



Spring
Entertainment
& Politics

Nicki Minaj plays Spectrum Center March 26



Pete Buttigieg
visits Charlotte

-pg 5

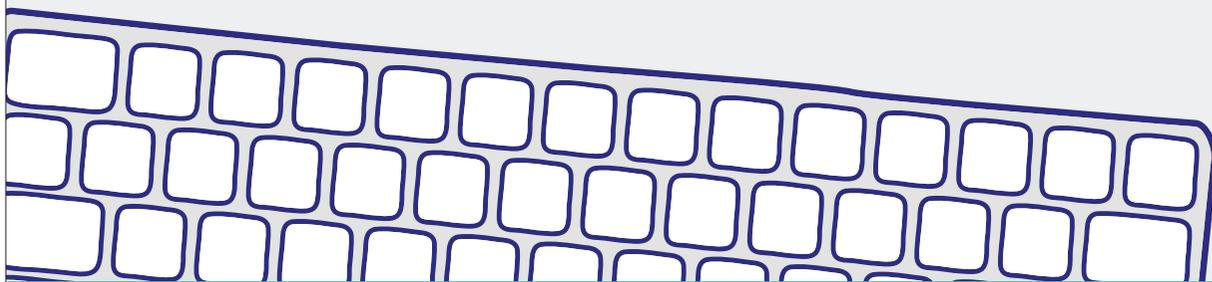
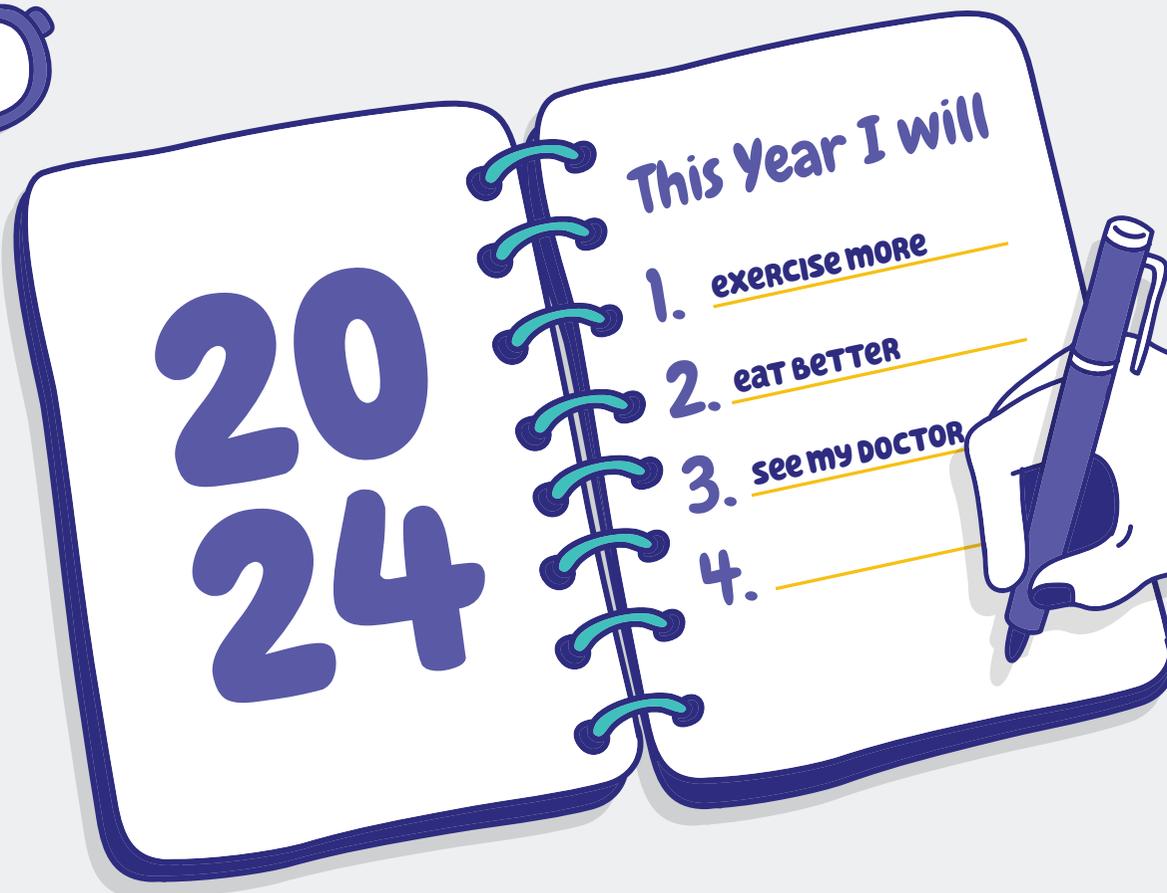
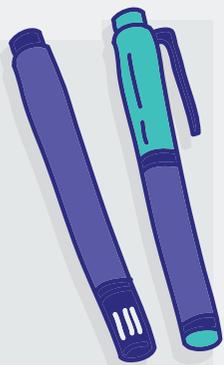
QnotesCarolinas.com

Is Nicki Haley a better
alternative to Trump?

-pg 4



It's never too late
to kickstart your goals



704.977.2972
704.948.8582

@TheDudleysPlace
@MyRosedaleHealth

dudleysplace.org
myrosedalehealth.com



contributors this issue

Writers: Taylor Heeden, David Aaron Moore, L'Monique King, Mary Ramsey

front page

Graphic Design by Will Kimbrough
Photography/Illustration: Social Media/ Instagram

Mission:

The focus of QNotes is to serve the LGBTQ and straight ally communities of the Charlotte region, North Carolina and beyond, by featuring arts, entertainment, news and views content in print and online that directly enlightens, informs and engages the readers about LGBTQ life and social justice issues.

Pride Publishing & Typesetting, Inc., dba
Qnotes

P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222
ph 704.531.9988 fx 704.531.1361

Publisher: Jim Yarbrough

Sales: x201 adsales@qnotescarolinas.com
Nat'l Sales: Rivendell Media, ph 212.242.6863

Managing Editor: Jim Yarbrough, x201,
editor@qnotescarolinas.com

Digital & Audience Engagement Editor:
Chris Rudisill

chrisrudisill@qnotescarolinas.com

Sr. Content Editor: David Aaron Moore,
specialassignments@qnotescarolinas.com

Copy Editor: Bailey Sides

Production: Will Kimbrough, x205,
production@qnotescarolinas.com

Printed on recycled paper.

Material in Qnotes is copyrighted by Pride Publishing & Typesetting © 2020 and may not be reproduced in any manner without written consent of the editor or publisher. Advertisers assume full responsibility — and therefore, all liability — for securing reprint permission for copyrighted text, photographs and illustrations or trademarks published in their ads. The sexual orientation of advertisers, photographers, writers, cartoonists we publish is neither inferred nor implied. The appearance of names or photographs does not indicate the subject's sexual orientation.

Qnotes nor its publisher assumes liability for typographical error or omission, beyond offering to run a correction. Official editorial positions are expressed in staff editorials and editorial notations and are determined by editorial staff. The opinions of contributing writers and guest columnists do not necessarily represent the opinions of Qnotes or its staff. Qnotes accepts unsolicited editorial, but cannot take responsibility for its return. Editor reserves the right to accept and reject material as well as edit for clarity, brevity.

inside this issue



feature

10 From Wilmington to Charlotte: A guide to spring arts & entertainment in North Carolina's largest venues



news

- 5 Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg visits Charlotte, announces airport to get \$27M for improvement projects
- 6 Plus Collective to host volunteer fair
- 6 Quality Comprehensive Health Center celebrates grand opening of new facility
- 6 LGBTQ Victory Fund to hold training in Charlotte
- 8 Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ Democrats announce results of county commission scorecard



a&e

12 A guide to spring arts & entertainment at small venues across North Carolina



life

15 Our People: Jamie Hildreth



views

4 Is Nicki Haley a better alternative to Trump?



events

For event listings, visit qnotescarolinas.com/events-calendar.



Quality Comprehensive Health Center celebrates grand opening of new facility

Quality Comprehensive Health Center celebrates the opening of a new health and wellness facility providing care for underserved communities in Charlotte. QCHC shares their thoughts about the latest center, located in the city's historic west side.

PAGE 6

Our People: Jamie Hildreth

Our People profiles former political candidate Jamie Hildreth, who shares his thoughts on the changing world of politics, what he learned from his experience running for office, and the ways you can make an impactful change without jumping into the political fray.

PAGE 15



NOW FIND Qnotes IN 63 CHARLOTTE-AREA FOOD LION AND HARRIS TEETER GROCERY STORES

Now more new locations for pick-up to support our readers and advertisers.



These rates only cover a portion of our true cost, however, our goal is to serve our community

Mailed 1st class from Charlotte, NC, in sealed envelope.

Subscription Rates: 1 yr - 26 issues = \$48 1/2 yr - 13 issues = \$34

Mail to: P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222

name: _____

address: _____

city: _____

state: _____

zip: _____

credit card - check one: mastercard visa discover american express

card #: _____

exp. date: _____

signature: _____

SUBSCRIBE!

Is Nikki Haley a better alternative to Trump?

Examining Haley's record on LGBTQ+ legislation and more



by Taylor Heeden
QNotes Staff Writer

Former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley announced over a year ago she was seeking to become the next United States President. A lot of people have seen her as a better alternative to fellow candidate and former president Donald Trump, but does her record prove that to be true?

QNotes has looked into Haley's legislative record regarding LGBTQ+ issues, her relationship to members of the queer community and more. Here is what we found.

Who is Nikki Haley?

Born as Nimrata Randhawa, Haley is the daughter of Punjabi Indian immigrants who came to the United States and opened what became a successful gift and clothing business called Exotica International.

Haley ran for her first office in 2004 against the longest-serving legislator in the South Carolina Statehouse at the time, Larry Koon, and beat him 55 percent to 45 percent in a runoff election. She became the first woman of Indian descent to hold office in South Carolina and even cited Hillary Clinton as her inspira-

tion for running for office.

"She said that when it comes to women running for office, there will be everybody that tells you why you shouldn't, but that's all the reasons why we need you to do it, and I walked out of there thinking, 'That's it. I'm running for office,'" Haley recounted.

She was elected as South Carolina's governor in 2010 and served in that position until her second term ran out in early 2017. Trump appointed Haley as an ambassador to the United Nations, as she has an extensive educational background regarding international policy and foreign relations.

Is Haley an ally to queer Americans?

Haley's political history surrounding the LGBTQ+ community is rather confusing.

According to GLAAD, the former South Carolina Governor falsely stated trans girls in sports contribute to teenage suicide ideation among women, going as far to say "Across the sporting world, the game is being rigged against women and in favor of biological men."

However, shortly after North Carolina passed House Bill 2 barring trans people from using the bathroom of their gender identity, Haley was questioned if she would support something similar in South Carolina.

"I don't believe it's necessary," she said

at the time. "There's not one instance that I'm aware of when we look at our situation we're hearing of anybody's religious liberties being violated. And we're not hearing any citizens that are being violated in terms of freedoms. Like it or not, South Carolina is doing really well when it comes to respect and when it comes to kindness and when it comes to acceptance. Faithful to apply it's not, I beg to differ. While other states are having this battle, this is not a battle that we've seen as needed in South Carolina."

Despite Haley's insistence that South Carolina had no need for legislation, since that time, other elected officials have introduced H-4624, an anti-trans youth bill that does just what she said the state didn't need. It passed the House, then it went to the Senate, where it has remained since Jan. 18, in the Committee on Medical Affairs.

Haley historically opposed same-sex marriage and the federal recognition of same-sex unions, saying it was a matter for the states to decide. Additionally, she misgendered and disparaged transgender social media influencer Dylan Mulvaney, who faced criticism from right-leaning media and politicians for sharing her journey through her transition.



Nikki Haley walks with supporters during a campaign rally earlier this year.
CREDIT: Facebook

She commented semi-positively on Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' "Don't Say Gay" law, which prohibits instruction on gender identity and sexuality in classrooms across the state.

"When I was in school, you didn't have sex ed[ucation] until seventh grade. Even then, your parents had to sign whether you could take the class," Haley told Fox News. "We should not be talking to kids in elementary school about gender, period. Schools need to be teaching reading and math and science. They don't need to be teaching whether they think you're a boy or a girl."

Haley as a Trump critic

While Haley did serve as an ambassador to the United Nations during Trump's administration, she left her position around a year after she was appointed. Since then, she's been one of the biggest critics of the former president both behind the scenes and publicly.

During an interview with Politico magazine in February 2021, she said that she was disgusted by the way Trump behaved towards former vice president Mike Pence during the capital riot, and went a decisive step further, announcing that the possibility of the former president running for office again in the future was something that shouldn't happen.

"We need to acknowledge that he let us down," she told Politico. "He went down a path he shouldn't have and we shouldn't have followed him and we shouldn't have listened to him. And we can't ever let that happen again."

Haley has gone as far to say Trump isn't qualified for the job, saying he lacks the respect and maturity the office of President requires after the former president made a jab at Haley's husband, who served in the military.

"He showed that with that kind of disrespect for the military, he's not qualified to be the president of the United States, because I don't trust him to protect them," she said in a post on Twitter/X.

"He's never had to fight for survival like so many of them sacrifice to do ... The most harm he's ever come across is whether a golf ball hits him on a golf cart."::

C.W. WILLIAMS
Community Health Center, Inc.
Healing Heart, Mind & Soul!

HIV medications can decrease HIV in the blood to be too low to measure. This is called being undetectable. And.....

UNDETECTABLE = UNTRANSMITTABLE

What does it mean to be HIV Positive and have an undetectable viral load?

Learn more about being UNTRANSMITTABLE.

The C.W. Williams Community Health Center Inc.
866-CWW-4-YOU (866-299-4968), ext. 1056
5800 Old Pineville Road, Charlotte. NC 28217

At The C.W. Williams Community Health Center, Your health is OUR priority!

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg visits Charlotte, announces airport to get \$27M for improvement projects

How various projects will impact travelers

By Mary Ramsey | Charlotte Observer

Charlotte-Douglas International Airport will receive millions in federal funding from a program designed to improve passenger experiences.

The airport, one of the busiest in the country, is set to receive \$27 million to help fund up to 16 new passenger boarding bridges, the walkways passengers use to get to and from a plane to the terminal gate. The total cost of the project is \$86.8 million, according to figures released by the White House.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg was at the airport Feb. 16 to announce the grant, kicking off a nationwide tour by Biden administration officials to highlight almost \$1 billion in grants. The money will go toward 114 airports across 44 states and three territories, Buttigieg said.

It's the third year of grants given out by the Federal Aviation Administration's Airport Terminals Program, a five-year, \$5 billion initiative established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which passed in 2021.

"It includes a lot of what you might call 'front of house' improvements, things you see and feel when you get ready to fly," Buttigieg told reporters at a preview of the announcement Wednesday. Charlotte's

plan will make passengers' "walk from the gate to the seat more comfortable" and help provide "safe, filtered air," he noted.

On Thursday, Feb. 15, Buttigieg described Charlotte-Douglas as "growing, important and deserving" of the grant. "No matter what brings you to this airport, so much depends on the airport being ready to meet your needs," he said. The secretary said the passenger bridges are integral to getting people on and off their flights in a timely manner. "Even most of us infrastructure nerds don't wake up in the morning thinking about jet bridges, but if your flight arrived on-time only for you to be waiting to get off that plane because there's an issue with the jet bridge, you're thinking about nothing else," he said.

Buttigieg lauded North Carolina's congressional delegation for pushing for the grant and "bipartisan" law that funded it, including Democratic Charlotte-area Reps. Alma Adams and Jeff Jackson and Republican Sen. Thom Tillis.

At the event, state and local leaders called the airport an economic engine for the region and the state. "The economic importance of our airport cannot be overstated," Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles said.

Gov. Roy Cooper added he "knows first hand" that businesses factor the airport's performance into decisions on whether to do work in North Carolina. "Getting people from one place to the next in the quickest, safest, cleanest, most convenient way is critical for all of us," he said. Lyles and Cooper both also thanked the White House for its push for infrastructure spending.

Federal officials selected Charlotte to announce the latest round of grants despite the fact that other airports will receive bigger awards. But the Charlotte area has been a popular destination for the Biden administration in recent weeks as the president ramps up his reelection campaign, including visits from Vice President Kamala Harris, First Lady Jill Biden and Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff.

That drew the attention of the North Carolina chapter of the conservative political group Americans for Prosperity, which called Buttigieg's visit "nothing more than a taxpayer-funded campaign stop."

This article appears courtesy of our media



Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg announces money for improvements at Charlotte Douglas International airport
CREDIT: Live Broadcast Screen Capture

partner the Charlotte Observer. Per agreement, it has been edited for space limitations. To see the article in its entirety visit The Charlotte Observer or follow the link from our website. ::

NC MEDICAID FOR MORE PEOPLE

You can earn more and still get NC MEDICAID.

Get full health care coverage at low or no cost, even if you earn more.

Apply at [Medicaid.nc.gov](https://www.Medicaid.nc.gov)



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Plus Collective to host volunteer fair

The Plus Collective is set to have its annual volunteer fair from 6 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, March 6, at NoDa North End, 150 W. 32nd St in Charlotte. The event is designed to connect individuals interested in volunteering for Mecklenburg County LGBTQ+ organizations.

The Plus Collective is a Charlotte-based organization which works to “award grants to organizations that support the LGBTQ+ community in the Charlotte region while also cultivating partnerships with community allies.” The collective has awarded almost \$2 million in grants to various groups and organizations across the city, including Charlotte Black Pride, PFLAG Charlotte, Time Out

Youth and more.

The Plus Collective hosts this volunteer fair in partnership with nonprofits, community organizations and other LGBTQ+ related committees. Some of the organizations at this year’s fair include Blumenthal Arts, Carolinas CARE Partnership, Theatre Gap Initiative, One Voice, Chorus of Charlotte, Equality NC, Charlotte Gaymers Network, Charlotte Royals Rugby Football Club, Charlotte Pride, Gay Men’s Chorus of Charlotte, Women’s Chorus of Charlotte, Carolinas LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce, We Rock Charlotte, Charlotte Transgender Healthcare Group and more.

“We are looking forward to welcoming

you and all of our friends to join us for this volunteer fair and learn more about some really incredible opportunities to deepen your relationship in the LGBTQ+ community of Charlotte,” a statement from the organization reads.

Registration is required to attend the volunteer fair. You can register for the event online through the Plus Collective’s



The Plus Collective, established in 2007, is bringing back its annual Volunteer Fair, which will be held at NoDa in North End. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

website or through the organization’s Facebook post regarding the event. ::

—Taylor Heeden

Quality Comprehensive Health Center celebrates grand opening of new facility

On their website Quality Comprehensive Health Center (QCHC) confirms they’ve been offering healthcare to Charlotte’s underserved community for nearly 20 years.

It seems fitting at such a pertinent moment in time the organization is celebrating a move into a new facility that provides the opportunity to offer expanded health care needs.

This past Monday, Feb. 26, beginning at 6 p.m. and continuing until 9 p.m., the grand opening party for QCHC’s new location (literally just a few steps from their previous locale) was held at 3607 Beatties Ford Road.

QCHC program manager L’Monique

King is excited about educating the community about QCHC’s healthcare and the new facility.

“This is something the community and our city needs,” King explains. “We’re located in Charlotte’s West side, an area that is populated with a sizable number of individuals that face limited access to healthcare.

“Now, not only will they and other city residents in need have access to quality and expanded care, they’ll be able to experience it in our great new center.”

The celebration kicked off at 6:00 p.m. with a ribbon cutting ceremony and light hors d’oeuvres. Also on the agenda for the evening was a kick-off performance

by the drum corps ALLTURNATIVES and an exhibit of works of various artists, including Dyair, Janice L. Jones and Myrna Parker. Tours of the new facility were offered throughout the event, which was open to the public.

QCHC History

Quality Comprehensive Health Center has focused on providing healthcare for the underserved communities of Charlotte for nearly two decades. The organization provides a variety of services for patients in the West End and surrounding areas. In addition to providing HIV related care, QCHC offers primary care, mental health services, case management and



Quality Comprehensive Health Center’s new facility, located on Beatties Ford Road in Charlotte’s historic West End area. CREDIT: Courtesy Quality Comprehensive

personal care services.

For additional details about the services QCHC offers, visit their website at qchealth.org or call 704-394-8968. ::

—David Aaron Moore

LGBTQ Victory Fund to hold training in Charlotte

The LGBTQ+ Victory Institute is bringing its Candidate & Campaign Training program to Charlotte April 11-14 as part of its efforts to train a diverse cross section of LGBTQ+ leaders to run for office and win.

Understanding how to develop a winning strategy that uses campaign tools effectively is what leads a campaign to victory. The Victory Fund’s four-day Candidate & Campaign Training provides comprehensive, non-partisan training to present and future LGBTQ+ candidates, campaign staff and community leaders.

Participants will learn the necessary skills and strategies by engaging in tough, realistic campaign situations, and hearing from our campaign experts. The organization has trained thousands of openly LGBTQ+ people how to build winning campaigns — including former Houston Mayor Annise Parker, U.S. Congressman

Robert Garcia, and Virginia State Delegate Danica Roem.

In order to take part, you must apply by March 15, 2024 for priority consideration. The program will take place in Charlotte beginning Thursday, April 11 at 5:00 p.m. and continue through Sunday, April 14, ending at noon.

To successfully complete the application process, you will need to submit an online application.

After the staff reviews your application, you will receive notice of whether or not you will attend the training and details your registration information to officially be a trainee.

The finalized, post-approval application date for Southern Campaign and Candidate Training in Charlotte is April 5. Program Costs are as follows:

\$400 for all program materials, training fees, food and a shared double hotel

room for three nights

\$675 for all program materials, training fees, food and a private single hotel room for 3-nights

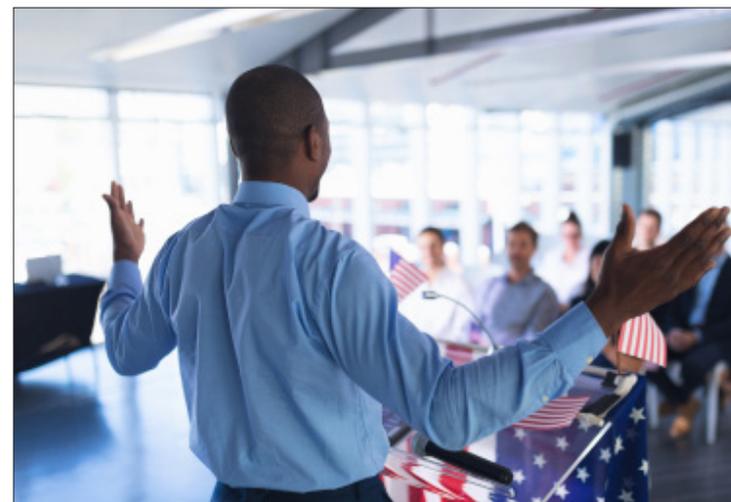
Note: These are fixed costs. Regardless of whether you live locally or not, you must select one of these two prices. It’s required that program participants stay at the host hotel due to long training days/nights.

Agenda Overview

Day 1: Training begins Thursday in the evening, 5 p.m.-late night

Day 2/3: Friday and Saturday, 8 a.m.-late night

Day 4: Sunday training concludes at



Participants will learn the necessary skills and strategies by engaging in tough, realistic campaign situations. CREDIT: Adobe Stock

12:00 p.m.

To apply visit the Victory Fund website or follow this link. <https://victoryinstitute.org/trainings/candidate-campaign-trainings/2024-application-southern-candidate-campaign-training-charlotte-nc/> ::

—David Aaron Moore

We buy interesting & worthwhile used books & Compact Discs.



Books Do Furnish A Room
1809 W Markham Avenue • 286-1076
(Between 9th & Broad) Durham

Charlotte's Only Exclusive Piercing Studio

SADU

Body Piercing & Modifications

Specializing In
 Traditional & Exotic Body Piercing

Large Selection Of
 Wood, Stone, Glass & Steel Jewelry

Shop Hours
 M-S 11am-7pm • Sun 1pm-6pm
 1515 Central Avenue
 Charlotte, NC 28205
 sadupiercings@yahoo.com
 704-344-0011



AMITY MEDICAL GROUP
 Adult & Pediatric Primary Care

The Charlotte Observer
CHARLOTTE'S BEST
 2022 WINNER

Accepting New Patients, Private Insurance, Medicare & Medicaid

- Primary Care
- Pediatric Exams & Immunizations
- Diabetes Care
- Addiction Medicine-MAT
- LGBTQIA+ Care
- HIV & Infectious Disease Care
- On Site Pharmacy



704-208-4134 amitymed.org   @amitymedicalgroup



Richard A. Grimstad, CPA, P.C.
 Bookkeeping - Consulting - Tax Advisory & Compliance

FREE INITIAL CONSULTATION

Need help this tax season?

14 years of individual and small business tax & accounting experience

grimstadcpa.com
 980-224-3124
richard@grimstadcpa.com



YOU MAY HAVE SYPHILIS AND NOT KNOW IT.

Protect your partner.

Testing and treatment is for everyone.

Stock photo. Posed by model. For illustrative purposes only.



Visit **syphilis.nc.gov**



Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ Democrats announce results of county commission scorecard

Six candidates received excellent scores for their responses



by Taylor Heeden
Qnotes Staff Writer

The Mecklenburg County chapter of LGBTQ+ NC Democrats announced the results of its county commission scorecard, where candidates for local office were asked to fill a questionnaire regarding their positions on various issues the local queer community faces.

Six candidates — Arthur Griffin, Jr., Leigh Altman, Yvette Townsend-Ingram, Mark Jerrell, Laura Meier and Susan Rodriguez-McDowell — received excellent scores based on their responses, according to a release sent by the LGBTQ+ MeckDems.

QNotes has collected answers for two questions from each candidate who scored excellent from this year's report. You can read the full questionnaires from these candidates and more by going to the Mecklenburg Democratic Party's website.

Q: What steps will you take (or have you taken) to ensure LGBTQ+ people are included in decision-making, including on advisory boards and commissions?

Arthur Griffin, Jr: Diversity and equity at all tables are critical to ensuring that we have the needed voices during decision making, specifically around policy. To create this pathway, respecting differences and authentic relationship building is key in also matching the needed skill set to the role. Having partnered with the LGBTQ+ community since the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the early 80s, as the Chair of the Health and Human Services committee, I have proactively built authentic relationships within the LGBTQ+ community with needed partners in this continued fight to eradicate this disease. During my first term, I worked collaboratively with Malcolm Davis, Chelsea Gulden, Dr. Allysha Maraugh-Bass at Duke University, and others to ensure meaningful access to quality healthcare.

Leigh Altman: We desperately need people to step forward and offer themselves for service on our advisory boards and commissions. This is the link to apply: <https://mecklenburg.granicus.com/boards/w/ba25d13a26a2ed22>

It would be wonderful of LGBTQ+ Dems can help us disseminate this link and encourage members of the LGBTQ+ community to apply!

Yvette Townsend-Ingram: As an African-American female, I understand how critically important representation is in every aspect of protecting our Democracy and our human rights. I have worked intentionally to appoint LGBTQ+ representatives to boards such as the Community Relations Committee (CRC).

EXCELLENT
Mecklenburg
County Commission

LGBTQ+ DEMSNC
Mecklenburg County

Arthur Griffin, Jr.
At-Large

Leigh Altman
At-Large

Yvette Townsend-Ingram
At-Large

Mark Jerrell
District 4

Laura Meier
District 5

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell
District 6

These six candidates for Mecklenburg County Commission received excellent results on Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ Democrats' scorecard this year.
CREDIT: From Mecklenburg LGBTQ+ Democrats

I ensure that the community is aware of dangerous legislation that specifically targets LGBTQ+ youth like the Parent's Bill of Rights. As well, my employer, JCSU has a program for young adults who have aged out of the foster care system. Many of these young adults identify as LGBTQ+ and thus we work closely with community organizations to protect and educate these young adults to give them better opportunities, job training, degrees and employment. Representation takes many forms in our community and I will always ensure that our community operates with equity for LGBTQ+ people.

Mark Jerrell: As a member of the BOCC, I have been intentional about ensuring that our LGBTQ+ community are included in decision-making and has representation on advisory boards and commissions. I am also a strong advocate for measures related to diversity and inclusion, in addition to advocating for education and collaboration to ensure the issues experienced by the LGBTQ+ community are [substantially] addressed. I will continue to work to establish a culture of acceptance and respect (within the County) and hold organizations that want to do business with Mecklenburg County accountable to the same standard. Finally, I will continue to encourage and support policies and initiatives that address the

needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

Laura Meier: I am proud of how the BOCC has recently adopted more inclusive language on its advisory boards/ commission applications to include "nonbinary, third gender, prefer to self-describe, prefer not to say." It's important for me and for my colleagues to ensure we have ALL of the county represented on our boards. ... One possibility to create more interest and gain more applications from the LGBTQ community is to be intentional when advertising for our boards and commissions by directly contacting various local organizations such as LGBTQ Democrats, the LGBTQ Chamber and the local chapter of the Log Cabin Republicans. We do often say that we don't get enough applicants in general for various board positions. Not only advertising within our own social media and email networks, but directly contacting these and other organizations would be a win-win. I would definitely volunteer to make sure when there are openings, I alert the local LGBTQ organizations.

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell: One of the steps I have taken is when I chaired the Ad-hoc committee that reviewed and redesigned the County's online application. Under my leadership we sought advice from multiple sources on how best to ensure that the language on the

application is inclusive. For example, the choices for gender are now: male; female; non-binary or third gender; prefer to self describe; prefer not to say. I was adamant in my advocacy for inclusion. In addition, all applicants are encouraged to reach out to commissioners to introduce themselves and explain why they would be a great candidate. In doing so, if an applicant disclosed to me that they are LGBTQ+ I would consider that as a very positive way to bring diversity to our advisory boards and commissions - which is one of our stated goals. Also, I have encouraged my friends and other members of the LGBTQ+ community to apply to serve! Lastly, I believe seeing and listening to the voices of the LGBTQ+ community is an important way to make sure that they are included in decision-making. It's not about what I think is needed - it is about hearing them.

Q: How would you rate the County's efforts in addressing rising cases of HIV/AIDS in Mecklenburg County? Please provide a rating of "Very Poor," "Below Average," "Average," "Above Average" or "Excellent," and why you provided this rating. Do you support expanding the "Getting to Zero" Campaign for Mecklenburg County?

Arthur Griffin, Jr.: Based on the data available to me at this point, I would rate Mecklenburg County's efforts in ad-

dressing HIV/AIDS Prevention and Care as “average.” I reached this rating by giving Mecklenburg County above average for making treatment available for newly diagnosed HIV cases and below average for creative intervention and prevention strategies to discourage behaviors associated with the acquisition of newly diagnosed HIV cases. Mecklenburg County’s HIV rate per 100,000 is twice that of the State of North Carolina and on average 70 percent of the newly diagnosed HIV cases are from the African American population.

We are the only county in North Carolina cited by the Centers for Disease Control as an “Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) site. Over the last three years we averaged about 278 newly diagnosed HIV cases per year.

Leigh Altman: I would give Mecklenburg County a strong rating for the following reasons:

1) We have expanded access to PrEP and do a lot of work to make sure people are retained in treatment which is a critical prevention strategy.

2) We have robust community-based outreach, education and testing.

3) Our investments have continued to increase over time to the PrEP budget so people who don’t have insurance can still access PrEP without finances as a barrier.

4) We’ve reorganized [a] HIV/STD program to add staffing.

5) We have more money for PrEP than we have spent in the last two years. This means we still have capacity to support the health needs of more people.

6) We run an HIV case management program which is going well. In this program we have social workers who support people living with HIV to navigate the system.

7) However, there continue to [be] issues around social determinants of health that have a role to play impacting outcomes for people living with HIV, e.g. housing grants, rental assistance. In that regard, we have significant challenges which remain for us to overcome.

8) I’m glad that with the mpox outbreak, Public Health did a lot of intentional outreach and strengthened partnerships with grassroots LGBTQ+ service organizations in Mecklenburg County to provide service to the community.

9) I support ensuring our “Getting to Zero” program has the resources it needs to work as effectively and efficiently as possible.

Yvette Townsend-Ingram: I would rate Mecklenburg County’s efforts as Average. There are several contributing factors for my rating of “Average”. The county’s Getting to Zero campaign planning stage began during an unfortunate time--the COVID 19 pandemic. Despite that fact, I believe the county did an admirable job of pivoting to Zoom meetings to keep conversations about the strategy from being dormant. However, it does not appear from current reporting, which I believe is lacking in transparency, that the county is on track to hit their self-imposed goals of the four key indicators by 2025. There should be clearly communicated benchmarks for each of the goals in the key indicators to diagnose, treat, prevent, and respond to the HIV pandemic. I do support the Getting to Zero campaign, but a good strategy is always flexible enough to pivot on areas where forward progress is not being made. In this case, I do not believe

there is enough data to support whether the strategy has made forward progress.

Mark Jerrell: I am very concerned about the current efforts to address the rising cases of HIV/AIDS within Mecklenburg County. To date, I would have to say that our efforts have limited effectiveness and are producing below average results. Communities of color and socio-economically disadvantaged residents have been hit the hardest and continue to bear the impact in a disproportionate way. On balance, there are multiple factors that contribute to this rating and include elements such as available resources, prevention programs, education, access to care, testing and treatment. I emphatically support the “Getting to Zero” initiative and believe it is imperative that we increase collaboration with community partners, marketing efforts and investments in all the areas outlined if we are going to change our current trajectory.

Laura Meier: I am aware that the rate of positive testing for HIV is on the rise. I work closely with Kathy Ireland and the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation where we discuss this and how to address these concerns. There are several reasons including: the effects of the pandemic and the difficulty in offering tests, availability of testing, and lack of focus on specific communities seeing an increase. It is important that the county work with local community groups (people of color, different cultural groups, religious organizations) to provide opportunities for testing and programs oriented towards prevention. I believe that we have to expand access to PrEP particularly for the underserved and uninsured.

As a first-time candidate, I am committed to making HIV testing/programming a priority in my service to Mecklenburg County. I am not 100% comfortable in offering a rating at either end of the spectrum. Today, I believe Mecklenburg County is average in their services/outreach. I am doing my homework and will possibly offer a different rating once I am more comfortable in my knowledge and my ability to effect change.

Susan Rodriguez-McDowell: I would rate the County’s efforts as “Above-Average” while believing there is always room for improvement. There has been a lot of progress in the last 18 months with expanded access to testing, especially with the County’s partnerships with providers out in the community. The County’s “Let’s Get Checked” initiative with confidential, at home, free testing is a positive step. Also, we have expanded access to PrEP by opening a new clinic last year and we have multiple marketing campaigns targeting increased compliance for medication intake. Mecklenburg has the highest HIV burden in the state but we have a robust set of strategies investing more than \$500,000 per year across efforts.

“Getting to Zero” is more than a campaign for Mecklenburg County – it is a framework, a road map for addressing HIV in the County. I support more aggressive implementation to make sure we reach our goals. I am glad that as a result of COVID, zoom meetings have allowed more community stakeholders to join the process and discussions, however it is definitely time for an update. ::

QUALITY
Comprehensive
Health & Wellness Together

Because Black Health Equity should begin with input from those being provided for, there is
Sigh
Magazine

Scan To Read Your Copy Now

<https://bit.ly/sighmag>
QCHealth.org

From Wilmington to Charlotte: A guide to spring arts & entertainment in North Carolina's largest venues

Fun you don't want to miss from music to ballet and theater to live concerts

by Taylor Heeden and David Aaron Moore

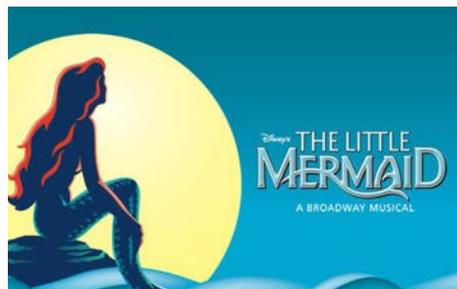
Spring brings warmer weather, April showers and new life to the world, but it also marks the beginning of concert season in North Carolina. The state is home to several large concert venues from Wilmington all the way to Charlotte. Some of these arenas and music halls have hosted some of the largest names in music, and this spring, many artists are making stops in the Tar Heel state.

QNotes has created a guide for the events happening at large venues across the state from Wilmington to Charlotte. Here's what's happening this spring.

"Peter Pan" • March 5-10 The Belk Theater at the Blumenthal, Charlotte

Charlotte's premier live theatrical venue brings this high-flying musical to the stage. Thrilling audiences of all ages for close to 70 years, it's now being brought back to life in a new adaptation by celebrated playwright Larissa FastHorse and directed by Emmy Award-winner Lonny Price, this latest interpretation follows Peter Pan and his mischievous fairy sidekick, Tinker Bell, as they visit the bedroom of the Darling children late one night. With a sprinkle of pixie dust and a few happy thoughts, the children are taken on a magical journey they will never forget. This extraordinary musical features iconic and timeless songs including "I'm Flying," "I Gotta Crow," "I Won't Grow Up" and "Neverland." "Peter Pan" takes the audience on a moving journey all ages will enjoy. Visit <http://www.blumenthalarts.org> for more info.

"The Little Mermaid" • March 7-24 Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts, Raleigh



The Martin Marietta Center for the Performing Arts is located in the heart of the Triangle at 2 East South St. in Raleigh. This spring, Carolina Ballet will be taking an adventure under the sea as they perform *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen. The ballet will follow the classic fairy tale by Anderson and



will feature new costumes and dance numbers from the company's usual performance. The show will be performed on weekends only from March 7 through March 24. Visit <https://www.martinmariettacenter.com> for more details.

Nicki Minaj • March 26 Spectrum Center, Charlotte



The Spectrum Center is home to the NBA's Charlotte Hornets and also doubles as a concert venue for some of music's largest names. Some of the artists who've performed at the Spectrum Center previously include Beyonce, Ariana Grande, Celine Dion, Bruce Springsteen and more. This March, the Spectrum Center will become a part of "Gag City" as Nicki Minaj makes a stop there on March 26 for her Pink Friday 2 World Tour. Minaj has been recognized as an ally to the LGBTQ+ community on multiple occasions, including when she

pulled out of her appearance at Jeddah World Fest in Saudi Arabia in 2019 to show her support for LGBTQ+ rights.

"After careful reflection I have decided to no longer move forward with my scheduled concert at Jeddah World Fest," Minaj stated in 2019 to the Associated Press. "While I want nothing more than to bring my show to fans in Saudi Arabia, after better educating myself on the issues, I believe it is important for me to make clear my support for the rights of women, the LGBTQ community and freedom of expression."

For details on her concert go to <https://www.spectrumcentercharlotte.com>.

T-Pain • April 4 NC Azalea Festival, Live Oak Bank Pavilion, Wilmington



Wilmington is home to the Live Oak Bank Pavilion, a large, outdoor concert

venue located at 10-A Cowan St. Music acts that have performed at the pavilion include Maggie Rogers, boygenius, Darius Rucker and more.

This year's Azalea Festival will open up with a concert at the Pavilion by early 2000s music icon T-Pain. Known for his use of electronic autotune, creating unique vocals and smudging the lines between rapper and singer, his signature style of over-the-top success led to over a decade of chart topping singles, numerous awards and international fame.

For tickets and other details go to <https://ncazaleafestival.org>

Dreamville Music Festival • April 6-7 Dorothea Dix Park, Raleigh

Dorothea Dix Park is located in the heart of Raleigh, and while it's famous for its sunflower fields and spacious green spaces, it's also known as the location of the annual Dreamville Music Festival.

Dreamville — which was started by North Carolina-native and famous rapper J. Cole — is the largest hip hop and rap music festival in the United States, and it brings hundreds of thousands of people to Raleigh every year. Some artists who've performed at the festival in the past include Kehlani (an out lesbian artist), SZA, Usher, Drake and more.

According to the festival's website:

"As a proud Black-owned music festival, Dreamville continues to emphasize community, diversity and inclusivity throughout the onsite fan experience each spring. If you've never been, imagine a large-scale multi-stage festival featuring performances from some of the biggest names in music, merged with a family-style cookout where everyone feels welcome and has a seat at the

table. ALL are welcome at Dreamville Festival!" Although the lineup has yet to be announced, tickets can be purchased at <https://dreamvillefest.com>.

**Women's Empowerment Expo • April 13
PNC Arena, Raleigh**



PNC Arena serves as one of the largest concert venues in the state, as well as the home basketball stadium for the NC State Wolfpack. This spring, the venue will also be home to the Women's Empowerment Expo — an event sponsored by Radio One Raleigh filled with seminars, curated shopping experiences, inspirational speakers and live music.

The lineup for this year's conference includes six-time Grammy-nominated R&B sensation Tamia, Le'Andria Johnson and Bobbi Storm, among others. The event will kick off at 2 p.m. Go here for more information: <https://www.pncarena.com>.

**The Harlem Globetrotters • April 21
Bojangles Coliseum, Charlotte**



Originally known as the Charlotte Coliseum, Bojangles Coliseum has served as a venue for many infamous events, including the ACC tournament, Elvis' final live performance in 1977 and currently it's the home base for the Charlotte Checkers Hockey team.

The Harlem Globetrotters will take to the court on the Charlotte stop of their world tour. The team was founded in 1926 by Abe Saperstein, and since then, The Globetrotters have entertained more than 148 million fans in over 120 countries and territories across the world. The Globetrotters are known for combining the athleticism needed to play basketball with theater and comedy, coming up with unique story-lines for each game/performance. More info is available online at <https://www.harlemglobetrotters.com>.

**Hozier • April 23
PNC Music Pavilion, Charlotte**



An outdoor music venue located in University City in Charlotte the PNC Music Pavilion has served as the host for such LGBTQ+ music icons as Janet Jackson, Shania Twain, Stevie Nicks and more. Now LGBTQ+ ally and musical artist Hozier will be making a stop in Charlotte for his Unreal Unearth tour. While he has become known for his fanbase of predominantly queer women, his involvement in advocating equality for all combined with his singing and songwriting abilities have led to success. His music often touches on social justice issues, with one of his greatest hits from 2013 — "Take Me to Church" — serving as a narrative about Russia and the Catholic Church's history of discriminating against queer folks.

Hozier talks constantly about the worries he had regarding marginalization and the rise of fascist policies across the globe, specifically since a lot of his fans are LGBTQ+ identifying. He's continued to advocate for LGBTQ+ equality and in recent months, has spoken out in support of his trans fans.

"You know, drag has existed for a long, long time and trans people have existed for centuries, but it's incredible in the last 10 years just how much they

have been scapegoated," he explained in an interview with Pink News. "You're talking about a tiny percentage of the population, so little gestures of support and solidarity like that, if they can go a long way, for me it is just important to show up for them."

Information about Hozier's upcoming concert can be found online at <https://hozier.com>.

**Maggie Rogers • June 19
Coastal Credit Union Music Park,
Raleigh**



Formally known as the Walnut Creek Amphitheater, the Coastal Credit Union Music is an outdoor concert venue located just outside of Raleigh. Most of the concerts at this music venue happen in the summer months, and to kick off this summer, singer and songwriter Maggie Rogers is making a stop at the outdoor music park as a part of her "The Don't Forget Me Tour."

Although Rogers does not publicly identify as queer, she is often viewed as a queer music icon by many in the LGBTQ+ community. Her music frequently contains lyrics or messages queer folks can relate to, ranging from talking about working through spiritual crises to discovering one's true self. Find out more about Maggie Rogers and her concert in Raleigh at <https://www.maggirogers.com/>.

LOW COUNTRY **BLUE RIDGE** **MIDLANDS** **GRAND STRAND** **TWIN CITY** **GATE CITY** **METRO**

WE ARE THE CAROLINAS

JOIN TODAY!

clgbtcc.org

CAROLINAS LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce

Connie J. Vetter, Esq.

Attorney at Law PLLC

Your LGBTQ+ Law Attorney

Talk/Text 704-333-4000

or online

A guide to spring arts & entertainment at small venues across North Carolina

Events taking place across the state, from Raleigh all the way to Asheville

by Taylor Heeden and David Aaron Moore

The spring season is fast approaching and with it comes a wide range of events happening across North Carolina in venues as large as Bank of America Stadium or as quaint as a local night club. Some of the best experiences happen in smaller, non-traditional venues and classic “hole-in-the-wall” joints. Many of them can be found right here in the Tar Heel state. Qnotes has collected a list of some of the smaller venues across North Carolina, as well as some of the events which will be taking place over the coming months.

Gay Men’s Chorus & the Women’s Chorus of Charlotte • March 3 First United Methodist Church, Charlotte

Members of the Women’s Chorus and the Gay Men’s Chorus of Charlotte, under the direction of John C. Quillin, will perform a selection of tunes set to the theme of “Forever Young: Stories From the Edge of Aging,” which is based on Robert Cohen’s “Alzheimer’s Stories.” The work tracks the history and experience of Alzheimer’s disease, starting with its recognition in 1906, continuing with the recollections of those who have experienced the disease, and paying tribute to the caregivers, all told through the language of love. Uplifting and cathartic, it’ll leave you a changed person. First United Methodist serves as the performance venue. Located at 501 N. Tryon Street, it was built in 1927 and is a welcoming and affirming congregation with a central sanctuary that seats 1,000. For more information, visit <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

TALK • March 5 Lincoln Theatre, Raleigh



Coming to the Lincoln Theatre this month is TALK, an androgynous singer and songwriter from Ottawa, Ontario in Canada. TALK found his way into the indie scene when he was forced to move back

into his parents’ house in 2020 after losing work during the COVID-19 pandemic. Falling into a state of depression, TALK wrote the song, “Run Away to Mars” after watching the film “Interstellar.” The music video for the viral hit featured David Bowie-inspired visuals, who has long been known as an icon in the queer community. The Lincoln Theatre is located at 126 E. Cabarrus St. in downtown Raleigh, right in the heart of the Triangle. Tickets for TALK are being sold at the Lincoln Theatre website at <https://lincolnthatre.com>

The Charlotte Pride Band • March 9 CPCC Parr Center, Charlotte

Located on Elizabeth Avenue on the main campus of the college, Central Piedmont Community College’s Parr Center is a state of the art facility that includes a 450-seat auditorium, which will host this year’s stage performances by the Charlotte Pride Band. Under the guidance of artistic directors John Stanley Ross and O’Shae Best, the Charlotte Pride will perform a selection of music curated with the theme “A Symphony of Emotion.” CPCC is located at 1201 Elizabeth Avenue. For more details, visit their website at <https://www.charlotteprideband.org>.

“Dance Your Decade: Party Supporting Reproductive Rights” • March 9 The Orange Peel, Asheville



The Orange Peel will be the location for “Dance Your Decade: Dance Party Supporting Reproductive Rights.” The event is sponsored by N.C. Sen. Julie Mayfield, state Rep. Lindsey Prather, Asheville Councilwoman Maggie Ullman, Commissioner Amanda Edwards and their committee. The party will be DJ’d by DJ Molly Parti and will feature tunes from the ‘60s, through the early 2000s. The Orange Peel is located at 101 Biltmore Ave. in the heart of Asheville and is home to some of the most anticipated local concerts for the area. Asheville is known nationwide for its accepting and affirming community with LGBTQ+ Pride flags flying over businesses and front porches alike. More details can be found at <https://theorangepeel.net>.



Gay Men’s Chorus & the Women’s Chorus of Charlotte

Common Woman Cabaret • March 10 Motorco Music Hall, Durham



Motorco Music Hall in Durham, located at 723 Rigsbee Ave., serves as a venue for many local and nationwide artists. An upcoming fundraising event at Motorco is for the Common Woman Chorus, a treble chorus made up of woman-identifying, gender-nonconforming, and transgender individuals. The fundraiser will be a cabaret-style show and hosted by Stormie Daie, a popular drag performer based out of Durham. Visit <https://www.commonwomanchorus.org> for tickets and additional info.

Jimbo’s Drag Circus • March 13 The Filmore, Charlotte



The Filmore, also known as the Underground, will host the 18+ drag show “Jimbo’s Drag Circus,” which is a part of former RuPaul’s Drag Race contestant Jimbo’s national tour. The Filmore is a lively music venue doubling as a club located in the AvidXchange Music Factory on 820 Hamilton St. The show will start at 8 p.m. For more details go to <https://www.dragfans.com/tour/jimbo-2024>.

Mimosa Fest • March 17 The Grey Eagle, Asheville

The Grey Eagle is located at 185 Clingman Ave. in Asheville and is a popular venue in town for private events, concerts and more. A fun event coming up at The Grey Eagle is the annual 21+ Mimosa Fest. The event will go from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Sunday, March 17, and will feature a live DJ, a brunch food menu, themed mimosa flavors and more. Regular tickets — which are \$15 — include just admission into the event. The VIP package includes three mimosa vouchers, admission and a free tee shirt. For more information, go to <https://www.thegreyeagle.com>.

Delighted Tobehere with the Gay Men’s Chorus & the Women’s Chorus of Charlotte • March 21 Lee Street Theater, Salisbury



Upholding Equality: Confronting the Surge of Anti-LGBTQ+ Legislation in North Carolina and Beyond

by Liz Schob (she/her), Communications Manager

From the genius of Clay Smith and his drag alter ego, Delighted Tobeher, comes this comedic and entertaining event. Fabulous looks, amazing singing and a razor-sharp wit make for a presentation of side-splitting laughter. Spend the evening with Delighted as she pulls out all the stops to prove she has what it takes, and will do whatever it takes, to get the role. Any role. The Lee Street Theater is located at 329 N. Lee Street in Salisbury. For more information go to <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

Delighted Tobeher with the Gay Men's Chorus & the Women's Chorus of Charlotte • March 22, Dowd Theater, Monroe

See March 21 listing. The Dowd Theater is located at 120 S. Main Street in Monroe. For more information go to <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

One Voice Chorus • March 22-23 Unitarian Universalist Community, Charlotte



One Voice Chorus brings LGBTQ+ and affirming people together to celebrate our lives in song. Since 1989 when five Charlotte residents met to form the chorus, the 25 singers at our first rehearsal in January 1990 have become a dedicated group of over 70 singers, support members and musical staff. Through the guidance of artistic director Cory Davis, One Voice will perform a selection of songs under the theme of "Mindful Music." The Unitarian Universalist Community Charlotte is located at 234 North Sharon Amity Road. For more details, go to onevoicechorus.com.

Delighted Tobeher with the Gay Men's Chorus & the Women's Chorus of Charlotte • March 29, Fullwood Theater, Matthews

See March 21 listing. The Fullwood Theater is located at 100 E. McDowell Street in Matthews. For more information go to <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

Gay Men's Chorus and Women's Chorus Ensembles of Charlotte • April 5-6 St. Martin's Episcopal Church, Charlotte

The three small ensembles of the Gay Men's Chorus and Women's Chorus of Charlotte – 7th Son, Vox Dominae, and Spite

& Malice – offer an unforgettable evening celebrating the vocal artistry of a cappella and more. The presentation includes Sara Bareilles's achingly beautiful Breathe Again, the Podd Brothers' knock-your-socks-off setting of Big Yellow Taxi, the beautiful world envisioned by Norwegian songwriter/performer Aurora, among others. The venue, St. Martin's Episcopal Church is located at 1510 East Seventh Street in uptown Charlotte. Originally built in 1880, the welcoming and affirming congregation features a large central sanctuary. For more information, visit <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

The Charlotte Pride Band • May 11 CPCC Parr Center, Charlotte

Central Piedmont's Parr Center is located on Elizabeth Avenue on the main campus of the center city college. A state of the art facility, it also includes a 450-seat auditorium, which will host performances by the Charlotte Pride Band. Under the guidance of artistic directors John Stanley Ross and O'Shae Best, the Charlotte Pride band not

only performs in the annual Pride parade but also offers concerts during the year. With the theme of "Spring Fling" guiding their presentation, the volunteer performers will keep you entertained with a selection of music reflective of the season. CPCC is located at 1201 Elizabeth Avenue. For

more details, visit their website at <https://www.charlotteprideband.org>.

Women's Chorus of Charlotte • June 14-15 The Galilee Center, Charlotte



Members of the Women's Chorus of Charlotte, under the direction of John C. Quillin will perform a selection of songs connected by the theme of "We Are." To guide us on this journey, we have road maps provided by composers like Ysaye Barnwell (We Are and Ella's Song) and Jason Robert Brown (Sanctuary). We've also got Sly and the Family Stone (Everyday People) and Sister Sledge (We Are Family). You won't be able to help stop tapping your toes and singing along! The venue, The Galilee Center, is located at 3601 Central Avenue near Charlotte's Plaza Midwood area. For more information, visit <https://www.gmccharlotte.org>.

In recent years, the United States has witnessed a concerning surge of anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the country. In this column, Charlotte Pride Communications Manager Liz Schob delves into the alarming implications of this trend.

Hey, Y'all.

Did you know that there are over 450 bills community being considered in state legislatures across the country attacking the LGBTQ+? Our own state is grappling with six bills under consideration by the General Assembly. We are barely into the year and more discriminatory legislation is likely on the way.

In North Carolina, legislators are considering bills that would impose age restrictions on access to puberty blockers and other gender-affirming care, allow health-care providers to discriminate against LGBTQ+ patients, force schools to out LGBTQ+ young people, and limit funding for LGBTQ+ affirming healthcare. They not only perpetuate harmful stereotypes but also continue a cycle of discrimination and marginalization. Many of these bills are holdovers from 2023, but more are likely to come.

Unfortunately, this is nothing new. The last few years have seen an alarming increase in bills like these and the sheer volume of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation being introduced is indicative of a troubling trend. At a time when equality and acceptance should be no-brainer, extremists are actively working to undermine the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and set us back decades. This is an election year, and the urgency of this fight is deeply felt.

I'm especially troubled by the fact that these bills largely target young people, and the rhetoric that has taken a national stage is already costing lives. Nex Benedict, a young nonbinary teenager from Oklahoma died recently after being attacked in a bathroom by bullies at their school. Nex loved spending time in nature, reading, art, and video games, and their young life was snuffed out. They were failed by their fellow students, their school, by law enforcement, and policymakers.

The Human Rights Campaign and the University of Connecticut's 2023 LGBTQ+

Youth Report found that over half of trans and gender-expensive youth face feel unsafe at their school, over a third feel unsafe in school bathrooms, and two-thirds have experienced bullying at school. The environment created by anti-LGBTQ+ vitriol and discrimination has enabled and empowered people to lean into the worst parts of themselves. Nex's death comes at a time when extremism and anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry are at an all-time high and the bills being heard in legislatures across the country will only make things worse.

Despite this, I hold on to hope. For every discriminatory policy that makes its way to the floor of a state legislature or halls of Congress, there are countless individuals united in their efforts to make sure these bills never become

law. We must join them in standing up against these discriminatory measures and demand action from our elected officials. This starts with advocacy and raising awareness about the harmful impact of these bills and mobilizing support for inclusive policies that protect the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of sexual

orientation or gender identity.

This is an election year, the results of which will reverberate throughout our country and beyond for years. If you haven't been paying attention before, I invite you to start now. All of the bills being heard in the North Carolina General Assembly are readily available on their website. Organizations like the Human Rights Campaign, Equality North Carolina, Democracy North Carolina, the Freedom Center for Social Justice, and others have resources on their websites that can help you make your voices heard.

The proliferation of anti-LGBTQ+ bills across the country, including those in North Carolina, is deeply upsetting and demands action. These discriminatory measures not only perpetuate harmful stereotypes and marginalize LGBTQ+ individuals but also undermine the principles of freedom, equality, and fairness that should be the foundation of our society. It is incumbent upon all of us to speak out against these injustices and work. I believe that if we work together, a future where everyone is treated with dignity, respect, and equality is possible.



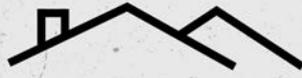
PHOTO CREDIT: Charlotte Pride



Q-munity connections



space starting at \$22:
call qnotes for details
704.531.9988



CARISSA EICHLER

704-910-7843

REAL ESTATE BROKER NC #346894
WEBSITE: CARISSAEICHLER.EXPREALTY.COM
EMAIL: CARISSA.EICHLER@EXPREALTY.COM
eXp Realty

A Day / Night
SALON & SPA

704-713-1952

Massages 24/7

MANSCAP



BODY
WAXING

MIKE THOMAS

704-400-2434

CALL OR TEXT

NCBARBERMIKE@GMAIL.COM

Relax...



to a
therapeutic or erotic body rub
given by attractive, experienced
professionals.

704.651.6899

4 hands available, by longest couple doing so.



MCC.

NEW LIFE
METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH

God loves YOU,
just the way you are!

NEW LIFE METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH
SUNDAYS at 7:00 P.M. 1201 SOUTH NEW HOPE ROAD GASTONIA
Rev. Dawn Flynn, Pastor www.NewLifeMccNC.org NewLifeMccGastonia@gmail.com

BUSINESS CARDS AS LOW AS \$22

FOR MORE INFORMATION, EMAIL ADSALES@QNOTESCAROLINAS.COM

OR CALL 704-531-9988

FROM
\$22

SPLASH

YOUR BUSINESS
HERE

Sweeten your love life!



Peaches

Adult Boutique & Arcade

OPEN 24/7

115 Swain Street, Fayetteville, NC, 910-339-2770

facebook.com/PeachesAdultBoutique1

TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH

GET TESTED

FREE Confidential Testing
Rapid HIV | Rapid HEP C
Chlamydia & Gonorrhea

WALK - IN TESTING

Monday - Thursday

8:30 am - 6:00 pm

Friday 8:30 am - 4:00 pm



STAY HEALTHY

Gay Friendly Primary Care
HIV Specialty Care
PrEP and PEP

Affinity HEALTH CENTER

877.647.6363

455 LAKESHORE PKWY.
ROCK HILL, SC 29730

affinityhealthcenter.org/get-tested

Our People: Jamie Hildreth

A young man with big hopes for changing our political landscape



by L'Monique King
Qnotes Staff Writer

Twenty years ago, a young boy from Anson County was spending most of his free time (summer vacations, holidays and long weekends) in Charlotte, N.C. Charlotte is where his family is from, where most have always resided and where he eventually decided to put down roots in 2010 after graduating from UNC-Charlotte. From his dimly lit living room in the East Charlotte neighborhood of Coventry Woods, sitting on his sofa with his fur buddy Bailey (an adorable Beagle) snuggled up close, Jamie Hildreth is eagerly prepared to share his insights on the current political climate, finding purpose in work and why Fruit Loops beat Corn Flakes on any given day.

L'Monique King: Do you have any siblings?

Jamie Hildreth: Yes. I'm the baby of three. I have an older brother and a sister (the middle sibling). My older brother, John, is also gay – and my opposite. I like to think of myself as a social butterfly, but my brother John is a real social butterfly. He's never met a stranger. I'm nice and pleasant [when meeting new people] but at the same time, if I don't know you – I don't know you. But John is just going to pull it out of you, all the information, all the tea. When you meet John, you're gonna leave with a new best friend.

LMK: As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?

JH: Oh God, that changed so much. For the longest time I said I wanted to be a doctor. Even in high school, I joined a program that would [result in] me graduating as a nurse. I quickly realized that the program [and profession] wasn't for me. I didn't like needles, didn't like blood and still don't. It was a great program, especially for those who thought they wanted to become doctors while weeding out those who it wasn't suited for. It definitely weeded me out. After that, I then thought I wanted to be an attorney. I like helping people and having discussions. It was natural for me, so I joined the debate club and went to UNC Charlotte for Political Science, at the worst time to be in college for that, the height of the recession. Everyone I spoke to said the field was oversaturated.

LMK: Is that what led you to get into politics?

JH: Actually, it started in 2012 during Amendment One, when gay marriage was put on the ballot in North Carolina. Up until that point, even though I was gay I had never had a negative experience [relating to being gay]. I'm a white cis guy and there's a lot of privilege that comes with that. At the same time, Republicans were



starting their march toward extremism, completely. I felt like I had to do something, I wanted to get involved. Me getting involved was my introduction to the Charlotte LGBTQ community. I reached out to two organizations. I found Charlotte Pride, eventually joined the board and then was invited to join Meck PAC, I loved them. With Meck PAC, I was privy to the behind-the-scenes political processes taking place. It meant meeting Mecklenburg County officials, interviewing them, handing out questionnaires and asking LGBTQ [community oriented] questions. It was extremely informative; learning who your real allies are and aren't.

In 2016, the Charlotte non-discrimination ordinance was passed, leading to the state of North Carolina passing HB[2] aka the bathroom bill. After all that, came the burn out. I ran for office, running for County Commission at large. I then took a break from politics for a few years and returned in 2020 to become a board member for the New Rural Project. This project is near and dear to my heart because it's focus is on getting people of color and folks in rural areas out to vote. It's so important, especially when you consider [what happened] in Anson County in 2022, where I'm from. For the first time in forever, a Republican won a majority of the votes. Ted Bud beat Cherry Beasley.

LMK: Can you share with readers a little bit on what it was like running for

County Commissioner?

JH: Highly informative, and while I would have never admitted it at the time, it was also the very real realization that I did not want to be elected. Granted I put my all into and raised more money than all the incumbents combined. However, from that experience I learned - there are more ways of having an impact than being elected. There are so many ways you can be involved and be the change you want to see. I thought about that a lot and realized I want to do things going forward that make me happy and bring me joy. Today, looking at where we are right now, I also feel like politics is just performative. I have a need to do something [beyond the rhetoric and performance]. I want to be involved in organizations on the ground who are actually working towards getting people to vote and making sure that the government is representative of the people they represent. I want our elected officials to look like the people they are actually governing.

LMK: Currently, what's your livelihood?

JH: Like a lot of people in Charlotte I work for a bank, in the Executive Complaints Department. Daily I'm working with everyday people who are having issues. They may have had a negative experience with an employee or have been scammed out of finances. In my position, it's about making sure there is someone who is looking out for the consumer. I

enjoy it because I get to see a very wide section of the banking industry.

LMK: What's most challenging about what you do?

JH: Unfortunate situations where someone has been scammed and we are honestly at the mercy of a lot of systems or regulations put in place that prevent that person from getting their money back. There have been some real sob stories when all options have been exhausted and they still can't get their money back.

LMK: After a day like that or any long day, how do you decompress?

JH: I like to consider myself a social person so I'm going to go out and have drinks with my friends. I love trying all the new restaurants that are popping up in Charlotte. I've been to Mariposa a few times. It's an absolutely great brunch spot and every time I go the food and vibe is just right.

LMK: Let's switch gears a bit. If you had a superpower, what would it be?

JH: Oooo. <Briefly pausing> I would want to be able to control the weather. I like the idea of always being able to control my [atmospheric] environment and creating storms when I'm feeling a little down.

LMK: Ok, serious question now. Corn flakes or fruit loops?

JH: <Without a moment's hesitation> Fruit Loops, always, hands down, since I was kid. <Laughter>

LMK: A picnic or the beach?

JH: Hmmm, why not a picnic on the beach?

LMK: If you're reading during that picnic on the beach, what's your preferred format? eBook or Hardcover?

JH: I am a recent eBook convert.

LMK: Before we conclude, we'd love to hear your thoughts on the future. How long, if ever, do you think it would take for Americans to experience a LGBTQ President?

JH: <Thoughtful pause> I want to be optimistic here, so after 2028, after Kamala's presidency. Thinking that she'll pick Pete Buttigieg as her V.P. he could likely be our first LGBTQ President [running and elected after President Harris].

LMK: With that in mind, can you wrap up with a few words of advice for the LGBTQ child who dreams of becoming president?

JH: I would tell that person to continue to live as authentically and as passionately as they can [and] in their true identity. An LGBTQ person is going to transform the office of the presidency by being just who they are. ::



WHITE RABBIT
920 CENTRAL AVE.
CHARLOTTE N.C. , 28204
(704) 377-4067

FOLLOW US @



WHITERABBIT



WRABBITNC



SHOPWHITERABBIT