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Are you out at work?
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In the next issue:
Right around the corner —
get ready for Gardening fun!

Companies in the Carolinas that are good to their gay employees

Company policies make many businesses good for gays

by Mark Smith

What do you look for in a good employer? Chances are — if you're like most folks — you're looking for a company that will pay you what you're worth, provide benefits, offer job security, room for advancement and a pleasant work environment.

Sound like too much to ask for? We don't think so.

But the fact of the matter is gays and lesbians looking for all those qualities might not find fulfilling them so easy.

But don't be surprised — one of N.C.'s largest employers offers just what many gay and lesbian workers are in search of.

US Airways employs more than 5,700 people in North Carolina alone. The company also offers multiple benefits for its gay employees.

"Health benefits and all travel benefits are extended to all domestic and life partners," explains US Airways spokesperson Twana Williams. "The travel benefits began in 2001

and health benefits were initiated in 2002."

In addition to the benefits, US Airways has also participated in community Pride events and the Metrolina AIDS Project's Evening of Giving.

"There's also the gay and lesbian employee group," adds Williams. "It's called US Airways Spectrum."

Founded in May of 2003, membership to the organization is available to all US Airways employees.

After further research, we've uncovered a rather sizeable number of companies operating in the Carolinas that have both non-discrimination policies and domestic partnership benefits.

American City Business Journals, headquartered in Charlotte, publishes business journals for cities across the country. The company has a non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation and offers health insurance coverage to employees' domestic partners.
www.bizjournals.com



US Airways employs more than 5,700 people in North Carolina.

Blackbaud Inc., is the leading global provider of software and related services designed specifically for nonprofit organizations. Located in Charleston, S.C., they maintain a non-discrimination policy and benefits for same-sex spouses.
www.blackbaud.com

see **BEST COMPANIES** on 21

Charlotte banks offer partnership benefits



Charlotte's Bank of America Tower

Bank of America and Wachovia stand in support of their gay and lesbian employees

by David Moore
Q-Notes staff

In an historically conservative town like Charlotte — especially when the leading business entity is banking — it might come as a surprise to learn that the city's two largest financial institutions are bucking the old trends.

Bank of America and Wachovia, both headquartered in this city, have made a concerted, caring effort to provide for their LGBT employees.

"We've offered domestic partnership benefits since 1997," says **Bank of America** spokesperson Tara Burke. "We pride ourselves on offering equal opportunities in the work place and support for different family structures."

The wide range of benefits includes health, dental, vision, bereavement, family leave, life insurance, adoption assistance, relocation and pension survivorship.

According to Burke, the program was initiated because of the growing needs of LGBT employees.

"It's available throughout the company and country," she explains. "Regardless of any state laws we have offered it and will continue to do so."

Employees of Bank of America seeking to qualify for domestic partnership benefits must meet specific requirements pertaining to the length of their relationship, if the relationship is expected to be indefinite and whether or not the individual has had another domestic partner.

see **WACHOVIA** on 4

Gay penguin drama

Aversion therapy fails

by Mark Smith

BREMEN, Germany — A zoo in Bremen, Germany, captured the world's attention during the first week of February when it announced that they were trying to "cure" three gay Humboldt penguin couples using a form of aversion therapy.

According to wire reports, the Bremerhaven Zoo split up the couples and imported four female penguins from Sweden. In the beginning, zoo officials couldn't understand why the mating pairs weren't producing offspring.

"They did the usual courting dances, built nests together, appeared to have sex and still no little penguins," said zoo director Heike Kueck.

Finally they did a DNA test to see if there was something genetically wrong — only then did they realize that all six of the birds were males.

Kueck said that the birds had been mating for years and one couple even adopted a stone that they protected like an egg.



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