

Fact Sheet:

Charlotte St. Patrick's Day, Knights of Columbus & Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) Inclusion

Charlotte St. Patrick's Day & the Knights of Columbus

The Charlotte St. Patrick's Day celebrations consist of a parade and a festival. The parade is organized by the Charlotte St. Patrick Day Parade Foundation, on whose board sits chief organizers Frank Hart and Linda Dyer Hart. The couple's DyerHart Productions produces the Charlotte Goes Green/St. Patrick's Day Festival. Both events occur on the same day, this year on Saturday, March 14, 2014. The events were begun by Linda Dyer Hart and the Knights of Columbus in 1997. According to parade and festival organizers, a portion of the proceeds from the Charlotte St. Patrick's Day events benefit the Knights of Columbus.

Knights of Columbus

The Knights of Columbus are a national, Catholic fraternal organization, which has local councils and chapters across the U.S. The national organization and its various local councils operate and contribute to a variety of charitable causes. However, the group has also contributed a significant amount of funding to causes attempting to strip LGBT people of their rights.

Knights of Columbus spending: \$15.8 million to anti-LGBT causes

The Knights of Columbus have spent \$15.8 million on anti-LGBT funding from 2005 to 2012, including \$6.25 million in direct contributions to anti-LGBT marriage campaigns and \$9.6 million to other anti-LGBT groups and causes. The Knights are one of the largest contributors to the National Organization for Marriage, a primary proponent of anti-LGBT constitutional amendments in states across the country, including North Carolina. The Knights have given NOM direct contributions totaling \$1.9 million. NOM was the single-largest contributor to NC4Marriage, the campaign which advocated for North Carolina's anti-LGBT constitutional amendment in 2012. For more information: <http://goqnotes.com/27974/>

Charlotte St. Patrick's Day anti-LGBT policies/actions

According to Frank Hart, a board member for the Charlotte St. Patrick Day Parade Foundation, LGBT groups are not allowed to march in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with a rainbow flag, a symbol of the LGBT community. Hart says the flag is a "political" symbol and interprets parade policy as excluding it. Additionally, parade organizers have stripped the words "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender" out of LGBT groups' descriptions as read by emcees during the event. Though LGBT groups are allowed to march — and several have done so in the past — they must do so without any acknowledgment of who they are, effectively pushing LGBT people back into the closet. Local organizers of the parade will claim they are not excluding anyone and that they are inclusive, but it is worth noting that Charlotte's parade policies are little different from anti-LGBT policies for parades in New York City and Boston, which have been protested and even sued by LGBT organizations there. By forcing LGBT participants to adhere to anti-LGBT policies that silence and make invisible their identities, local St. Patrick's Day organizers are, indeed, acting in a prejudiced manner. For more information: <http://goqnotes.com/27946/>