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'Creating a new reality' with S.C. Pride

2005 Pride celebration expected to
attract record crowd to Columbia

by Donald Miller

On the heels of Charlotte Pride comes South Carolina's annual LGBT Pride celebration. With the theme "Creating A New Reality," organizers at the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride, Movement (SCGLPM) are set to bring attendees a Carolina Pride unlike any other in its history.

The week-long series of events kicks off May 13 with a pre-Pride dance party and culminates over a three-day period, May 21 through May 23, with a Pride parade and celebration in Finlay Park, a film festival, a community picnic and a worship service.

"We're trying to model our Pride after larger cities that have larger crowds, to put ourselves on the map, so to speak," says Don Hair, vice president and a coordinator of Pride. We're going to have more performers, speakers and vendors and national acts, as well. Every year we're trying to increase our offering of diversity to the LGBT community."

According to organizers, attendance numbered close to 3,000 last year. That's a number they hope to exceed this year.

"We think a lot of people are going to come out this year," says Ed Madden, director of SCGLPM. "There's a lot going on and this is an important time for us to come together."

Hair concurs. "I think the reason so many

people are being supportive this year is because of the marriage amendment. It's important that the rest of South Carolina see that there is an LGBT community here. People need to come out in the spirit of Pride and to be seen and heard.

"I honestly think there are a lot of legislators that actually think there are probably only one or two gay people in this state. This is a good opportunity to let them know they're wrong and to really put a face on it."

Marchers in last year's S.C. Pride Parade.

Radar Williams, treasurer for Pride and another of the event's coordinators, points out another side to Pride.

"A lot of people see it as a chance to be with their people. Some people see it as just a big ol' fun party in the park. It is both of those things. But even if we're just coming together in a spirit of fun and community — it brings out the issues that effect us, whether people realize it or not."

In Columbia, Pride-goers have generally

been met with little to no resistance from anti-gay elements in the city.

"The city has always been pretty supportive," says Madden. "I think in the past people were afraid to be in the streets, but this is the 13th march and over the years we've had so much positive coverage on the news, I don't think it's an issue anymore."

"We'll have a handful of protestors but we always do," Madden chuckles. "You have to have a few fundies out there waving the Bible or it's not the true South Carolina Pride experience."

On hand for the event

will be speaker Wayne Besen, author of "Anything But Straight" and a frequent contributor to Q-Notes, folk pianist and vocalist Rachel Sage and local singer and diva Elaine Townsend.

Madden's particularly excited about nationally-known dance music artist Debby Holiday, who just had a hit on the charts with her song "Dive."

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Mecklenburg County considers domestic partner benefits

Issue debated previously by Charlotte City Council

by David Moore
Q-Notes staff



Mecklenburg County Commissioner Parks Helms says he wants to offer domestic partnership benefits for county employees.

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — In a Mecklenburg County Commission meeting held April 25, Chairman Parks Helms announced his support for domestic partnership benefits for gay and lesbian employees of Mecklenburg County.

The announcement drew support from other board Democrats but vocal opposition from Republicans.

"There is no reason to discriminate against people because of their sexual orientation," Helms said in the pages of the *Charlotte Observer*.

Helms brought the issue up without lobbying from
any political see **COUNTY** on 15

Anti-gay Cardinal Ratzinger becomes Pope Benedict XVI

LGBT Catholics see appointment as 'profound betrayal'

by Bob Roehr



German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, now known as Benedict XVI.

The College of Cardinals of the Roman Catholic Church selected German Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as pope April 19. He chose the name of Benedict XVI and was installed in the office April 24.

Some have referred to him as "God's Rottweiler" for the tenacious manner in which he enforced doctrinal discipline for the Papacy over the last 24 years as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly the Inquisition.

Catholic Conservatives were pleased by the selection, but most members of the LGBT community were dismayed.

Ratzinger, 78, was raised in Nazi Germany, reportedly forced into membership of the Hitler Youth and drafted into the army during World War II. He was ordained a priest in see **CARDINAL** on 4