

Harriet Hancock makes history in S.C.

Since 1980, Hancock has aided in founding four S.C. organizations for the LGBT community

by Monica Simpson

On the gay drama series "Queer As Folk" the happy-go-lucky, red-haired, gay-positive mom, Debbie, bops around her job helping her gay son and all of his friends in any way she can. She marches in the pride parade with him and she is always there to



Harriet Hancock has been the chair of Columbia's PFLAG Chapter for the past 22 years and works as a lawyer.

ensure that each new love interest is good enough for her son. Most gay people see her as the role model for a mom: supportive, loving and was always ready to fight for

any gay issue.

In South Carolina, Harriet Hancock brings the television version of Debbie to life. Since 1980, when her son Greg came out to her, she has been an advocate for the LGBT community in the south.

"When my son told me he was gay, I had to educate myself on his community," says Hancock. "I had to make sure that I knew about discrimination of any kind that my son could encounter so that I could be able to support him and my family."

For the past 22 years, Hancock has been the chair of the Columbia chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) that was founded in 1982. In 1989, the South Carolina Pride Movement was created and they began to do work to bring the LGBT community together. Hancock was one of the founding members, and was instrumental in acquiring the community center that now sits on Woodrow Street in Columbia.

Hancock is not only known for being an advocate for the rights of the LGBT community, she was an advocate and lobbyist for HIV/AIDS. She co-founded Palmetto AIDS Life Support Services (PALSS) and served as board member from 1985-1991. Hancock also helped in founding Sue Kulen Camp For Kids, which is an organization named after a nurse that died after becoming infected with the virus while working.

In 1991, Hancock was awarded South Carolina's Pro-Bono Lawyer Of The Year Award for providing service to people with

AIDS for free.

"It seemed as if no one was trying to help these people who were dying of this disease," explained Hancock. "I knew that I had to help them in some way, so I used my profession of being a lawyer as a way to help those infected get what they needed."

Along with all that she has done in the south, Hancock marches in every Pride march that she can. At the Stonewall 25th anniversary march, she was named by the Carolinas as a Stonewall Hero. "I had never been so honored to receive this award because at that point I knew that I was doing something to help somebody," says Hancock.

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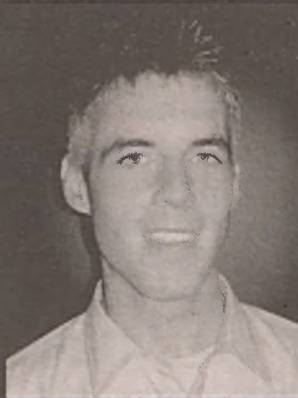
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