

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville, NC

Serving the Southern Appalachian Gay/Lesbian Community

Circulation 7,000

Vol.V, No.12

December 1993

Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Information Line:  
253-2971

A project of the Asheville Gay and Lesbian  
Community Council

Gay and Lesbian Youth Hotline:  
1-800-347-TEEN  
Thurs.-Sun. 7 p.m.-12 a.m.

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

Asheville-Buncombe Community Relations Council:  
253-1656 / 252-4713

U.S. Department of Justice toll-free:  
1-800-347-HATE



## Protest Draws 75 in SC

Approximately 75 protesters representing a broad coalition of individuals and groups protested outside Greenville, SC's Memorial Auditorium on November 12, while Pat Robertson spoke inside to about 3000 listeners. The protest was sponsored and organized by Voters United for Equality(VUE), SC-NOW, and Greenville Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Protesters included Christians, Jews, Unitarians, Wiccans, agnostics, Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, union members, African Americans, pro-choice advocates, public school defenders, etc.

Over the weekend, Robertson pushed his right-wing political agenda in

meetings with about two dozen African-American religious leaders, the Auditorium event, and a training school.

Roger Bell of VUE said, "Robertson's Christian Coalition has made many inroads in South Carolina. They seized control of the state Republican Party earlier this year. Some of their friendly state legislators have introduced a variety of anti-lesbigay bills in the General Assembly which we will have to fight these bills again next year. But having 75 protesters was really great! Two years ago, maybe six people would have shown up. The cause of human rights is a real struggle in SC, but we are making gains. This coalition of progressives is evidence of that."

## Nelson Wins Seat in Carrboro

Openly gay candidate, Mike Nelson, won a seat on the Carrboro, NC Board of Aldermen on November 2. With the resignation of Joe Herzenberg, from the Chapel Hill town council, the 29 year old becomes the only openly gay elected official in the state.

Focusing on crime and environmental issues during his campaign, Nelson placed 2nd in total votes. An incumbent, Jackie Gist, was top vote getter, with newcomer Hank Anderson capturing the last of 3 seats. Six people sought positions during the non-partisan election.

This was Nelson's second attempt at winning a seat on the Board of Aldermen. He lost by 32 votes in the 1989 election.

Nelson, a travel agent and longtime gay activist, is a former executive director of Pride PAC and served as campaign manager for Joe Herzenberg the year he won.

Heavily involved in the Democratic Party, Nelson is the Vice 1st Chair of the Orange County Democratic Party and serves on the State Democratic Party Executive Committee. Last year, he was a Clinton delegate for NC at the 1992 Democratic National Convention.

"I am the only openly gay elected



official in North Carolina and don't want to be the only one," Nelson said in a telephone conversation. "I want to see an openly gay elected official in every major city in the state. The polling data in North Carolina has shown that the people of this state will vote for an openly gay candidate if he or she is qualified."

Nelson went on to say that data shows that minorities almost never get elected their first attempt. It takes at least two attempts and sometimes three.

Nelson said he wants to encourage gay men and lesbians to run for office. "We as gay people haven't given the public a chance to vote for us, because we haven't run."

## Ban on Gays Ruled Unconstitutional

In 1987, six weeks before graduation, honor student and battalion commander Joseph Steffan was expelled from the US Naval Academy because he said "yes" when asked if he was homosexual. On November 16 a federal appeals court ordered the Navy to grant Steffan his degree and his commission as an officer, marking the first time an appeals court has ruled that the ban on gays and lesbians serving in the US military is unconstitutional. In handing down the

ruling Judge Abner Mikfa said, "America's hallmark is to judge people by what they do, not by who they are."

The court said the military's ban on gays was unconstitutional because it had "no rational basis." "It is fundamentally unjust," said the Court, "to abort Steffan's most promising military career solely because of a truthful confession of a sexual preference different from that of the majority, a preference untarnished by even a scintilla of misconduct."

The court acknowledged that letting gays in might cause other servicemen to feel uncomfortable, but the military "cannot discriminate...to avoid the effects of others' prejudice."

The Clinton administration has since abandoned the flat ban on gays in the military in favor of a policy called "Don't ask, don't tell," which is now before Congress.

The court emphasized it was ruling only on the old policy, not the new one,

but by deciding the government may not punish Steffan and other members of the military solely for telling, the court clearly cast grave doubt on the new policy, too. Steffan was kicked out of Annapolis and the military not for homosexual conduct, but merely for admitting that he was gay. The November 16 ruling may eventually force the military to completely reverse its ban on gays. The government is expected to appeal.--ABC Nightly News, NBC Nightly News, 11/16/93

Snapshot

7

Survey Results

8

Strides & Slides

10 & 11

Book Review

11