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Gay students arrested for Army protest in enlistment attempt

Nine individuals charged with trespassing after Army refuses to allow gay and lesbian students to enlist

by Donald Miller

GREENSBORO — Nine people were arrested, charged with criminal trespassing and led away in handcuffs on Sept. 21 when four openly gay students attempted to enlist in the U.S. Army.

The four students — Jessica Arvidson, Stacey Booe, Matt Hill Comer and Alex Nini — were participating in the Right to Serve campaign, a national effort by the group Soulforce protesting the federal “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

After the recruiter told the students they would not be allowed to enlist, Comer, the city organizer for the Right to Serve Campaign, stood in the doorway of the Army office and informed the media that the sit-in would start. Although the recruiters allowed the sit-in to begin, they did not allow media into the building and immediately called the police.

According to a report in the *Greensboro News and Record*, Major Stewart Upton, a press officer for the Department of Defense said members of the military must abide by the U.S. Code.

“Under that policy, any person who has stated that they are a homosexual or bisexual cannot be allowed entry into the U.S. military services based upon the applicable laws and regulations governing sexual conduct by members of the armed forces.”

In what seemed almost a note of support for the protestors, he added, “the Department of Defense supports and defends the constitutional right of all U.S. citizens to free speech and peaceful assembly.”

In a statement exclusive to *Q-Notes*, Comer described what happened once the sit-in began.

“A police officer arrived in just a couple of minutes and informed those sitting in that they were trespassing and that they must leave or be arrested,” he said. “One of those sitting in left while nine others remained. These nine were arrested, charged with Class 2 Misdemeanor Trespassing and set a court date of Oct. 23.”

Police said all nine were released on a writ-

ten promise to appear in court. The other five individuals arrested were Alexander James Barbato, Cristy Ford Elkins, Jacquelyn Hernandez, Danielle Ashton Hoffman, Leslie Jean Hughes and Caitlin Elyse Stroud.

According to a press release from Soulforce, the Right to Serve campaign is having an impact on military recruitment offices around the country.

Since the beginning of the summer, 25 openly gay Americans have attempted to enlist as part of the campaign. They range from recent high school graduates to recent college graduates, but each one has been denied the opportunity to enlist because of sexual orientation.

The week beginning Sept. 18 marked a turning point in the effort, as recruiting offices across the country closed their doors rather than offer recruiting interviews to openly gay youth.

In New York City, the Armed Forces Recruitment Center, which is normally open every day of the year, was closed without warning. When Right to Serve campaigners Curt Peterson, Kamal Davis and Rhonda Davis found the center empty, they held an all-day vigil outside the center. They were joined by more than 80 supporters from nearby schools and colleges.

Throughout the day, enlistees unaffiliated with Right to Serve showed up for recruiting appointments, but they found that their scheduled appointments had been cancelled without notice.

In Austin, Texas, Rebecca Solomon and Jesus Sanchez had both attempted to enlist in recent weeks, but were turned away because of their sexual orientation. They returned to the recruiting center with the intent of holding a sit-in with their supporters. Although the doors were locked, recruiters were plainly visible inside the office. Sanchez and Solomon were able to slip inside when one of the recruiters exited. After a brief sit-in, they were arrested and charged with criminal trespassing.

In Charlottesville, Va., openly gay third-year college student Wyatt Fore and second-year college student Rachel Miller, a lesbian, were arrested and charged with trespassing on private property after being asked to leave by recruitment officers.

In Washington, D.C., bisexual Mandy Craig and Alexandra Douglas-

Barrera, an 18-year-old lesbian, attempted to enlist Sept. 26 in the U.S. Navy, but the recruiting office was closed when they arrived, and calls to a posted telephone number went unanswered. No arrests were made.

To date, Greensboro has been the only city where openly gay youth were actually given a brief opportunity to sit down with recruiters. ▽



Alex Nini being taken away by Greensboro police.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Over two decades of building breast cancer awareness have provided information and hope for future innovations in treatment

For more than 20 years, National Breast Cancer Awareness Month (NBCAM) has educated women about early breast cancer detection, diagnosis and treatment.

NBCAM continues reaching out to women with several key messages, most notably, the importance of early detection through annual mammography screening for women over 40, or earlier for women at increased risk.

Mammography screenings are a woman’s best chance for detecting breast cancer early. When coupled with new treatment options, mammography screenings can significantly improve a woman’s chances of survival.

We are pleased that our efforts have contributed to more women than ever participating in mammography screening. Independent reports indicate that this has been instrumental in the increase in the survival rate for women with breast cancer.

Now, in an effort to further

increase our impact, we are seeking to take our activities to the next level — encouraging all women to take charge of their own breast health. Whether it includes practicing regular self-breast exams or making sure to schedule an annual mammogram, every little bit counts.

For patients and survivors, adherence to one’s prescribed treatment is equally as paramount. Visiting one’s healthcare provider on a regular basis and staying alert to changes in

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Celebrating gay history month

by Jason Villemez

Motivated by the lack of gay and lesbian history in textbooks, in 1994 Missouri high school teacher Rodney Wilson and other leaders and educators started a campaign to raise awareness in the general public about the history of the LGBT community.

Since then, many prominent groups and state and city governments have endorsed October as Gay and

see celebrate on 14



Mammograms are an important step toward prevention of breast cancer.

