

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville Gay and
Lesbian Information
Line:
253-2971

To report discrimination
or violence:
SALGA Documentation Proj.:
253-1656
U.S. Dept. of Justice toll-free:
1-800-457-HATE

Asheville, NC

Serving the WNC Gay/Lesbian Community

September, 1990

WNC Gay/Lesbian Community Receives Public Recognition

Beth Betbeze and Joan Marshall Honored

The gay and lesbian community in Western North Carolina was recognized twice this summer, once in July and again in August, when lesbian activist Beth Betbeze and activist parent Joan Marshall, received community-wide awards. Bethbeze was named 1990 Dr. Marketta Laurilla Free Speech Award winner for speaking out on behalf of the rights of gay and lesbians through her work with SALGA (Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance). Marshall was named 1990 Buncombe County Woman of the Year for her work with CLOSER, persons with AIDS, Parents-FLAG, and the whole gay and lesbian community in association with the Episcopal Church.

Beth Betbeze: 1990 Dr. Marketta Laurilla Free Speech Award Winner
by Peter Kendrick

On Saturday, July 21, 1990, Beth Betbeze was honored as winner of the 1990 Dr. Marketta Laurilla Free Speech Award. The award banquet was held at the Jubilee Community Church on Wall Street.



Beth Betbeze was the SALGA Chair for 1989-90. This was an active year for SALGA. A number of important events were planned and proved to be so

successful that they have been continued annually. These include Asheville's first openly gay-supportive demonstration and a month long Gay-Pride celebration and calendar of events for Asheville. Beth was instrumental and active in staging these events. During her tenure as chair, she also provided leadership for SALGA's work on The Non-discrimination Ordinance, National Coming-Out Day, The Active Gay Speakers Bureau, the

Discrimination Documentation Project, and other activities.

Members of SALGA are familiar with Beth's energy, commitment, and publicly visible position on human rights for lesbians and gay men. They nominated her, and a panel of judges chose her, as one of three recipients of the Third Annual Dr. Marketta Laurilla Free Speech Award.

At the banquet, Beth was honored for her commitment to free speech. She shared the award with two environmental activists: Dr. Marc Guerra and C. D. "Dick" Mullinix. The program notes included a picture of Beth and stated:

"Beth Betbeze has been a SALGA member since 1987, and was 1989-90 chair. She is a vocal advocate for gay and lesbian rights nationally and in North Carolina, the state that leads the country in gaybashing. She continues to speak publicly on behalf of gay rights, and her home phone number is published as the SALGA contact, opening the door for harassment. SALGA credits Beth's action with paving the way for others "to speak out and exercise their rights as Americans. Beth Betbeze has shown western North Carolina gay men and lesbians and non-gay citizens that freedom of speech is a right to exercise despite the risks and by her actions has defended the rights of those who do not speak openly because the risks are too great."

Teri Gibbs, the present SALGA chair, introduced Beth with a sobering, well-directed speech which asked the predominately straight audience to imagine what a world would feel like to them if the tables were turned. Imagine that only homosexuality was accepted while their innate heterosexual preferences had to be continually hidden and denied. She was eloquent in pointing out the overwhelming

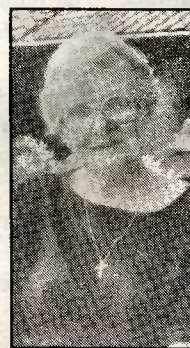
effect of the present institutionalized discrimination which is so pervasive it is often taken for granted by even those being stifled. She concluded that we can all be thankful for people like Beth who speak out and bring empowering truths to light.

Beth's acceptance speech put the award in the perspective of her continuing message of the need for support, dignity, and equal rights for gay people. She recognized that the award itself was a step forward in this process. She concluded her speech by thanking her beloved partner, Lillian Powell, for all of the tremendous support Lillian has provided her in her activist work.

Joan Marshall: 1990 Asheville-Buncombe Woman of the Year
by Charlotte Goedsche

Joan Marshall is the recipient of the 1990 Asheville-Buncombe Outstanding Woman of the Year Award. She was nominated by CLOSER, and chosen by a panel of area leaders. The following is based in part on CLOSER's letter of nomination.

Joan has been one of the most active members of CLOSER since its founding eleven years ago. In 1979 Joan invited CLOSER to hold its meetings at All Souls Episcopal Church. Since then, Joan has attended nearly every one



of CLOSER's weekly meetings and has served the members of CLOSER as an unfailing friend, a loving supporter, an untiring advocate, and a surrogate mother. Joan receives no salary for the countless hours she devotes to CLOSER, to the greater gay and lesbian community, and to people with AIDS. Her work with parents of lesbians and gay men is significant, as well. Almost ten years ago, Joan and her husband, Dan, founded the Asheville chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Parents-FLAG), and they have lead that group ever since. How many people's lives has Joan touched? Surely thousands.

Joan is articulate, non-judgmental, patient, compassionate, nurturing, untiring, freely giving of herself, has the utmost integrity, scrupulously respects confidentiality, and maintains her calmness and composure even during crises.

Through her encouragement, her kindness, her support, her unquestioning love, Joan brings out the best in those who know her. She has become a role model because she is highly respected and deeply loved. Looking to Joan for inspiration, CLOSER has become a family, and it is the only family that many of its members have.

The Asheville-Buncombe Woman of the Year Award, sponsored by the Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council (CRC), was initiated in 1981 by the Commission on the Status of Women, a committee of the CRC. Its purpose is to recognize women in our area who have

See Joan, page 5.

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