

## news notes: carolinas. nation. world.

compiled by Lainey Millen | Matt Comer

### Charlotte

#### Amendment One and the law presentation slated

CHARLOTTE — On Aug. 1, Conniè Vetter, an attorney and member of the North Carolina State Bar and Mecklenburg County Bar, will present "Amendment One, DOMA, and Gay Law 101: Everything you *should* and *need* to know" at the LGBT Community Center of Charlotte, 2508 N. Davidson, at 6:30 p.m.

Vetter will share what impact Amendment One has had and how the state's law affects LGBT individuals and couples, in addition to ways to protect oneself. Also, with the June 26 repeal of the *Defense of Marriage Act*, a discussion will ensue to go over the significance of the Supreme Court decision both on the national and state levels.

With a focus primarily on the needs of LGBT individuals, as well as couples, Vetter is an experienced mediator. She previously has served on the boards of the Center, NC GALA Institute for Equal Rights, North Carolina Gay & Lesbian Attorneys, Mecklenburg Gay & Lesbian Political Action Committee, Equality NC, Time Out Youth and OutCharlotte. In 2004 she was appointed to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community Relations Committee by the Charlotte City Council.

Vetter has received numerous awards and honors throughout her career. Her passion for educating people on legal issues continues as she shares her expertise with the community and beyond.  
info: gaycharlotte.com.

— L.M.

#### LGBT endorsers prepare for campaigns

CHARLOTTE — Community members with the Mecklenburg LGBT Political Action Committee (MeckPAC) are preparing for this year's local election season. As campaign filing got underway at the beginning of July, the group announced a significant expansion in their endorsement process.

MeckPAC, founded in 1998, has long endorsed in Charlotte Council and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools races. For the first time

this year, they will also review mayoral candidates in Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville.

"Our steering committee knows there are LGBT citizens and MeckPAC supporters in these towns and we want to provide an easy way for them to evaluate the LGBT inclusiveness of those running for office there," the group said in a release. "If successful, we foresee a time when we can expand our reach to also include the town councils and commissions."

The highest-profile local race this year will be that for Charlotte's mayor. Announced candidates include: Patrick Cannon, James Mitchell and Edwin Peacock.

The filing period for this year's local elections opened July 5 for candidates running for Charlotte City Council, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education and the town commissions and mayoral offices of Mecklenburg County suburbs. Filing ended on July 19.

The group says it will send candidate questionnaires to all who file for the elected offices on the ballot this year. The deadline for candidate responses is July 26.

Read a longer version of this story at [goqnotes.com/23857/](http://goqnotes.com/23857/) and stay tuned to *qnotes* for more news as this year's local election season progresses.

— M.C.

#### Pride Band forms marching contingent

CHARLOTTE — The Charlotte Pride Band has announced it is forming their new Charlotte Pride Marching Band. The news comes just in time for this year's Charlotte Pride, which will include the first local Pride parade in Charlotte since NC Pride visited in 1994.

"Charlotte Pride is commemorating the first Pride parade in 19 years with a marching band," the group said. "Not just any ol' band, though — one that's composed primarily of LGBT musicians of all ability levels who want to have a fun, visible (and audible) celebration of Pride."

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### Pageant sees first lesbian contestant

COLUMBIA, S.C. — The Miss South Carolina 2013 pageant, a part of the Miss American Organization, has "come out" *literally* this year with its first openly lesbian contestant in the system's history.

Analouisa Valencia, a 20-year-old from Spartanburg and titled as Miss Lyman, decided that it was time to be open about her sexual orientation during the pageant's run this season. Hiding who she was, Valencia said, made her less comfortable and confident competing for last year's Miss South Carolina.

"Coming out this year in the pageant world has made me become a lot more confident and comfortable with who I am and inspired so many people to make their dreams come true, no matter who you are or where you come from," she said.

Her mission was to inspire people and make things better for everyone.

"I wasn't going to compete this year, but God put me on a mission and I accepted fully. I promised I would do my best to inspire and make change happen for LGBT, minorities, underprivileged and special needs [people]," Valencia continued.

The trailblazer's Facebook post stated that she did not make it into the finals and felt she inspired others.

As far as her knowing about her sexual orientation, she said she knew most of her life. "I loved Barbie. I thought she was incredibly beautiful. As time progressed and I got older, I started to develop crushes on female classmates."

When asked about whether or not the fallout of her disclosure had come with a price, considering that pageant systems are quite political, she said, "It hasn't come with a price that I can tell. All I have received is positive feedback, encouraging words, prayers and endless support. That has made me so humble." She added that the other contestants welcomed her with open arms, even though she feared they would not.

In Canada, a transgender contestant, Jenna Talackova, competed in the Miss Universe Canada in 2012. She had originally been disqualified from the event, but with pressure mounting from activist organizations and the community, she was allowed to compete. She placed in the top 12 and tied for Miss Congeniality.

Inspired by her, Valencia said she looked up to her for taking a stance and that Talackova was proud of herself and exhibited strength during the process. "I have had to have all those qualities, as well," she commented when asked if she thought she'd have similar challenges.

Her Talent presentation was a vocal rendition of "Footprints in the Sand" by Leona Lewis. She told The Associated Press that she "became interested in pageants in 2000, when she joined a mentoring program for young girls called Palmetto Princesses and met Miss Spartanburg. The tiara got her hooked. She has been competing ever since."

Her platform centers around Special Olympics. She said she was a fan and that she had worked with it since she was eight and began coaching when she was 14.

Valencia is biracial and bilingual. Her father is of Hispanic decent and her mother is African-American. She has two brothers. A former gymnast, she crossed over to singing when an injury sidelined her career.

— L.M.



Photo Credit: Analouisa Valencia via Facebook



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