

News notes: sc

from the palmetto state

by Ed Madden

Banquet celebrates 15 years of history

COLUMBIA — Over 100 people from across the state gathered at the Columbia Conference Center on April 15 to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the S.C. Gay and



Longtime activist Harriet Hancock (above) was honored at the SCGLPM banquet. Freedom to Marry's Evan Wolfson was featured guest.

Lesbian Pride Movement. The anniversary banquet featured special guest Evan Wolfson, the nation's leading activist on

marriage equality. The banquet also included a special tribute to honor longtime activist Harriet Hancock.

Wolfson, director of Freedom to Marry (www.freedomtomarry.org),

discussed the current battle for marriage equality in a historical context and he specifically addressed strategies for South Carolina's coming ballot campaign (see following entry).

He insisted that fair-minded South Carolinians need information, and time to digest it.

"The information that fair-minded people need," he added, "is local, concrete and real." He emphasized the need for our movement to show South Carolina faces and families, and he noted that the state is fourth in the nation for the number of gay and lesbian couples raising children at home.

Harriet Hancock was recognized for her three decades of service and activism for gays and lesbians and people living with HIV in South Carolina. During the tribute the S.C. Gay and Lesbian Community Center was officially renamed the Harriet Hancock Center for the Gay and Lesbian Community of South Carolina.

Calling the evening "one of the most happy and memorable events of my life," Hancock said, "I am honored and proud to have the community center bear my name."

Jim Blanton, one of the first co-chairs of SCGLPM, offered a special toast to Hancock, noting that "the history of SCGLPM is truly *herstory*."

Senate passes anti-gay amendment

COLUMBIA — On April 13, the S.C. Senate passed HB 3133, the amendment to the state constitution securing marriage discrimination and banning all forms of union for same-sex couples and their families. Updated information confirms the bill passed by a vote of 42-1. As reported last issue, only Sen. Robert Ford (D-Charleston) voted against the amendment.

The House version of the bill was amended to address concerns raised during the Senate Judiciary Committee meeting, by Sen. Glenn McConnell (R-Charleston) who called the bill "defective, unconstitutional, and vague."

At issue was unclear language discriminating against "putative unions," which McConnell said could affect contracts made by any couple. The House bill was amended to exclude private contracts, but the bill continues to prohibit civil unions and domestic partnerships. The amendment reads: "A marriage between one man and one woman is the only lawful domestic union that shall be valid or recognized," and it further states that the state cannot recognize or give any legal status to "any domestic union" recognized by other states, whatever name is given to that union.

During the discussion of the bill, Sen. Ford noted that there are 400,000 gays and lesbians in South Carolina and that it is the responsibility of senators to represent all people. The amended bill now goes back to the House for a vote. It is expected to appear on the Nov. 2006 general election ballot.

Picnic planned for North Augusta

AIKEN/NORTH AUGUSTA — The CSRA Rainbow Alliance and the Metropolitan Community Church of our Redeemer will hold a community Pride Picnic on June 4, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Riverview Park, 110 Riverview Park Dr. in North Augusta. Activities will include carnival games and contests for children and adults and a volleyball tournament. Admission is free. MCC will be selling refreshments to raise funds for the choir and a new kitchen. Community organizations, including CSRARA, SCGLPM, SCEC, Georgia Equality, and others, will have information tables at the picnic. For more information, call 803-663-9375.

LGLA boycotts Charleston cruise line

CHARLESTON — The Lowcountry Gay and Lesbian Alliance (LGLA) cancelled their annual harbor cruise in April when they discovered that the cruise line is owned by anti-gay Sen. Chip Campsen (pictured) (R-Charleston). As a matter of principle, they didn't want an outspoken advocate of discrimination to profit from their event.

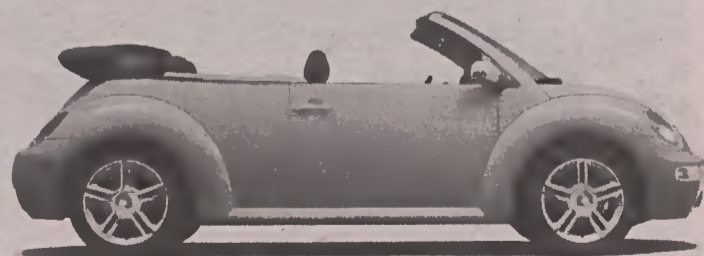
Campsen was one of the most vocal advocates of the anti-gay marriage and civil unions amendment. In the Judiciary Committee meetings he expressed a desire to vote on the amendment without giving the gay and lesbian community a fair hearing. LGLA



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