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HRC Carolinas announces 2008 honorees

Elke Kennedy, Bennie Colclough and Myers Park Baptist to be honored at February dinner

by Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

CHARLOTTE — The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Carolinas Gala committee



Elke Kennedy will be presented with HRC Carolinas' Equality Award, sharing the honor with Myers Park Baptist Church.

has revealed the winners of the 2008 Equality Award and Trailblazer Award, which will be presented Feb. 16 during the 13th annual fundraising dinner. The announcement of the honorees was made public on Jan. 9.

The Equality Award, which recognizes out-

standing individual or organizational work for LGBT equality and progress, will be presented to Elke Kennedy of Greenville, S.C., and Charlotte's Myers Park Baptist Church. The Trailblazer Award will be presented to the Rev. Dr. Bennie Colclough.

Kennedy, who was recently named Q-Notes' 2007 Person of the Year, became a champion of LGBT equality after her gay son, Sean, was killed in a hate crime last May. She is the founder of Sean's Last Wish, a foundation created to raise awareness of the need for hate crimes legislation and to combat prejudice. Kennedy has lived in South Carolina with her family since 1985. While Sean's death was investigated as a hate crime, South Carolina currently has no local hate crime laws.

Kennedy and Sean's Last Wish were instrumental in campaigning for federal hate crimes legislation in 2007. The Matthew Shepard Act passed both chambers of Congress, an historic first, before it

died in committee. Kennedy has spoken to audiences and organized vigils in Greenville, Charleston and Columbia, along with appearances at Atlanta Pride, Pride Charlotte, SC



Pride and in New York City.

Myers Park Baptist Church took a courageous stand last November when the church's Board of Deacons, representing an almost 2,000-member congregation, decided to seek dialogue with the North Carolina Baptist Convention as an act of witness to Christ's welcome to all people.

In the interest of social justice, Myers Park "outed" itself to its own religious association to declare that the church would accept all LGBT people who wish to follow Christ and "participate fully in our faith community and serve as leaders in our Church."

The move resulted in Myers Park's expulsion from the Convention, which has a policy to separate from the Baptist community any member church that openly accepts and affirms LGBT persons and same-sex relations.

A statement of response was immediately posted on Myers Park's website and read by the church's senior pastor, the Rev. Dr. H. Stephen Shoemaker, on several newscasts.

The statement professed, "We will not allow our conscience to be coerced by [the

Convention's] exclusionary conditions of membership, and we reaffirm Christ's welcome to all persons and our commitment to a ministry of reconciliation that seeks to be a healing witness in a world of divisions and hatreds and a part of God's dream to make all things one."

The 2008 Trailblazer Award, which recognizes an individual who has a record of consistent and significant contributions to the LGBT community and is seen as a role model to others, will be presented to the Rev. Dr. Bennie Colclough, pastor of Providence Christian Church in Manning, S.C.

Colclough has given much time and effort working as an advocate and straight ally for the South Carolina Equality Coalition (SCEC), the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (SCGLPM), Faith In America and HRC. A native of Sumter, S.C., Colclough served in the United States Marine Corps for six years with a tour of duty in Vietnam, and is a graduate of Yale University Divinity School.

He has actively participated in numerous town hall forums, vigils, press conferences and radio talk shows around the issues of discrimination, justice, equality and religious bigotry.



An active straight ally in South Carolina, Rev. Bennie Colclough will be given the Trailblazer Award.

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Worst anti-gay voices of 2007

GLAAD lists the homophobic defamers of the year

by Marc McCarthy

The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) has issued its list of the worst anti-gay voices of last year. Featured offenders include a successful TV actor, a pro athlete, a trio of right-wing talking heads and a daily newspaper.

"Since our founding over 22 years ago, GLAAD has taken a stand against anti-gay defamation," said GLAAD President Neil G. Giuliano. "As a media advocacy organization for the LGBT community, it is our responsibility to articulate the harm done when anti-gay sentiment is voiced through media platforms. By fighting defamation with educational resources and telling the stories of the community, GLAAD changes hearts and minds so that LGBT people can live in a more understanding, accepting and inclusive society."

Anti-gay voices of 2007 (in chronological order)

• **Isaiah Washington**

Summary: During a backstage press conference at the 64th

Annual Golden Globe Awards on Jan. 15, then "Grey's Anatomy" star Isaiah Washington used an anti-gay slur when denying an allegation made earlier by T.R. Knight. Washington said on the air: "No, I did not call T.R. a faggot." Rumors had begun in Oct. 2006 that Washington initially referred to Knight as a faggot during an on-set altercation with co-star Patrick Dempsey. Following the incident, Washington apologized and worked with GLAAD and the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) to produce a PSA conveying the power of demeaning, dehumanizing words.

• **Snickers**

Summary: GLAAD strongly condemned elements of an ad campaign launched by Snickers during the Feb. 4 Super Bowl. The televised ad showed two mechanics eating from opposite ends of a Snickers candy bar and, after their mouths touch, ripping out their chest hair in a desperate attempt to "do something manly." The campaign included a website featuring alternate endings



for the ad — among them, a version called "Wrench" where one man grabs a wrench and uses it to bash the other, who responds by slamming the hood of the car down on the first man's head. Another video featured NFL athletes reacting with prejudice and disgust to depictions of two men kissing.

• **Tim Hardaway**

Summary: In the days following former NBA player John Amaechi coming out publicly as a gay man, former NBA all-star Tim Hardaway said on the Miami radio station Sports Talk 790 The Ticket, "You know, I hate gay people, so I let it be known. I don't like gay people. I am homophobic. I don't like it. It shouldn't be in the world or in the United States." Following his Feb. 14 comments, Hardaway went on to apologize and, on Sept. 26, he participated in a dis-

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