



on being a gay parent

by Brett Webb-Mitchell
qnotes contributor

The D.C.-N.C. Connection

What do North Carolina lesbian and gay couples do when the laws of the state make adopting a child by both people in a same-sex relationship nearly impossible? Where do they go when the laws and constitution of NC make it impossible for LGBTQ couples to wed, let alone live in a domestic partnership or civil union of any kind, shape or form? Where do gay couples in a significant long-term relationship go when they are desirous of being dads through surrogacy? Where do lesbian or gay couples go if they want to have both of their names on their infant's birth certificate?

Simple: North Carolina individuals or couples go to Washington, D.C.! Washington, D.C. has become the marriage and birth sanctuary or haven for many North Carolina LGBTQ individuals and couples who wish to wed, have receptions, give birth to a child or have a child through surrogacy.

I know I'm a little slow on trends, but this is a definite trend. It was unbeknownst to me until the last few weeks when "D.C." started to arise when talking to gay and lesbian couples who were either getting married, having a child, adopting a child or having a

child through surrogacy. The first inkling about D.C. being the hot place to marry came about when I looked through the photo album of a recently married couple of men who are gay and deaf. I realized that I knew three or four other couples who had recently wed in D.C. This led to the second "aha" moment when talking to a lesbian couple who were wed in D.C., claimed "residency" in the city itself before they were wedded (and have recently moved to N.C.), and plan to go back "up" to D.C. when their child (they are expectant parents) is born. Why D.C.? Because both names of the mothers can be on the birth certificate when a child is born in a D.C. hospital. I've now known three North Carolina lesbian couples who had their child in D.C. for this very reason. And, their N.C. families gladly trooped up to the city to celebrate the festive day of birth, in which the caravan then came back down with a new citizen of N.C.

Lastly, a gay friend and his new partner

who have both always wanted a child have been working with lawyers and a surrogacy service in D.C., and they are expecting a child in October 2013. Will they be recognized as the "moms" and "dads" legally in N.C.? Apparently, there is already legal precedent in N.C. for recognizing either gay or lesbian parents when children born in other cities and states where it is legal to have both dads and both moms on the birth certificate.

"Necessity" and "desire" are the "mother" of invention, says the old tired cliché. And, on this matter, I'm glad that North Carolinians who love living in this state have found a way of both fulfilling their desire to be parents and securing their rights as parents through other creative means. I hope other wannabe couples and parents take advantage when other states are seeing the inevitable reality of this country, that we, who are LGBTQI, are slowly but surely becoming equal citizens of these United States. : :

community voices

by Kisha Fox and Nicole Grier

Positive growth through community service

Greetings, from the respectful women of Chi Psi Omega Fraternity, Inc.! An organization that, while still very young, has begun to turn up the heat in the LGBTQ community. Born on June 25, 2011, by four distinct women — Roberta Kerr, Melinda Dixon, Samantha Mercer and Diana Nutter — Chi Psi Omega is a positive space for dominant lesbian women to promote equality and awareness in the LGBTQ community. Since establishment, the organization prides itself on community service outreach.

The organization's One Community Cares project began in 2011 and progressed into a community-wide effort to assist the area homeless by collecting and distributing toiletries and non-perishable foods to

the homeless. Over 300 care packages were distributed through Crisis Assistance Ministry Free Store and the Men's Shelter to the city's homeless community during the project. The care packages included socks, gloves, lotion, deodorant, shampoo/conditioner, toothbrush/

paste, soap and other hygiene-related products. The gratitude on the faces of the people at each of these locations is unexplainable. The experience shared was life-changing and concluded 2012 on an extremely high note.

Chi Psi Omega also adopted Hamilton St. and neighboring streets located in the NC Music Factory area. Each quarter, those streets are cleaned as part of the Keep Charlotte Beautiful initiative. Every third Sunday of the month we present Spoken

Word Sunday in the private room of Wet Willie's. This is a monthly fundraiser hosted as an open mic to allow the community to come out and share their talents. The organization's Back to School drive starts every year around May and runs through August. This is a time where school supplies are collected; funds are raised through car washes.

Last June, the organization began quarterly community forums at the LGBT Community Center. The forums are the organi-

zation's gift back to community because they are free to attend and local professionals are brought in to form the panel to discuss various topics of concern to the LGBTQ community. Past forums consisted of topics ranging from safe sex to domestic violence. In September

of 2012, Chi Psi Omega was honored to be a part of the Democratic National Convention by sponsoring *qnotes'* coverage of this historic event for Charlotte.

Chi Psi Omega is also growing! Our membership has more than doubled since incorporation. The first membership line, The New Edition, crossed in the Spring of 2012 bringing Tania Cox, Christina Whitner and Devon Copeland into an incredible movement. In December 2012, two new women were added to Chi Psi Omega Fraternity, Inc.'s journey to bridge gaps in society and within the LGBTQ community itself. Kisha Fox and Nicole Grier became the Dynamic Duo, adding to the elite group of women who are changing the meaning of service within the LGBTQ community and abroad.

This year, Chi Psi Omega will host its annual I Am You Campaign beginning in March. I Am You is an anti-bullying campaign which runs until the end of the school

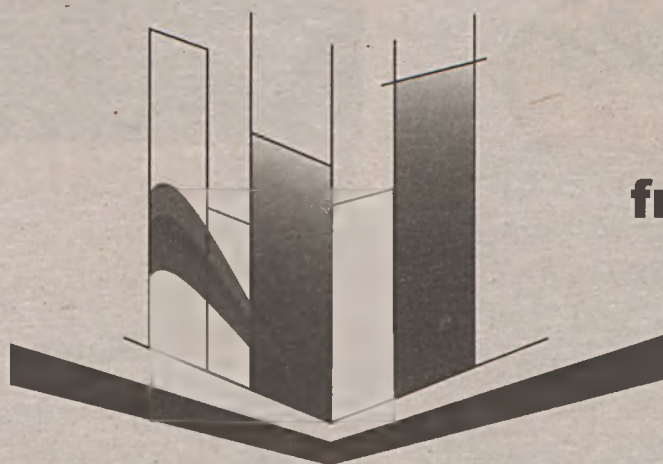
year and brings awareness of the impact of bullying through assemblies at local schools. Assemblies consist of a Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police officer and a licensed therapist teaching children the importance of bullying awareness and prevention. Last

year, Kennedy Charter Schools hosted the I Am You Campaign. The campaign was such a success that Kennedy Charter began an in-house anti-bullying program after the school recognized the need. Chi Psi Omega Fraternity, Inc. is currently seeking other schools with a need for this program to mentor students on bullying to host the I Am You Campaign.

Please, visit our website, chipsiomegafraternity.org, for more information on the organization or to apply for membership. : :

— Kisha Fox, a native of Charlotte, and Nicole Grier, a native of Nashville, Tenn., are members of Chi Psi Omega Fraternity, Inc. Grier graduated from Independence High School in 1994 and is currently enrolled at Central Piedmont Community College studying business. She is the owner of SMOKN-G's Catering and Event Planning Services. Fox graduated high school in 2000 and attended the University of North Carolina-Charlotte, where she studied kinesiology and interdisciplinary health studies.

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