



The Front Page

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Columbia Hosts SC's Largest Gay Pride Rally

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — Ginger and Mac McClure seize every chance they get to talk about gay rights.

"We have a gay son and we hope we can provide some support for equal rights," said Ginger McClure, 64, a retired statistician who was among hundreds gathered for the 14th South Carolina Pride Celebration on Saturday, May 21 at a downtown park.

The Columbia couple said there has been progress in the state but they have noticed less acceptance of gays and lesbians since the terrorist attacks in 2001.

"The more fear, the more people are afraid of people who are different than them," said Mac McClure, 62, a retired psychology professor.

The Pride Parade kicked off at Memorial Park at noon. The parade made its way to Gervais Street and then through the Vista to Main. Passing the State House, the parade proceeded up Main Street to Taylor and then over to Finlay Park, where the Pride Celebration was held.

Organizers said they took the annual event away from the steps of the Statehouse this year to focus on the community instead of soliciting lawmakers for support.

"It's about us, it's not about them," said Ed Madden, president of the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement.

But the rally still had a political agenda. Madden urged the community to work against efforts banning same-sex marriage in South Carolina.

"That legislation hurts families, it hurts kids," said Madden, adding the state among the top five in the percent-



Photo above left, bottom right Jay Gross, above right Radar Williams, bottom left Jim Griggers

age of same-sex couples raising children.

The General Assembly has agreed to send the issue to voters in November 2006 whether to change the South Carolina Constitution to say "marriage between one man and one woman is the only lawful domestic union that shall be valid or recognized in this State."

State law already bars same-sex unions, but supporters say a constitutional ban is needed because a single judge's ruling could trump the law and force South Carolina to recognize same-sex unions from other states.

"I disagree with what they're doing, especially to get a constitutional amendment to deny the rights of

Americans," Ginger McClure said.

Madden said he was not surprised by the anti-gay attitude in the Statehouse.

"I think it was inevitable," Madden said. "Anytime there is progress, there is a backlash."

Beautiful Day for a Parade

Even so, "this was one of the best Prides yet," Madden said. "After rain all day Friday and cold cloudy skies Saturday morning, the sun came out right as the parade entered the park for the festival—and the rainbow came out!

"We had over 40 vendors, great entertainment, and the perfect mix of politics, community building, and fun."

"We were pleased to be able to offer an outdoor mall, a photography exhibit

celebrating our older LGBT activists, a great line up of films, and a diverse offering of talent and speakers on our main stage," added Bert Easter, past president of SCGLPM.

Among the many events planned around SC Pride 2005 were a film festival at the Nickelodeon Theatre, the Pride Parade, a community picnic on May 22, a special Center workshop on May 23, and the always popular Ms and Mr SC Pride Pageant.

Club diva Debby Holiday and art rocker Rachel Sage were among the performers, and nationally known activist and author Wayne Besen was the featured speaker.

"We have just learned that our head-

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