

National News Notes

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

State Rep. takes historic step out

DANBURY, Conn. — State Rep. Jason

Bartlett (pictured) came out Jan. 19 during an interview with *The Danbury News-Times*. The announcement made Bartlett the first and only openly LGBT African-American state legislator in the nation.



The first-term Democrat said he has been open about his sexuality with his family, but decided the time was right to make it public.

Rumors about Bartlett's sexual orientation had circulated during past political campaigns, including posts on some websites. "For me the decision came down to why not now," he told the paper. "To me this is about having a conversation with my larger family — the people of Greater Danbury who voted for me."

Joseph DaSilva, chairman of the Danbury Democratic Town Committee, said in *The News-Times*, "There were some aspersions being cast and he put those to rest. It shouldn't be an issue for any person or any voter, and I would be greatly disappointed if it were. Jason is an excellent lawmaker who does a great job in Hartford and is responsive to his constituents. That's what people should really be focusing on."

Late gay philanthropist still giving

SEATTLE, Wash. — Former Microsoft

executive and long-time philanthropist Richard (Ric) Weiland passed away June 24, 2006, at the age of 53. His estate announced Feb. 25 that a \$46 million fund had been established to support the work of 10 national LGBT and HIV/AIDS organizations. Each group will receive a specific annual amount from the fund for the next eight years.

Among the recipient groups are Lambda Legal (who will receive more than \$11 million in total); the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (\$7.9 million); Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (\$800,000); the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force; Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays; and amfAR, the Foundation for AIDS Research.

"Ric's death was a terrible loss," said Lambda Legal Executive Director Kevin Cathcart. "But it is no surprise that his generosity will live on. At Lambda Legal, we are honored by the great respect he had for our work, reflected in this tremendous bequest. He set a new standard for vision and philanthropy for our movement..."

Black gay poli-sci award launched

WASHINGTON, D.C. — The National Conference of Black Political Scientists and the Gay & Lesbian Leadership Institute have jointly established the Bayard Rustin Award. The award honors outstanding contributions to the field of political science on the topic of LGBT African-Americans in electoral politics. NCOBPS will administer a cash prize to the award's recipient, to be presented at the group's annual conference in 2009.

Chuck Wolfe, president and CEO of GLLI,

said he hoped the award would foster research that could lead to more openly gay African-Americans seeking leadership roles in their communities. "More than 400 openly gay officials are serving their communities across America, but just a handful are African-American. We hope to change that."

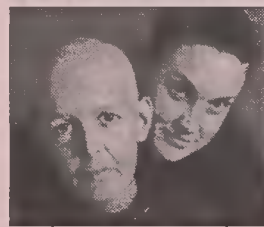
Dr. Desiree Selma Pedescleaux, president of NCOBPS, added that the work of political scientists is vital to equalizing governmental representation. "We hope this award leads to scholarship that helps the African-American LGBT community realize its leadership potential in electoral politics."

Lesbian-themed docu wins Oscar

HOLLYWOOD — Director-producer Cynthia Wade and producer Vanessa Roth shared the Oscar for Documentary Short at the

80th Annual Academy Awards, presented Feb. 23 at the Kodak Theater in Los Angeles. Their 38-minute film, "Freeheld," chronicles the 2006 struggle of New Jersey Detective Lt. Laurel Hester to transfer her pension to her domestic partner, Stacie Andree (both pictured), as she nears the end of her battle with cancer.

Hester challenged the Ocean County Freeholders, the locally elected officials, to provide Andree with the security that surviving married spouses receive automatically. The film captures the very public and urgent dispute with the Freeholders, as well as the cou-



ple's intensely private struggle as they come to terms with Hester's terminal illness.

In addition to the Academy Award, "Freeheld" has received a number of notable awards since its release, including the Special Jury Prize at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival and the Audience Awards at Outfest, Newfest and the Palm Springs International Film Festival.

Campaign marks Shepard killing

DENVER, Colo. — In observance of the 10 years since Matthew Shepard's death, the Matthew Shepard Foundation plans to launch an aggressive anti-hate campaign aimed at engaging the general public in the mission to "Replace Hate with Understanding, Compassion and Acceptance." Judy Shepard will unveil the new campaign during the 7th Annual Bear to Make a Difference Gala, which will be held on March 29.

This year's Gala will include a large silent auction, and a live auction of teddy bears signed by celebrities including Dolly Parton, Better Midler, Ellen DeGeneres, Liza Minnelli, Tim McGraw and Faith Hill. Former NBA player John Amaechi will receive the Foundation's "Making a Difference Award."

"In the past 10 years since my son's death, I have spoken to over one million people who are searching for a way to help us in our mission to erase hate," said Judy Shepard, executive director of the Matthew Shepard Foundation. "We developed this campaign with that goal in mind and are eager to provide individuals with the tools and resources needed to amplify their voices and begin to turn the tide on hate in America." ▀

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