

# Local progressive ideas boost gay rights issues

*Aid social justice, area officials say*

**BY DAN SCHWIND**  
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

Of the six openly gay officials ever elected to office in North Carolina, four have been elected in Chapel Hill or Carrboro.

Although many agree on the source of the apparent openness toward gay rights, there is debate on how progressive the area really is.

"The first victories are usually in the more progressive areas," said Carrboro Mayor Mike Nelson, one of four openly gay mayors in the South. "Orange County is certainly one of the more progressive areas in the state."

Former Chapel Hill Town Council member Joe Herzenberg, who became the state's first openly gay elected official in 1987, also cited the towns' liberal reputations.

"I always thought that Chapel Hill would elect an openly gay official," he said. "University towns are traditionally ... more liberal and tolerant."

Council member Mark Kleinschmidt said Chapel Hill's history in playing a major role in activist movements is also key.

"We've been at the forefront of most civil rights movements," he said. "Generally, progressive and liberal people are the first to take on social justice issues."

Ian Palmquist, executive direc-

tor for Equality NC, echoed the sentiment.

"Chapel Hill and Carrboro have had a long history with social justice issues," he said. "I think they are a little ahead of the rest of the state on issues like this."

Rights for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community are recent social issues the area has tackled.

At the council's March 22 meeting, Kleinschmidt presented a petition that would have asked the state to ignore the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act.

Doing so would have allowed the town to recognize same-sex marriages performed legally elsewhere in the country and provide those couples with the same benefits accorded to married couples.

Nelson followed suit, making a similar petition at the March 25 Carrboro Board of Aldermen meeting.

Both petitions were killed quickly in the N.C. General Assembly, but Kleinschmidt said his petition still has much support locally.

But for all the perceived local support toward the LGBT community, some harsh feelings toward the group still resonate.

"It's not completely easy," said Gloria Faley, former member of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of

Education. "There are a lot of folks in this community who are not happy with us."

Faley said that during her campaign for the school board, she received a number of anonymous phone calls and "a lot of nasty anonymous letters."

Faley said she is even more worried by the results of the Nov. 2 general election, in which 11 states approved state constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage.

"I'm worried about the overall state of the nation," she said. "I worry about people portraying other people as moral or immoral."

But Kleinschmidt said that despite the election results, he believes the nation has turned the corner toward a more tolerant view of the LGBT community.

"This isn't really backlash," he said. "It's really just half of an opinion. If you look at the polling numbers, there's a lot of support for civil unions."

Nelson shared similar views, pointing out Julia Boseman's election as state senator for the traditionally conservative New Hanover County.

"Once you cross that hurdle, you can win anywhere," Nelson said. "Clearly, we've made it over that hurdle."

Contact the City Editor at [citydesk@unc.edu](mailto:citydesk@unc.edu).

## ANGELS IN AMERICA



DTH/CARTER MURPHY

Joe Pitt, played by sophomore Patrick Link, and Louis Ironson, played by freshman David Greenslade, interact on stage during the last performance of "Angels in America, Part One: Millennium

Approaches" on Monday night at the Playmakers Theatre. The production was sponsored by the student-run Lab! Theatre in association with the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender-Straight Alliance.

## Searches continue for 3 deans

**BY RACHEL BROCK**  
STAFF WRITER

Three schools at UNC are in the midst of searching for new leadership, and officials' efforts to fill these roles will continue during Winter Break.

The School of Dentistry has been seeking a new dean since January when Dean John Stamm announced his departure.

Provost Robert Shelton said he now is looking through the committee's recommendations, which voiced stronger support for three of the five candidates.

"Now we just have to choose between those three," Shelton said. "We hope to have an announce-

ment in the new year."

Stamm, who has served in the role for 15 years, will step down Dec. 31, but Ken May, associate dean for administration and planning, will take the post of interim dean Jan 1.

A search committee charged with recommending a new dean for the School of Journalism and Mass Communication also has examined applications throughout the semester. Richard Cole, who served as dean of the school for 26 years, will resign from the post in June.

"We're moving ahead very well," said Tom James, chairman of the search committee and dean of the School of Education.

So far, the committee has looked

at about 40 applicants, some of whom hold posts at other universities or are leaders in the journalism field, James said.

He said the committee will invite candidates to campus in February. The School of Public Health also is coming to the end of its search process for a new dean. The search committee recently made recommendations to Shelton.

Shelton said he is pleased with the work of the search committees for all three schools and is optimistic that qualified applicants will be chosen to fill the leadership positions.

Contact the University Editor at [udesk@unc.edu](mailto:udesk@unc.edu).

### CORRECTIONS

■ Due to a reporting error, the Dec. 6 article "Grants aid renovations" states that the Renewable Energy Special Projects Committee has received a \$137,500 grant from the State Energy Office.

UNC has not yet received the grant; it is being reconsidered for the money.

Also, due to a source's mistake, the same story states that the group plans to install photovoltaic panels on the roof of Morrison Residence Hall.

It actually plans to install solar-thermal panels.

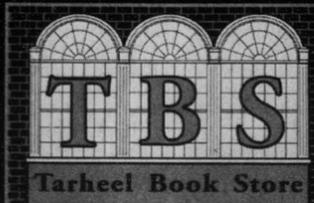
To report corrections, contact Managing Editor Chris Coletta at [cchetto@email.unc.edu](mailto:cchetto@email.unc.edu).

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