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On National Coming Out Day,
will you:

- Fly a rainbow flag on your home?
- Come out to friends or family?
- Party yourself silly at a local queer watering hole?
- Spend a quiet evening with your significant other?
- Treat the day like any other?

Achieving political strength in the Queen City

Four politically active members of Charlotte's LGBT community share their thoughts about how to achieve political change

by David Moore
Q-Notes staff

Charlotte, N.C., is the largest city on the map between Atlanta and Washington, D.C. Despite all the city's much-touted wealth and sizeable population (540,828 in the city proper, 1.5 million when the seven-county metro area is included), political gains for the LGBT community here come slowly.

As a whole the state boasts five openly gay elected officials, none of whom are residents of Charlotte: Carrboro Mayor Mike Nelson, Chapel Hill Town Councilman Mark Kleinschmidt, Wilmington/New Hanover County Commissioner Julia Bozeman, Chapel Hill/Carrboro school board member Gloria Faley and Cabarrus County Soil and Water Conservation Supervisor Scott Herman.

At heart, Charlotte has always been a conservative town. Bankers, churches and Republicans clearly outnumber artists, gays and lesbians and Democrats.

Still, it seems surprising that other N.C. towns — replete with their share of conservative elements — can elect a gay or lesbian official, yet that goal remains unachieved here.

Ray Warren

"I don't think Charlotte's gay and lesbian community is organized enough to elect anybody," says attorney and former Superior Court Justice Ray Warren. "I don't think a gay or lesbian candidate should count on the 'community' to get them into office. When a lesbian or gay person is elected it will be because they have good civic and party connections, not because they're gay."

"When I ran for office I didn't find being gay to be a problem. I found not being rich to be a problem."



Attorneys, community center directors and activists agree: visibility and involvement are the key to change.

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Breast cancer awareness helps lesbians stay healthy

October 17 is National Mammography Day

by David Stout
Q-Notes staff

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month and the third Friday in October each year is National Mammography Day. On this day, and often throughout the entire month, radiologists provide discounted or free mammograms. In 2002, more than 680 American College of Radiology accredited facilities participated.



Lesbians have a higher concentration of important risk factors for breast cancer than any other subset of women.

These factors include: never bearing a child or not bearing a child before 30; obesity and alcohol use

Because of the elevated risks, lesbians need to get routine clinical breast exams and mammograms. But according to GLMA, lesbians are actually less likely to access the health care system than heterosexual women.

"We know from research that lesbians are less likely to seek medical care than other women because of the stigma they experience everywhere in society," says GLMA President Kathleen O'Hanlan. "They also experience it when they go for medical care. Health care providers may feel uncomfortable

The campaign is a critical undertaking. An estimated 211,300 new cases of the disease are expected to occur in the U.S. this year. It's clear that women need to be proactive in their efforts to stay healthy. And this is especially true for lesbians.

In its report last year of the "10 Things Lesbians Should Discuss With Their Health Care Providers," the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association (GLMA) cited breast cancer as the top-priority issue.

Researchers cannot state for a medical certainty that lesbians get breast cancer at a greater rate than heterosexual women — the existing data is simply too limited to reach that conclusion — but they do agree that lesbians have a higher concentration of important risk factors for this cancer than any other subset of women.

In the family way: Gay couples make inroads on network TV

Portrayals still skew toward affluent white males

by David Stout
Q-Notes staff

The gay best friend has been depicted on network television so often that you can recreate his typical scene in your head without even trying:

The beautiful, rail-thin sitcom starlet is sitting on her couch, forlorn because she's just broken up with yet another attorney who looks like a CK underwear model. Suddenly, the door bursts open and in bounds her fabulous, fey neighbor — all swish, dish and eyebrows. He delivers a biting bit of sarcasm (no doubt about her outfit) and a delicious double entendre (the ex's name was Richard after all) before finally dispensing a pearl of relationship wisdom (not that he has a boyfriend or even seems to date) that puts everything into perspective.

It's a one-dimensional characterization that LGBT activists have been battling for years. Thankfully, Tinsel Town executives might have finally gotten the message.

ABC's new comedy "It's All Relative" stars John Benjamin Hickey and Christopher Sieber (both of whom are gay off-screen) as tony Boston parents whose Harvard-coed daughter is set to marry into a lowbrow, working-class family.

And Fox's "A Minute with Stan Hooper," starring Norm MacDonald, includes supporting characters Pete and Lou Peterson, a gay couple who own and operate a local diner and consider themselves married.

Portrayals of long-term gay partners like these have been a rarity on television despite the fact that it's a basic reality for many viewers. Bridging



Art imitates life for gay actors John Benjamin Hickey (left) and Christopher Sieber of ABC's 'It's All Relative.' Maggie Lawson plays daughter Liz.

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