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## NC Pride draws 8,000

Festival-goers flood Duke Campus for fair and parade

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

DURHAM — Estimates range as high as 8,000 attendees at the 25th annual N.C. Pride Festival held here on Saturday, Sept. 30.

On hand for the event were such Carolina luminaries as Chapel Hill City Councilman Mark Kleinschmidt, Dr. Janie Long of Duke University, Durham County Assistant City Attorney Sherri Rosenthal and former Air Force Sgt. Bruce Wyatt.

This year's Grand Marshal was Charlotte-based attorney Connie Vetter.

"We're very happy with the way things went," says N.C. Pridefest spokesperson Keith Hayes. "We had a great, wonderful sunny day with no clouds. It seems we've hit a winning formula with the parade. What really struck me was how much fun everyone was having."

Attendees for the event traveled from states as far away as Georgia, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and even the District of Columbia.

In keeping with the theme "Pride isn't just in One's Sexuality, but in your Whole Well Being," organizers put together a well-rounded slate of events that kicked off Sept. 29 with a



N.C. Pridefest Grand Marshal Connie Vetter addresses the crowd.

party at Fowlers in downtown Durham produced by Magnus Events and featuring special guest DJ Rob Harris.

In addition to the festival and parade, throughout the weekend the LGBT community from the Triangle and beyond flocked to other related events like a performance by the Triangle Gay Men's Chorus, a "Black Out Party" and Pride Drag Show, a Pridefest Brunch and a film screening of the Todd Verow film "Vacationland."

A gay couple from Norfolk, Va., told Q-Notes that this was the first time that they had attended the N.C. Pride Festival.

"It's a chance to get to see how the LGBT community in our neighboring state lives," offered Bill Russell, a business consultant who just recently made the move to the east coast with his partner from Oklahoma City.

"We're getting adapted to some of the cultural differences between the Midwest and the Southeast," he continued. "Everybody here has been great and we've met a lot of people."

Although Russell acknowledged some differences in the Midwest LGBT community and the Triangle area — "in terms of outness, these folks are really out and proud" — for the most part, he says, "gays and lesbians

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## Former Carrboro Mayor running for Orange County Board

Openly gay politician wants to see trans county employees protected

by Donald Miller

CARRBORO — Residents of Orange County have the opportunity to vote for an extremely qualified candidate when elections for the Board of Commissioners are held Nov. 7.

Mike Nelson, the openly gay former mayor of Carrboro, has an extensive history in public service.

Nelson's career began when he was elected precinct chair of East Franklin precinct while still an undergraduate. He went on to serve as chair of Dogwood Acres precinct in Carrboro. In the early 1990s, local Democrats elected Nelson vice-chair of the Orange County Democratic Party and to the state executive committee. He has attended four Democratic National Conventions (1992, 1996, 2000, 2004).

He first ran for the Carrboro Board of Aldermen in 1989, narrowly losing that year to an incumbent by only about 30 votes. He waited four years to run again and won easily in 1993.

In 1995, Nelson unexpectedly found himself in a mayoral race when Mayor

Eleanor Kinnaird decided to retire. Working hard to defeat two seasoned candidates, Nelson garnered as many votes as the other two put together, becoming Carrboro's youngest mayor.

"I served five terms," Nelson recalls fondly. "The most number of terms served by a mayor in Carrboro. I was the first openly gay mayor in the south and the first and only one so far in North Carolina."

Nelson's not the boastful type — he's just happy he's had the chance to achieve what he has for the community around him. During his multiple terms served as mayor he points to two particular achievements



Mike Nelson wants your vote on Nov. 7 when he runs for a seat on the Orange County Board of Commissioners.

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## A look at the Queen City's Community Center

Despite some financial challenges, new board members and new board director committed to staying the course

by Joe Greene

CHARLOTTE — The Gay & Lesbian Community Center here opened its doors for the first time on Feb. 1, 2003, with former OutCharlotte festival director



Find out how you can help!

Dan Kirsch on board as executive director. Planning for the center stretches back to the late 1990s, with facilities in areas like NODA and Dilworth being considered as a possible home.

Eventually the Central Ave. location was chosen because of the proximity to other lesbian and gay-owned businesses, as well as a high concentration of LGBT individuals in the surrounding neighborhoods.

A year or so later after its ini-

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