

# Q Notes

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## Multiple vigils for Sean Kennedy held across S.C.

**Columbia Mayor Bob Coble speaks at vigil; victim's mother starts foundation to fight hate crimes**

by Mark Smith

The murder of 20-year-old Sean Kennedy has resonated across the Palmetto state, prompting multiple vigils to honor his brief life.

To date three vigils have been held: Greenville (June 3), Myrtle Beach (June 6) and Columbia (July 1). At press time a fourth was planned for Charleston on July 10.

In Greenville, Kennedy's mother Elke Kennedy-Parker stood before a crowd of 300 in downtown, recalling the day her son, Sean, told her he was gay.

"He said, 'Mom, if you don't want to love me anymore, I will understand. I told him that there is nothing that he could ever do for me to stop loving him.'"

Sean Kennedy's friends, family and supporters packed the center city plaza for the candlelight vigil.

Leaders from the religious community called for peace and an end to violence.

Donna Stroud, pastor of the Metropolitan

Community Church of the Upstate offered a prayer for Kennedy's friends and family, as well as for Stephen Andrew Moller — Kennedy's accused killer.

"No one is safe from hatred until everyone is equally valued as a human being and equally protected under the law," said Stroud.

A few people in the crowd wept as Kennedy-Parker read a poem, "Sean's Last Wish," written by a friend.

*Sean, beautiful young man  
Your demise has touched our hearts  
There must have been a wondrous plan  
For God chose you to play the part  
This sad and bitter world  
Is due a wake-up call  
We saw the snarling jaws of hate  
And you dear, took the fall  
Your spirit all encompassing  
Cries out for all to know  
We will join hands, your song to sing  
And vow to never let this go  
We must cast light on your purpose  
Lest it all have been in vain  
Today you have our promise  
From you, this world has much to gain  
I see pure determination*



Elke Kennedy-Parker, mother of slain 20-year-old Sean Kennedy, pays homage to her son during a candlelight vigil held in his memory.

*There in your Mother's eyes  
Your last wish will know realization*

*On this you can rely  
During the Greenville vigil, Stroud pointed out Kennedy's commitment to equality for all people. "Even in death, he saved lives by donating his organs," said Stroud. "Because of his choice, the lives of four people he never knew have been saved."*

Just three days later another crowd came to pay homage to Kennedy's memory. Kennedy-Parker was once again in attendance.

"His death is an example of what hate can do," Kennedy-Parker told the group gathered for the candlelight vigil at The Center Project in Myrtle Beach. "We need to stop the hate and stop the violence."

In Columbia, candles lit up the night in memory of Kennedy at the State House.

Despite the fact the crowd was somewhat smaller — around 100 people — the emotion surrounding Kennedy's death was ever present. "How could anyone think of hurting anyone because of who they are?" Kennedy-Parker asked those present.

In addition to Kennedy-Parker, Sean's sister Dawn, South Carolina Equality Coalition board member Ed Madden and Columbia Mayor Bob Coble spoke to the group.

The outpouring of support for Kennedy-Parker has prompted the mother of the slain youth — along with other members of the Upstate — to put together Sean's Last Wish, a

see she's on 21

see vigils on 16

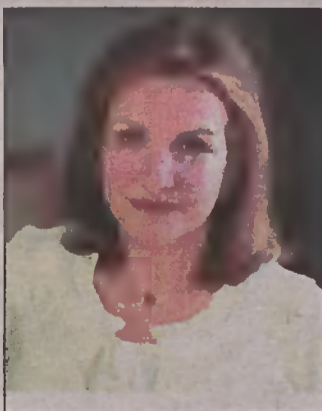
## Elizabeth Edwards declares her support for gay marriage

**Wife of former N.C. Senator turned presidential candidate 'completely comfortable with gay marriage'**

Elizabeth Edwards, wife of Democratic presidential hopeful and former N.C. Senator John Edwards, kicked off San Francisco's annual gay Pride parade by splitting with her husband over support for legalized gay marriage.

"I don't know why someone else's marriage has anything to do with me," Mrs. Edwards said at a news conference before the parade started. "I'm completely comfortable with gay marriage."

She made the remark almost offhandedly in answering a question from



**'It seems to me we're making issues of things that honestly ... don't matter.'**  
— Elizabeth Edwards

reporters after she delivered a standard campaign stump speech during a breakfast hosted by the Alice B. Toklas Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Democratic Club, an influential San Francisco political organization.

California's presidential primary is Feb. 5, one of the earliest contests in the nation.

She conceded her support puts her at odds with her husband, a former Senator from North Carolina who has said that he supports civil unions among gay couples — but not same-sex marriages.

"John has been pretty clear about it, that he is very conflicted," she said. "He has a deeply held belief against any form of discrimination, but that's up against his being raised in the 1950s in a rural southern town."

To date, no serious presiden-

tial candidate from either major political party has publicly supported gay marriage, including John Edwards. San Francisco area politicians and activists hailed Elizabeth Edwards' appearance as another step for gay civil rights.

I think honestly he's on a road that a lot of people in this country are on. ... They're struggling with this. Most of the gay and lesbian people I know ... have seen their friends and family walking down that same road.

"It's frustrating, I know," she added, "but it's a long distance from where we are now to the pews of a Southern Baptist church. So, John's been as honest as he can about that."

Edwards said she has come to the conclusion that the marriage of another couple "makes no difference to me," just as it would make no difference in her opinion of a neighbor if he painted his house a different color.

"If he's pleasant to me on the street, if his