



QNotes

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Who's got the benefits: LGBT positive companies in the Carolinas

by Mark Smith

Q-Notes plunged headfirst into researching which companies in the Carolinas had domestic partnership benefits and sexual orientation non-discrimination policies in place back in 2005.

Since that time a number of other companies have jumped on board, which facilitated the need to revisit the issue.

While a number of companies that are new to this list have only recently added non-discrimination policies and domestic partnership benefits, **US Airways** has had both in place for over five years.

"Health benefits and all travel benefits are extended to all domestic and life partners," explains US Airways spokesperson Twana Williams. "The travel benefits began in 2001 and health benefits were initiated in 2002."

American City Business Journals, headquartered in Charlotte, publishes business journals for cities across the country. The company has a non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation and offers health insurance coverage to employees' domestic partners. www.bizjournals.com.

Blackbaud Inc., is the leading global provider of software and related services

designed specifically for non-profit organizations. Located in Charleston, S.C., they maintain a non-discrimination policy and benefits for same-sex spouses. www.blackbaud.com.

Located in Durham, **Biomerieux** is a leading international diagnostics group that specializes in the field of in vitro diagnostics for clinical and industrial applications. The company has a non-discrimination policy and offers insurance benefits for same-sex spouses. www.biomerieux-usa.com.

Health Insurance Company **Blue Cross and Blue Shield** of Chapel Hill offers domestic partnership benefits to unmarried couples of the opposite or same-sex.

The Bob Barker Company, based in Fuquay-Varina, N.C., is the nation's leading detention supplier. If you're scratching your head wondering just what that means — in short it's a massive operation that supplies goods to incarcerated prisoners.

According to their website, the company smashes radios on the floor and grinds toothbrushes on cinderblock walls to see how easily they can be made into shanks (crude knife-like weapons). They screen hygiene products for pork and other animal products to minimize conflicts with the practice of religious beliefs. They also maintain a non-discrimination policy and offer insurance benefits for domestic partners. www.bobbarker.com.

Communications Access Network Inc., a Charleston, S.C. business that supplies interpreter services for deaf speakers, provides domestic partner benefits and maintains a non-discrimination policy. 843-763-3890.

The Constella Group, a leading provider of professional health



A sizable number of companies in both Carolinas keep their LGBT employees happy with non-discrimination policies and domestic partnership benefits.

services worldwide, is located in Durham, N.C. The company has a non-discrimination policy that includes sexual orientation and it offers domestic partnership benefits. www.constellagroup.com.

Digital Recorders is a technology leader in transportation, law enforcement, and security digital communications systems. They design and manufacture products that improve the flow and mobility of people through transportation infrastructure, mitigate security threats, and enhance law enforcement surveillance capabilities. Incorporated in 1983 in Durham, N.C. the company's policies include a non-discrimination bylaw and domestic partnership benefits. www.digrec.com.

see carolina on 5

Interview: Deborah Cox

Multi-talented diva makes Charlotte stop Feb. 24

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

Deborah Cox is on the phone. She sounds relaxed and open, laughing easily whether recalling the first time she heard herself on the radio or discussing the pressures of being a gay icon. She's calling from Miami, where she lives with her music producer husband, Lascelles Stephens, and their children, Isaiah, 3, and Sumayah, eight months.

The 32-year-old Canadian has come a long way since her self-titled debut album dropped in 1995. She's recorded a string of R&B (and in remixed form dance) classics, including the record-setting "Nobody's Supposed To Be Here," "Things Just Ain't The Same," "It's Over Now" and her roof-raising anthem "Absolutely Not."

These hits and more have netted her three Juno awards (the Canadian version of the Grammy) and two Soul Train awards. She's racked up nine number one hits on *Billboard's* Club Play chart. And in 2004, she made her Broadway debut starring in Elton John's musical, "Aida."

Here's what the multi-talented artist shared with Q-Notes in advance of her Feb. 24 performance at Charlotte's Velocity nightclub. **You grew up in Toronto. How long has your family been there?**

I'm a first generation Canadian. My parents moved there from the West Indies — Guyana.

Same-sex marriage is now legal in your home country.

Yes it is. And I'm really kinda surprised that there's such a fight to stop same-sex marriage here in the U.S. It's just not a big deal.

Who were your musical influences growing up?

Hmmm, who were my musical influences... Gladys Knight, Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin... jazz was also a big thing in our house, Ella Fitzgerald, Dinah Washington, Billie Holiday.

You were once a background vocalist for another Canadian diva, Celine Dion. What was that like?

Very interesting. It was in the early part of her career when she was doing her English albums in the U.S. It allowed me perform on "The Tonight Show," "The Arsenio Hall Show," see dance on 7



Can Deborah Cox be stopped? Absolutely Not!