

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville, NC

Serving the Southern Appalachian Gay/Lesbian Community

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Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Information Line:

253-2971

A project of the Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Community Council

To report anti-gay/HIV +  
discrimination/violence:

SALGA Documentation Project:

253-1656

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U. S. Department of Justice toll-free:

1-800-347-HATE

## Tiffany Bonet Crowned Miss Gay America!

Two of the top three places in the Miss Gay America Pageant were captured by contestants from North Carolina. Tiffany Bonet of Winston-Salem was crowned the winner of the pageant and Blair Williams of Charlotte was 2nd Runner-up. First Runner-up was Leslie Rage of New York City.

1991 marks the 20th Anniversary of the pageant which is held each October in Dallas. Preliminary competition was held at Village Station Nightclub, and the final night of competition was held at the Majestic Theatre in Downtown Dallas on October 20.

Winners in the five categories on the final night were as follows: Interview, Blair Williams; On Stage Question, Evening Gown, and Sportswear, Tiffany Bonet; Talent, Leslie Rage. Winner of the Tuna Starr Award was Amazing Grace



of Dallas. The Lady Barbara Award for the highest non-finalist went to Keri Nichols of Charlotte.

In a telephone interview just hours after she was crowned, Tiffany stated, "It hasn't hit me yet. I've worked extremely hard and I came this year to win."

The following is a list of the top ten finalists in the order they finished: Tiffany Bonet, Leslie Rage, Blair Williams, Amazing Grace, Coco, Mahogany, Diedre Dillon, Donna Day, Nakoma Shaye and Ramona LeGer. --Thanks to Mark Swann

## Entrapment in Upstate SC Media Print Names, Pictures, Employers

by Jim Fowler

During the period from September 16 through September 25, 1991, twenty-eight men were arrested in an area called Twelve Mile Park. This is a wooded park area on Lake Hartwell near Clemson, SC. The charge for the arrests was solicitation to commit sodomy.

What has followed since has led to speculation as to the reason for the arrests as well as the methods used in the sting operation.

This series of arrests followed on the heels of seven arrests made at an Interstate 85 rest area in Anderson County on August 15 and 16. Lt. Tim Morgan of the Pickens County Sheriff's Department said the arrests were part of an operation to curb illegal solicitation for sex at the park and to "reclaim the park for its intended use."

In an open forum conducted by the Piedmont Chapter of the South Carolina ACLU on October 17, questions were

raised regarding the issue of police harassment and selective prosecution. The leaders of the discussion were Chris Foreman, former state president of the ACLU; Edmond Robinson, current president; and Dwight Newton, current Chapter president.

According to Foreman, the following bases were given for the September arrests in Twelve Mile Park:

In eight of the cases, the undercover police officer engaged his victim in conversation only. According to the police officer, the victim requested sexual favors.

In five of the cases, the undercover police officer convinced his victim to expose himself. Then the arrest was made.

In the remaining fifteen cases, the

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## Cracker Barrel to Build in Asheville

Cracker Barrel Old Country Stores, Inc., a company with an explicitly anti-gay policy, will build a restaurant in Asheville.

Cracker Barrel plans to locate the restaurant at the intersection of I-40 and (West) Patton Ave. On October 7 the Asheville Board of Adjustments granted Cracker Barrel a variance from the sign ordinance to erect a 125-foot sign. The only appeal process for the sign variance would be in Superior Court by November 7. For more information, call Zoning Administration at 259-5850.

The Cracker Barrel chain of restaurants has been under criticism from the gay and lesbian community and other civil rights organizations for maintaining a flagrantly anti-gay hiring policy. A number of gay employees have been fired by Cracker Barrel.

William Bridges, Vice-President of Human Resources, issued the following

statement last spring: "Cracker Barrel is founded upon a concept of traditional American values. It is inconsistent with our concept...to continue to employ individuals...whose sexual preferences fail to demonstrate normal heterosexual values which have been the foundation of families in our society."

"Traditional American values" or "traditional family values" are code phrases commonly used by certain institutions and politicians to mask their aggressively homophobic philosophies. As a rule, those using these phrases would have the public believe that gay men and lesbians are anti-family, when in fact it is the families of many gay people who are anti-gay.

Cracker Barrel has backed away from its original policy statement, and is now leaving it up to individual stores to determine their own hiring policies. However, gay male and lesbian employees

who were fired solely because of their sexual orientation have not been re-hired.

Cracker Barrel might have figured that their primarily Southern presence would shield them from angry gay and lesbian demonstrators, who are often thought to live only in California and large Northeastern cities. But southern communities like Greenville, SC; Lebanon, TN; Atlanta, GA; and Columbia, SC, have shown that their gay and lesbian members do not appreciate the Cracker Barrel brand of corporate bigotry. Demonstrations against the restaurant chain have been occurring with increasing frequency.

The public, too, is showing support of their gay and lesbian citizens. The City Council of Atlanta has issued a resolution recommending that Cracker Barrel end its policy of refusing to employ gay men and lesbians. The City Council stated that the Cracker Barrel policy is "discriminatory

and contrary to traditional American values."

Cracker Barrel has become a national symbol of employment discrimination against gay men and lesbians. And now they're coming to Asheville.

The Coalition for a Progressive Asheville has tried in vain for several years to convince the Asheville City Council of the need for an ordinance or resolution prohibiting discrimination in employment and housing on the basis of sexual orientation. Cracker Barrel's current plans underscore the urgent need for such legislation.

If you are concerned about Cracker Barrel coming to Asheville, come to the next meeting of the Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance (SALGA) and brainstorm about effective and appropriate responses to Cracker Barrel. SALGA is meeting on Sunday, November 3, at 5:30 PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Asheville on the corner of Charlotte Street and Edwin Place. --Thanks to Ron Lambe. ▽