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## S.C. group starts campaign with interstate billboard

*Charleston's AFFA reaches out to voters to say no to the anti-gay 'marriage amendment'*

by Jim Baxter . Q-Notes staff

CHARLESTON, S.C. — The Charleston-based Alliance for Full Acceptance (AFFA) has started a campaign to defeat the proposed constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage in South Carolina.

"AFFA is in its eighth year and for the past seven years we've been putting up billboards on I-26," Susie Prueter, president of AFFA, said.

"It's becoming our trademark and we're becoming known as 'the billboard people!'"

"The billboard and the whole media campaign are meant to put a real empowering message out there about the LGBT community," she added. "The message of our first billboard is meant to put a human face on the impact of this discriminatory amendment. We know that nothing moves a person more toward support of gay and lesbian equality than knowing and talking with someone they know who is gay or lesbian."

AFFA is paying more than \$1,100 a week for a billboard on I-26 encouraging people to vote no in November.

"Someone you know, someone you love... is gay. They need your help in November," the billboard says.

"The campaign went out a little later than usual this year because we are trying to educate voters about the constitutional amendment prohibiting gay marriage," Prueter said.

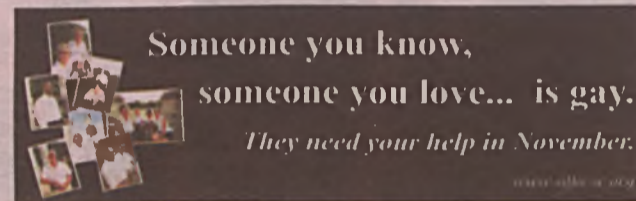
"This billboard is actually just part of a bigger media campaign taking place over four months. There won't be just one billboard, but three. This one will be up for six weeks — through Aug. 13 — then there'll be a second

and a third just before the vote on Nov. 7."

In addition to the billboard, the Alliance plans direct-mail, radio and television ads, bumper stickers and other means to get its message out.

Local newspapers quoted a leader of the Palmetto Family Council, based in Columbia, in response to the billboard.

"We are encouraging people to vote yes for marriage as an institution between men and women," Oran Smith, the Council's executive director, said. "We all have friends who are gay and lesbian, but it's our belief that only opposite genders should be afforded the privileges



AFFA's billboard urging voters to vote no on Nov. 7.

associated with the term 'marriage.'"

Prueter takes it in stride.

"Anytime we put out a message about the LGBT community here, the press feels compelled to go to 'the other side' for comment. Rep. John Graham Altman, a co-sponsor of the gay marriage legislation, is usually quoted," she said. "But people do speak out on both sides of the issue and we welcome that. We work hard to take the high road, even though there is a lot of rhetoric out there, a lot of it untrue. Our motto is to educate, not alienate."

Warren Redman-Gress, the Alliance's executive director, adds "If South Carolina residents look into their lives, they'll see that there are people who they know and love who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and those people need their support."

"There is an important vote in November and those individuals will be drastically affected by that vote." ▀

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### ONLINE Q.POLL

www.q-notes.com

Do you think the U.S. will ever amend the Constitution to ban same-sex marriage?

.yes .no

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