaders who tolerate anti-gay harassment and other violations of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass."

The letter specifically asks for accountability of Major General Clark, Commanding General of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, KY, where Private First Class (Pfc.) Barry Winchell was murdered last year after months of harassment by a fellow soldier who perceived him to be gay. Major General Clark was to change command at a Fort Campbell ceremony on June 9.

Those who signed the letter, including Rep. Barney Frank, who spearheaded the effort to contact Secretary Cohen, expressed concern over the possible relocation or promotion of Major General Clark, noting that he is the subject of an investigation into Fort Campbell's command climate.

Congressional members wrote to Secretary Cohen stating, "we believe that, as base commander, Major General Clark is responsible for tolerating anti-gay harassment on the base prior to Pfc. Winchell's murder, and for doing little in the wake of the murder to stop this type of harassment."

Notwithstanding the open Inspector General investigation into his command climate,

the Army has assigned Clark to the prestigious position of Vice Director of "J-3" Operations Office for the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

C. Dixon Osburn, co-executive director of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN), welcomed the letter as an important first step in ensuring accountability in the ranks, but expressed concern about accountability at the post. "While we appreciate the Army's decision not to immediately promote Major General Clark, the Army has sent a mixed message by appearing to reward him with a prestigious assignment while his command climate is still under investigation."

In conjunction with seeking to hold Major General Clark accountable for the documented instances of anti-gay harassment at Fort Campbell, the Congressional letter pressed for confirmation of accountability in the case of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Melton of Twenty Nine Palms, CA.

Lieutenant Colonel Melton sent an email in October belittling the murder of Pfc. Winchell at Fort Campbell, using anti-gay epithets in a statement to subordinates that was supposed to encourage the proper implementation of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass."

Though the signers noted that reports have surfaced that the situation was resolved, they expressed concern that the resolution has not been made public. "If LTC Melton's actions have been addressed," the letter said, "it seems *See ACCOUNTABILITY on page 25*