

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville, NC

Serving the Southern Appalachian Gay/Lesbian Community

Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Information Line:  
253-2971

A project of the Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Community Council

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## Local G/L Community Questions City Council Candidates

by Cynthia Janes

On September 10, 1991, an historic event took place in Asheville. For the first time, candidates for Asheville City Council presented their views on matters of interest to the gay and lesbian community in a gay and lesbian-sponsored Candidates Forum.

Organizers considered the forum a huge success, in numbers of candidates and audience attending, in cooperation among gay and lesbian organizations, and in coverage of gay and lesbian-related issues.

Several candidates remarked during the forum that they were very impressed with the turnout. The Friends of Police Forum, which the challengers had spoken at one hour before, had drawn only 20 to 30 people, according to several candidates, while the official count at the

gay/lesbian forum was 145 to 150.

The forum is the first large-scale example of cooperation and active participation between several gay/lesbian groups in Asheville. Sponsored, organized, and paid for by SALGA, the forum was held in cooperation with CLOSER as a regular CLOSER program in the Parish Hall at All Souls Episcopal Church in Biltmore, which CLOSER rents for their meetings every Tuesday evening. CLOSER also provided the refreshments.

*Community Connections* was responsible for transcribing, compiling, typesetting, printing, mailing and other distribution of the results in the form of a flyer. Mailing costs were partially covered by donations, and SALGA covered the remaining expense and assisted with distribution.

Members from still other gay/lesbian

groups attended the forum, along with other gay men and lesbians and quite a few non-gay people.

Ron Lambe, a community activist involved in several area gay and lesbian groups, as well as other groups related to the environment and social issues, served as moderator.

Candidates' responses to key issues of interest to our community were presented in the flyer distributed to Buncombe County residents who receive *Community Connections*, all SALGA members, the gay/lesbian bars in Asheville, and some of the Asheville distribution points for *Community*



Ron Lambe

Photo by C. Janes

### Connections.

Candidates' statements are presented below. In brief, the most outspoken supporter of gay and lesbian people and their issues was Readell Davis, a challenger. Several others were quite supportive, but it is impossible to precisely rank them. All raised their hands when asked if they would support inclusion of sexual orientation in the non-discrimination clause of the City hiring policy.

#### Most Gay-Positive Statement(s) Made by Candidate

**Leverette:** "I do not believe in any form of discrimination."

**Brown:** "I support the resolution and the inclusion of sexual orientation in the resolution."

**Davis:** "I support your concerns, especially that we must add sexual

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## Celebrate National Coming Out Day!

by Charlotte Goedsche

October 11 was picked as the date for National Coming Out Day (NCOD) to commemorate the 1987 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. That march was a milestone for the more than 600,000 people who attended it, and for the gay and lesbian community nationwide. The march was also a turning point for our state and local lesbian and gay communities, and led, at

least indirectly, to the founding of the North Carolina Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCCGLE) and the Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance (SALGA).

NCOD is designed to encourage all lesbians and gay men--and their families and friends--to enlarge the circle in which they are "out" about their sexual orientation. It is a day for each of us to take our next step in the process of coming out.

NCOD can, and I hope, will be an important day in the lives of all gay people. Coming out is not only the most important political statement a gay person can make, it also is a critical issue for the psychological well-being of all gay men and lesbians.

#### Personal Aspects of Coming-Out

Our ability to hide and to "pass" as heterosexual has probably been our greatest psychological liability. Only by being oneself can one achieve wholeness,

inner peace, and self-respect.

Why are gays prepared to hide? What heterosexual would agree to hide their partner's identity at the workplace, for instance? Isn't it that gays tend to deem themselves less worthy than others, and just accept what may appear to them as the inevitable? Gay men and lesbians usually perceive hiding as a survival strategy, but much more frequently it is a habit which inhibits personal growth and perpetuates low self-esteem.

It is wonderful to talk with openly gay people and to hear them say with self-confidence: "I'm out, and I'm never going back."

#### Political Aspects of Coming-Out

Our ability to hide and to "pass" as heterosexual has also been our greatest political liability. People who don't think that they know anyone who's gay tend to be homophobic. But research shows that

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OCTOBER 11



Photo by Cynthia Janes

John Yelton pauses during painting at All Souls Church, as CLOSER members show their appreciation to the church by participating in Work Days September 13-14. See page 17.