

# Q-Notes Person of the Year: Angela Brightfeather

2009

From her humble home in North Carolina to the doorsteps of national organizations and the halls of Congress, there's no doubt that Angela Brightfeather has done her part this year.

If there were issues to be discussed, if the transgender community needed an advocate or if the transgender community was being ignored, Brightfeather stepped up.

The 63-year-old transgender leader and activist is a legend — she's been involved in advocacy work since she was in her 20s; and she's certainly not afraid of ruffling feathers.

"Anybody who challenges the establishment is going against the flow," she told Q-Notes. "When you do that, you become the ultimate activist. You become the one that pushes too hard, that wants everybody to take a lead, the one who wants to really change things."

Shaking up the establishment seems to have come easy to her. Since the most recent controversy over transgender inclusion in the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)

in late 2007, Brightfeather has taken on high-profile leadership among her transgender brothers and sisters. In February 2008, she helped to organize a friendly protest — characterized as an "outreach" — to dinner guests at the Human Rights Campaign Carolinas Gala in Charlotte.

But her work isn't just local. As vice president of the Transgender American Veterans Association (TAVA), Brightfeather has worked diligently to see the needs of transgender servicemembers met with dignity and equality.

TAVA's biggest battle has been securing equal and fair healthcare treatment for transgender, former servicemembers at government-run VA hospitals.

"We've just been able to establish a connection at the VA that might allow us to meet with Gen. Shinseki," Brightfeather said, referring to Obama's new pick for VA secretary. "It's a

dream come true to think of sitting down with the director of the VA to tell him our needs and where we are being discriminated against."

Among the group's accomplishments this year are a highly successful survey of transgender servicemembers and veterans and joint work with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network on the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

"We'd also like to be able to work on being

able to march in the veteran's parade in Washington, D.C. next year," Brightfeather said. "We'd be the first transgender group to march in that parade."

Brightfeather was born in London to bi-national parents and was declared a U.S. citizen soon after birth. Just months afterward, her family moved to New York state. Her introduction to Southern living came only a few short years ago, when she moved to North Carolina. But in the time she's been here, Brightfeather has managed to make a difference both locally and nationally, becoming a fundamental part of Carolina transgender

organizing and a vital leader and activist in the greater LGBT community.

With her leadership comes a sense of urgency and toughness. Unafraid to say it just like she feels it, Brightfeather's learned to lead and speak from the heart and from the passion that's kept her involved for decades.

It is with great pride that the staff of Q-Notes names Angela Brightfeather our 2008 Person of the Year. ▀

— compiled by Q-Notes staff

**online extra:** Read more about Person of the Year Angela Brightfeather at [q-notes.com](http://q-notes.com).



## 2008 — a tough year

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### The HIV-positive DJ files

"Raleigh man pleads guilty to HIV health law violation"

Sept. 6

"House arrest for gay DJ's second HIV violation"

Nov. 1

Q-Notes took the most flack this year for deciding to run with the story of Joshua Waldon Weaver, a 23-year-old DJ in gay clubs in Raleigh and Wilmington.

In September, Weaver pleaded guilty to violating state health regulations on communicable diseases. His infractions were

failing to use a condom during intercourse and failing to inform his partners of his HIV-positive status.

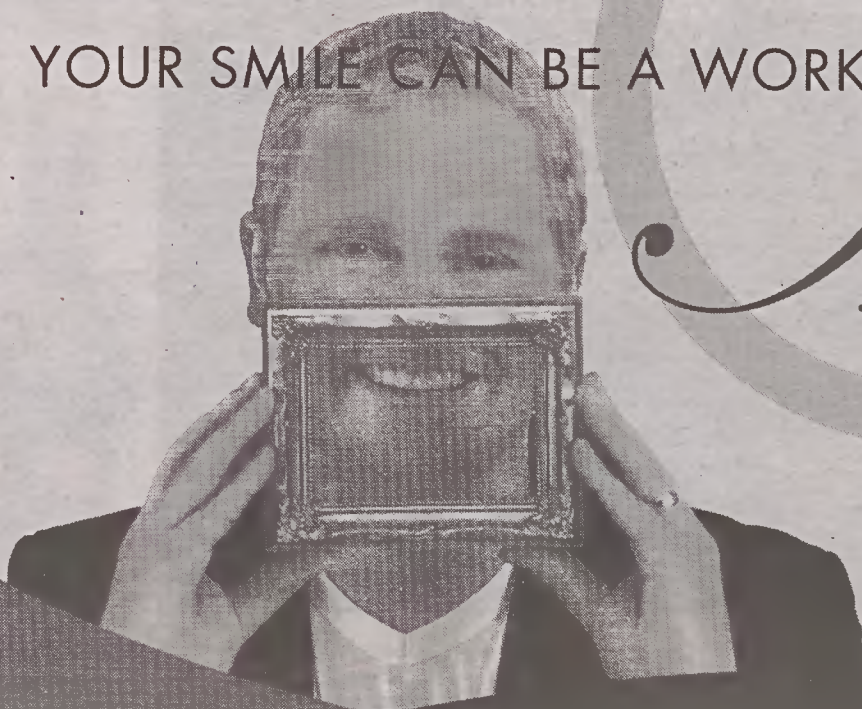
Evidently, failing to learn his lesson the first time, Weaver was arrested and charged yet again with a second set of HIV health regulation violations in November. This time, a court put him on three months house arrest.

Community members decried our decision to publish the story and his photo. We felt it was in the best interest of the community and of reporting the news accurately and fairly.

Since then, Weaver's stayed out of the limelight as far as we know. ▀

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