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Organization of the Year: Hearts United for Good



**Cornbread & Roses
delivers solutions
in Western Carolina**
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**Charlotte Drag
performer Kasey
King passes at 68**
-pg 11





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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.

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For event listings, visit
qnotescarolinas.com/events-
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Ultimate Gift Guide

Instead of churning out anymore of those endless political memes on social media, it's time to turn your attention to making memories and exchanging gifts, like these carefully curated selections that'll lighten the mood, facilitate festiveness, and bring joy to those on your nice list. What about some Absolut Warhol?



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Worst Organization of the Year: 2024

When seven figure grants are used by nonprofit organizations, it's time for fiscal responsibility and transparency. Qnotes has increasingly encountered nonprofits that aren't willing to be as transparent as they should. That's one of the reasons Qnotes Staff has named Carolinas CARE Partnership (CCP) as the Worst Organization for 2024.

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Trump plans to bar Transgender military service members again

Plan may terminate 15,000 with a 'medical discharge'

by David Aaron Moore and Brandon Wolf

According to the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), reports emerged over the weekend beginning Nov. 22 that Donald Trump has begun planning for an Executive Order that would reinstate and expand upon his first administration's ban on transgender military service members.

Trump's transition team denied in Newsweek that any decisions on the issue had been made, and spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt told Newsweek the unnamed sources "are speculating and have no idea what they are actually talking about."

"No decisions on this issue have been made," said Leavitt. "No policy should ever be deemed official unless it comes directly from President Trump or his authorized spokespeople."

While Leavitt is adamant no concrete policy has been put forward, other media sources, including The Daily Beast, have stated that Trump plans to dismiss all currently serving transgender recruits regardless of rank (an estimated 15,000 individuals) and ban any future enlistees. Speculation surrounding the potential executive action is stoking devastating

uncertainty for transgender people across the country.

As the United States military continues to fall short of its recruitment targets, the discriminatory ban, as reported, could terminate the employment of an estimated 15,000 people, deeming them "unfit to serve" – despite the fact that they meet every qualification. The United States military is the largest employer of transgender people in the country. Recent studies show that transgender people are twice as likely as the general population to serve in the military.

"Banning thousands of qualified transgender service members – who meet every qualification to serve and have been serving without incident positively contributing to the nation's defense for nearly a decade – would make our country less safe and is nothing more than transphobia masquerading as policy," said HRC President Kelley Robinson.

"The United States military, tasked with defending our country and protecting all Americans, should be built on readiness and qualifications, not bias, hate and discrimination. Transgender service members are patriots who have



If Trump removes all currently serving trans recruits the impact on military readiness could be disastrous.

proven their commitment, skill and dedication to protecting this country.

"Donald Trump is making clear that his administration will go all in on hatred and division at the expense of our military's readiness, our standing as a leader on the world stage, and the dignity of those who have made the courageous decision to serve their country," Robinson continued. "Our military must be able to recruit the best candidates, retain the highly trained service members who have already sacrificed so much for their country, and every qualified patriot should be able to serve openly, free of discrimination."

"Transgender people exist and belong in every part of our society. We stand with these service members and will take swift action to push back against this dangerous and discriminatory ban. Any person who meets the qualifications should be able to serve."

As reported in, this proposed ban would be disastrous for military readiness and the country's safety. "These people will be forced out at a time when the military can't recruit enough people,"

a source familiar with Trump's plans said. "Only the Marine Corps is hitting its numbers for recruitment and some people who will be affected are in very senior positions."

"Should a trans ban be implemented from day one of the Trump administration it would undermine the readiness of the military and create an even greater recruitment and retention crisis, not to mention signalling vulnerability to America's adversaries," said Rachel Branaman, executive director of Modern Military Association of America, which campaigns on behalf of LGBTQ+ military personnel and veterans.

Trans people already serving in the military say that as well as causing them significant personal hardship, a new ban would be disastrous for the armed forces.

"There are very few members of my career field with this experience, and in the event of a large-scale contingency, it would be difficult to replace the level of experience that I bring to the table," said a serving US Air Force non-commissioned officer, who preferred not to give their name. ::

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Mecklenburg County Democratic Chair asked to step down over scathing letters

Both former Executive Director Monifa Drayton and African American Caucus President Braxton Becoats have raised red flags for Drew Kromer



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

In a letter posted online November 23, the African American Caucus of Mecklenburg County has called on the Democratic party chair of Mecklenburg County, Drew Kromer, to resign.

The caucus claimed, in the letter, that paid and volunteer staff had been mistreated and that Kromer made unilateral decisions to remove leaders from their positions while otherwise being uncommunicative with other staff.

The caucus letter also spoke on a lack of transparency surrounding the party's financial concerns and a "refusal to engage with ethnic minority communities in Mecklenburg County."

"You have an African American arm in your party, and when we are reaching out and trying to help you come up with a strategy, and when we are telling you the things that need to be done in our communities, you are not listening,"

Caucus President Braxton Becoats said. The letter from the African American Caucus comes several weeks after Monifa Drayton resigned from her role as executive director, saying she faced a racist and toxic work environment.

In her resignation after Election Day, in a letter written to Kromer along with the party staff, Drayton had claimed that she was stripped of her responsibilities, accusing party leaders of limiting her to only work with Black, brown and LGBTQ+ communities after stripping away her power due to false allegations. Drayton stated that the way she learned about losing her duties was through a staff memo, shared by her colleagues.

"This was truly reminiscent [of] what was required of professional Black women during the Jim Crow era," the letter reads. "Without my knowledge or justification, I received a screenshot from staff in which they were informed of an organizational restructure ... all of my duties and direct reports were redirected to Julia Buckner who was a replacement for the former Field Organizer who resigned two months prior."

"Additionally, it was shared by multiple

staff that they were instructed to not speak to me moving forward which was obvious while I was in the office, making the environment hostile and unbearable. This was done despite having a proven record of winning 100 percent of local campaigns that I managed and being a trusted voice in the political sector for many years."

Kromer, 27, was selected to be the Mecklenburg Democratic Party chair in April 2023. Under his leadership, Kromer is credited with growing the party by recruiting thousands of volunteers as well as raising more than \$2.5 million, garnering the newly minted chair national attention.

However, despite all of Kromer's accolades, Becoats does not see the young politician as the way forward for the NC Democratic party. "If you are not treating that staff well or if you are not utilizing that money to reach all communities in Mecklenburg County, then what's the point of having the money?" Becoats asked.



Monifa Drayton (left) resigned from her role as executive director of the Mecklenburg County Democratic Party in mid November. Now she's calling for Drew Kromer, the Mecklenburg County Chair to step down. CREDIT: Facebook

Mecklenburg County Democrats released a statement carried by The Charlotte Observer that said the party doesn't comment publicly on personnel matters.

"What we can say is that our organization, like our fundamental party beliefs, remains steadfastly committed to the principles of a diverse workforce and opportunity for all people," the statement said. Party Chairman Drew Kromer has reportedly declined to provide any additional comments about the situation. ::

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Coffee shop shares the gospel with LGBTQ+ community in Lowell

In Gaston County, where there are few LGBTQ+ welcoming establishments, one venue seeks to show love in any way it can to people looking for an affirming environment. Beginning this past Aug. 18, Lowell's North Main Kava Bar added a new event in the form of church services each Sunday.

To the small bar, Pastor Castello Vore works to bring Catholic teachings in for the openly LGBTQ+ congregation.

In an interview with Charlotte television station WCNC about his services, Vore explained where he places the pain felt by those he preaches to. "One of the greatest crises in humanity is spiritual homelessness, and we want

to provide a cure for that," Vore told reporters. "The art and the movement of conversation that flows through this space gets people that don't understand us to hear our stories"

Bambe Johnson, the co-owner of Kava Bar, agreed with Vore's words in the same report. "We are here for a purpose," she told WCNC. "The church brings in those that are maybe outcasts or aren't well received in other places."

Bringing the church services to the underserved LGBTQ+ citizens of Lowell is the latest way that Johnson has pursued making the Kava Bar a home for everyone. The alcohol-free bar has also been home to the Bolivian Mystic

Maya, who on Aug. 23 celebrated a year of providing card readings, and quarterly drag shows.

Johnson has remained strong about her vision for a more open community at the bar. While residents of Lowell attempted to push for a city ordinance against hosting drag shows last February, Kava Bar was about to host their first one.

During a city council meeting held on Feb. 13, Lowell Mayor Larry Simonds pushed back on the comments surrounding the request. "I think it's the most ignorant thing I've ever heard in my life, and for people to have to come up here tonight and express views about something like that, either side, that's not the place for it. This is a City Council meeting trying to better our city and go forward in the eyes of Christ." Despite what at first seemed like a defense of the performance, Simonds did ask Johnson to cancel the event slated for March 9.

Johnson's reply? Not only did the show go on, Johnson reportedly informed the Lowell City Council if any



Bambe and Sam Johnson pose in front of North Main Kava Bar.
CREDIT: North Main Kava Bar / Facebook

moves were made to prevent the show going forward, she would get "the gayest lawyer she could find," and sue them.

For North Main Kava Bar, which touts the business as woman- and LGBTQ+-owned on their Facebook page, all who come through their doors with love and a positive attitude are considered family and a blessing, especially allies in rural places for the LGBTQ+ community. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Has all been forgiven?

On Sunday, November 24, Shane Windmeyer will be performing in Charlotte as their drag persona Buff Faye, in a series that started on October 20 at Dilworth Neighborhood Grille. The presentations come nearly a year since their expulsion as CEO from Campus Pride for misappropriating more than \$100,000 from the organization.

Faye's recent performances, which have largely taken place in Rock Hill and date back to August are only now resurfacing in Charlotte. Among the other entertainers who have been and will be in performance along with Faye are Reann Ballslee, Erica Chanel, Kristin Collins, Devida, Brooklyn Dior, Giovanni Diamond, Ashli Farrington, Lilli Frost, Malayia Chanel Iman, Saniya Chanel Iman, Kiana Layne, Angela Lopez, Mania, DJ Magik Mike, Jayla Serena Mitchell,

Cierra Desire Nichole, Taylor Knight Adams St. James, Dorae Saunders, Rebecca Stardust, Quindyn Tarentino, DJ Bear Traxx and Venus Wyre. Venues listed on promotional ads are Dilworth Neighborhood Grille, Midtown Tavern and Kounter.

As reported by Qnotes on December 15, 2023, an anonymously dropped envelope was received at White Rabbit Books. Inside of it was a collection of materials, ranging from exchanges via email containing financial activities highlighted across excel spreadsheets and legal documents pertaining to Windmeyer's financial activities at Campus Pride.

The result that followed was a series of investigative stories that became a subject of intense debate in the Charlotte LGBTQ+ community, and a question of Windmeyer's reputation after admitting

to misappropriating funds in excess of \$100,000 from the nonprofit.

Since the stories originally appeared, Windmeyer's Buff Faye has made only a few stage appearances, including one during Rock Hill Pride earlier this year, but a scheduled performance at The Fillmore's Icons of Pride event was postponed with no replacement announcements made as of this writing.

With the inclusion of so many notable figures in Charlotte's drag community, the question arises: does a year after the admitted misuse of such a large amount of funds, paired with only the admittance of guilt without even an apology tacked on, give Windmeyer entree back to Charlotte and the southeast drag performance community?

Additionally, who pays the price for re-admittance? Since the initial incident, Campus Pride has seemingly ceased operating as an organization, with no replacement being instated as CEO after



Windmeyer's ousting. Before all of this, the institution was nationally recognized, supporting LGBTQ+ youth by providing guidance to students seeking welcoming and vetted environments at campuses across the country.

Given Windmeyer's impact on such important work dedicated to potential future LGBTQ+ leaders, have venues and other drag performers that previously rallied against Faye/Windmeyer's actions chosen to turn a blind eye? ::

—Jonathan Golian

Asheville's Day Trip bar to reopen at new location

Announced first as part of an interview on the Jennifer Hudson show, Brandon Davis and his husband, Davie, will reopen their popular LGBTQ+ and allied bar, DayTrip, at the site of another former bar known as The Malvern in March 2025.

On September 26, just as the impact of Hurricane Helene was realized, the couple could be seen in an Instagram reel tromping through mud and water that was almost knee deep inside Day Trip. Shocked and aggrieved, the couple took to social media to show their patrons the fate of the original location.

While the Davises slowly doubled up on clearing out parts of their building, as well as helped in the local community by taking in and distributing donations for those in need, a friend decided to try and help them in kind.

Meredith Sims started a GoFundMe campaign on behalf of both the business owners and the bar, setting an initial goal of \$180,000, taking an estimation

of both the couple's life savings and the loans taken out to finance and establish the bar.

"They spent countless months and so much blood, sweat and tears renovating the space and realizing their dream of creating a cozy and quirky place for friends and neighbors to come and feel welcome," she wrote on the fundraising page, which since surpassed its goals and the effort has come to a close. "It was that place for a sweet brief time."

The gofundme page raised more than \$191,000, as verified by NBC News. The couple was able to pay back their loans, but also give parts of what was donated to other Asheville residents in need of help.

What had been a journey since the end of September after losing their original space, continued on the "Jennifer Hudson Show." In a segment known as J Hud's Heroes, the couple announced that they were going to be rebuilding their business.

In the last part of the segment,



Brandon and Davie Davis talking with Jennifer Hudson on a segment of her show called 'J. Hud's Heroes' about their experience with Hurricane Helene.
CREDIT: The Jennifer Hudson Show/Instagram

Davie Davis told Hudson about the developments underway.

"The bar where we're doing our pop up [now]... we've actually bought into that bar," Davie explained. "And that's called the Malvern, which is what it used to be called. It's a long-time institution, and we're going to be bringing that back [with DayTrip]."

A follow-up Instagram post gives further details, marking the first week of December to be the start of a three-month pop up within The Malvern, called "DayTrip: Winter Vacation." After

that period, March is the goal for not only having The Malvern back up to full capacity, but DayTrip in its new permanent home by that point, as well.

Brandon Davis had one more thing to say at the end of their conversation with Hudson: "At our bars, both of our bars, it doesn't matter if you are a queer person, if you are a trans person, if you are a person of color, if you are a woman, if you are someone who does not feel seen, we see you and you are welcome at our spot." ::

—Jonathan Golian

Cornbread & Roses mends invisible wounds in Western Carolina

Making mental health a major priority, CBR seeks to heal its clientele both inside and out



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

According to horticulturist John Negus, you can spread a handful of cornmeal around the base of a rose bush in spring to protect the plant from black spot disease, a fungal condition that reduces the plants vigor.

The same kind of surrounding protection can be found in Sylva, N.C. at Cornbread & Roses, or CBR. Founded by a small group of queer and queer-allied individuals, CBR's main goal is to provide a safe space for the LGBTQ+ community in Jackson County – a place where everyone feels accepted and understood. As CBR's website states, "In Appalachia, we've always helped our neighbors in need. We think sharing cornbread is the best way to foster awareness, education and love."

Jackson County is one of the 27 counties in western North Carolina that suffered major devastation from Hurricane Helene with more than 11 inches of rain fall during the storm. The main river there rose to over 17 feet and wind gusts rose to 60 miles per hour in certain areas. Despite escaping the worst of the storm, many residents were unable to leave their homes, and the area continued to run low on food and fuel for weeks. Thousands in the county were without power, water and telephone or internet services in the days and weeks that followed.

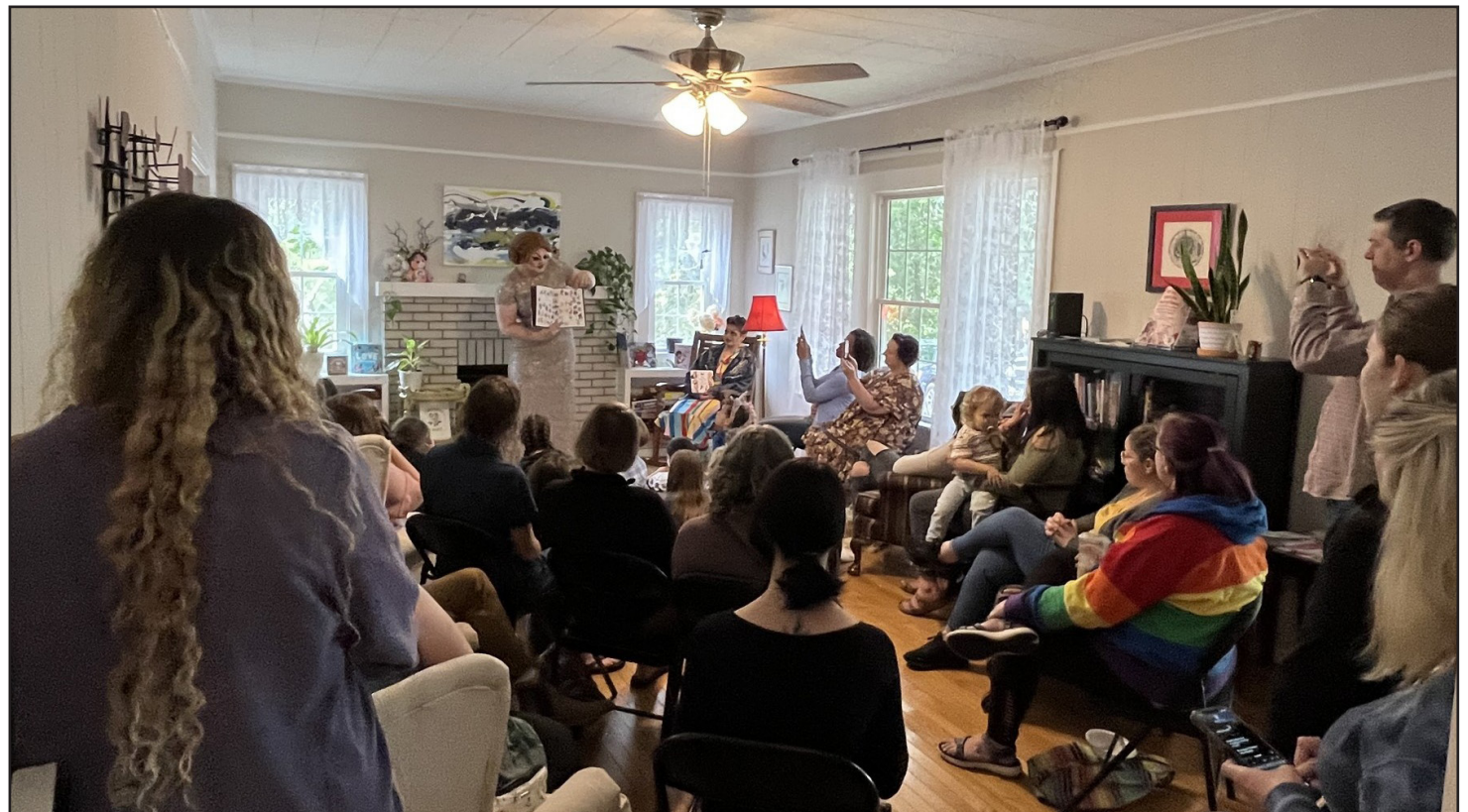
Residents of North Carolina, including people at organizations like CBR, have pitched in to help their fellow neighbors in the western territories. While the work is continuing, the impact made by those in and outside North Carolina has been tremendous.

The tasks at hand have been conducting search-and-rescue operations for missing people in the Appalachian area, clearing up roads that were not completely washed away in order to get rural towns connected with the rest of the area again, and dropping off and distributing food and supplies among the hardest hit victims of the storm. Each step of progress is a step toward providing more hope for a better tomorrow for those affected.

Most of the assistance in western North Carolina has been physical. The public can verify that the needs to sustain life have been tackled. We see the donations of food, water, batteries, etc. We can visually see the homes being rebuilt, roads being worked on, and power and other utilities start to work again.

However, there is another hardship that is not so visible. The mental impact from the traumatic experiences exposed by the hurricane's devastation.

Our mentality, the very peace of mind that keeps us all going, is just as essential as the rest of our bodily needs.



Community help and outreach presentation from Cornbread and Roses.
CREDIT: Facebook/Cornbread & Roses

For the multitude of those affected by the storm, trauma suffered from family and friends missing or lives being lost, the monumental loss can be overwhelming. Those type of wounds can go unnoticed for some time, only to fester and fundamentally change a person for the worse. When there is a need to decompress, reevaluate outside the normal means of close personal contacts, or tackle certain traits like anxiety and depression, avenues like CBR is one place where help can be found.

The name of the clinic, Cornbread & Roses, comes from a speech made by American women's suffrage activist Helen Todd, which is attributed to the poem Bread and Roses by James Oppenheim. The specific line in the speech Todd attributed to her inspiration, "bread for all, and roses too," spoke to providing fair wages and dignified conditions, during a textile strike in Lawrence, Mass. It lasted from January to March 1912 and is at the core of Todd's other inspiration for the phrase.

Says Kassie McAlpin, a youth therapist and community and clinical educator who works as a part of CBR: "We use cornbread because we're in the south, so it's kind of a general messaging that everybody deserves to have their basic needs met and everything they need to live."

McAlpin has made it her mission to work with the staff at CBR. She wants to see the clinic succeed through the multiple programs it boasts, including monthly group meets for parents and caregivers of LGBTQ+ youth, a support group for transgender and gender-

expansive youth and community movie nights. That will provide community members and clients alike a fun span of time to relax.

"I'm the youth therapist here, so all of my clients are queer and trans youth. And, you know, the kind of shifting legislative landscape in North Carolina has been a roller coaster over the past couple years. We try to do things in a way that is the most productive and protective for these clients who are part of a very marginalized population, and hold some very marginalized identities, right now."

Along with concerns that have followed the devastating storm, CBR has expanded their community counseling focus to address the specific gaps faced by marginalized people living in areas impacted by Helene. Additions include providing sliding-scale therapy and queer-focused support groups, education and events.

Another vital initiative that CBR boasts since the storm is its food bank, headed by Claire Leipold (she/they), the bank's director of operations. Starting at the clinic in June after meeting CBR's executive director Jen Harr, Leipold has made the food bank's success her priority.

The food bank is one major initiative that combats the degradation of mental health that western North Carolina residents have been dealing with. When the hurricane hit, the need for perishable products became a major driving force for those giving aid.

McAlpin and company would tend to the internal mental wounds during

counseling sessions, while Leipold combated the outer, surface issues through food distribution. It makes sense that having access to daily necessities from the clinic would be included in the healing process. What good is talk therapy if you're so hungry you can't think clearly?

One of the main reasons CBR has been so helpful: Very few questions are asked of those who come to the food bank. "It's set up like a little grocery store, and people walk through and take whatever they need and however much of it they need, while keeping in mind the people behind them," explained Leipold. "So, we don't put limits on anything. It's just kind of self-regulated. We try to be as trauma informed as possible." It's clear this organization is always thinking about the mental health of their clients.

Many people have gained so much from the expansion of CBR's programing.

Atsej Cooper, a representative of the LGBTQ+ Cherokee organization Unequolada, said that CBR "has been incredible with food distribution and so much more. It is incredible to see the outpouring of love, labor and solidarity in our mountains from every valley and holler during these awful times."

"This story has been supported by the Solutions Journalism Network, a nonprofit organization dedicated to rigorous and compelling reporting about responses to social problems <http://solutionsjournalism.org>."

Additional Qnotes staff members contributed to this story. ::

Hearts United For Good named QNotes 2024 Organization of the Year

From food distribution to Western Carolina relief efforts, reasons for the win are as numerous as HUG's daily activities



by Jonathan Golian
QNotes Staff Writer

For 2024's Organization of the year, QNotes is excited to celebrate the work of Hearts United For Good (HUG) for its annual selection.

HUG has had a very busy year of work in the Charlotte community along with areas beyond the city's borders. According to Bethany McDonald, the executive director of HUG, while the challenges have been extraordinary, each was met through hard work and a smile.

One of the major initiatives of HUG in 2024 has been its food assistance program. According to McDonald, over 100,000 pounds of food have been distributed in this year alone.

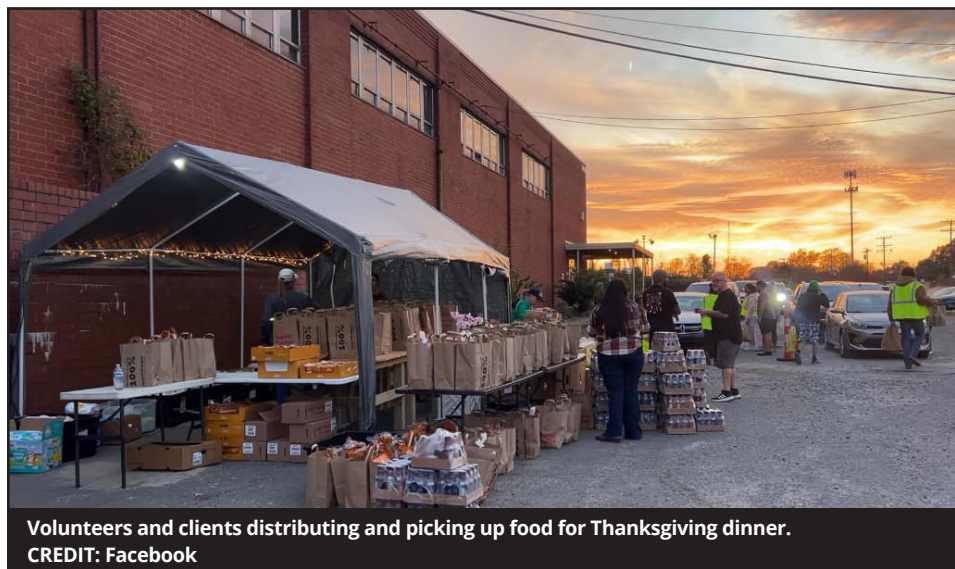
According to the organization's impact report, which includes the weight in total and number of bags, over 10,395 bags of groceries were given out, 12,500 adult incontinence items have been provided, and, unique to HUG and a handful of

other non-profits, 30,000 diapers were distributed for families in need.

"Hearts United for Good has truly earned the honor of being named Organization of the Year," says Chad Turner, CEO of the Carolinas LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce. "Their selfless dedication to serving the most vulnerable in our community is nothing short of inspiring. They embody the spirit of compassion, doing so much with so little, and proving time and again that even in the toughest times, hope can shine through. Their unwavering commitment has been a beacon of light for those who often have nowhere else to turn, and this recognition is a testament to the profound impact they continue to make in our region."

It's true, HUG has been able to do much on its own, but the organization's extended efforts lay with the partnerships it has been able to make.

"We are official partners with Second Harvest Food Bank and Stand For Animals, [Both of which] help our animal welfare program," McDonald explained. And the diaper bank of NC, where they give us the



Volunteers and clients distributing and picking up food for Thanksgiving dinner.
CREDIT: Facebook


diapers for free when we were buying them at high cost. We're one of the only pantries that give out diapers for free."

"We try and find low income families that have, you know, elderly family members that are in late stages of

diseases like Alzheimer's, where if hospice won't cover the incontinence items, we take it over to them and we make sure that they're taken care of."

Two other major programs HUG has managed this year are the Homeless

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Outreach and the Animal Welfare programs. The successes of the first allowed many of the homeless population in the Charlotte area to receive over 2,300 snack bags and over 1,000 canned or covered meals. For other daily needs, HUG gave out over 150 pairs of shoes or work boots, as well as more than 300 hygiene kits and sleeping materials, such as blankets and sleeping bags.

We asked McDonald what drives her efforts to make the impact the organization does everyday. She replied, "Oh, just breathing drives me with this group!"

"What's incredible about us is that, I know it sounds cliché, but we truly are a family," expressed McDonald. "I recently drove back from Vermont on Monday overnight, dropped off my partner with my dog, and I came straight here because I was excited to see everyone and catch up on what they've done. And, you know, it's what we do, we connect with the people directly. We're not just a conduit or a resource center, we're the ones that are actually working with the people. And when you get those experiences, and you get to see that, you're not just putting band aids on things, you're finding cures, and that's what changes everything for us.

"You know, when people come to the food pantry line, we don't just give them a bag of food," she continued to explain. "We ask them questions. We want to know why they need the food, and that way we can help them to not need again. If we can help give them clothing, household items, whatever it is they need, so that they can allocate the little funding they have to more critical resources, then we're happy to find a way to do it.

"And there's puppies," McDonald laughed. "We have puppies in the office sometimes. So come on, that's a good reason to come every day. We've rescued or re-homed over 28 dogs this year. We've just been all over the place."

On the animal side, HUG works with Stand For Animals, a local veterinary clinic that offers affordable animal care as well as spay/neuter services. Through their

partnership, along with efforts to re-home dogs, HUG has also found treatment for 37 of the pups in need and were able to have 11 of them spayed or neutered. Through Second Harvest Food Bank, they've distributed over 5,000 pounds of food.

"We also had an office cat for a while, but we re-homed him as well," McDonald recalled with a hint of melancholy. It's amazing. Our intern comes in and gets really disappointed when he doesn't see puppies," McDonald added.

This year has been busy with activity, including the organization's work with those affected by Hurricane Helene, but the needs have leveled off since the days of the COVID pandemic, when the call for help was as high as ever. Their continued presence in Charlotte, however, makes it clear: Needs in the region continue.

"From 2021 to now," McDonald recalled, "we are down on cost by 95 percent, but we have upped our distribution [by] 438 percent, so that tells you somehow we found ways to make magic happen, and that's just through partnerships."

Along with the programs outlined on HUG's impact report, Education and Development is a relatively new initiative that began with 2024. Currently working with five schools, according to McDonald, HUG tries to do the most for those that are "99 percent economically disadvantaged" and with "at least 97 percent minority enrollment." McDonald herself has her *boots on the ground* weekly with these schools. "I tutor kids sometimes on Wednesdays and Thursdays."

"We also proctor tests and exams, on occasion covering one school for an entire week." McDonald included that one of the major directives was the teachers in the schools they directly sponsor. Between 200 teachers over two schools during Teacher Appreciation Week, HUG made sure to give back, handing out gift bags and flowers, along with serving breakfasts and lunches. "We know if there's anybody that's undervalued," McDonald stated, "it's teachers."

The work that HUG has done with schools, much like the rest of their work,



Staff and volunteers with Hearts United for Good preparing supplies for transport. CREDIT: Facebook

directly addresses the forward thinking needed for a more positive future. "If we can help these kids where they are now, then that's one less bag of food we'll have to hand out later," McDonald offered. "If they have kids that need school uniforms, [or] shoes, if they have families that need food, we have a referral process, and they come right to us."

Looking ahead to the end of 2024 and into 2025, HUG hopes to further expand what they already do in their service to other communities within reach.

McDonald immediately zeroed in on continuing the relief efforts for counties like Jackson and Buncombe. "We're ready to shift into rebuilding. We're gonna be there for that. We've got pallets upon pallets of supplies like putty, paint and things that we'll need. We've got pallets of housewares, linens and things like that. So, we'll be making sure that everybody's got anything they need, especially in the

250 counties that we're focused on. We're also hoping to work with the LaMelo Ball Foundation to do sneaker drives and presentations for teens in schools that are economically disadvantaged and don't have nice shoes. We're hoping that we can solidify this partnership and make sure we can take care of that."

HUG has also begun integration of an online pantry system in order to expand on feeding as many people as possible and allowing for easier access to the programs the organization already has in place.

Despite the sizable number of families and individuals HUG works with, through their continued persistence, along with partnerships from around the area, much of the non-profit's visions are reached.

From food distribution, to advocating for Charlotte's homeless, youth and other people *and animals* in need, it's easy to see why Hearts United For Good deserves **QNotes'** Organization of the Year Award. ::

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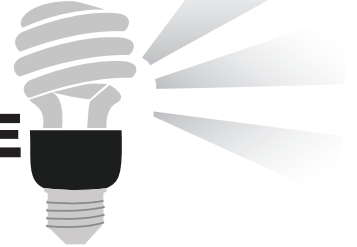
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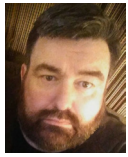
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Worst Organization of the Year: Carolinas Care Partnership

Organization accepts \$2mil grant, loses most of employees, then seemingly does nothing. Where's the money?



by David Aaron Moore
QNotes Staff Writer

Charlotte is a big city. Including the metro area, the population is right around three million. As everyone knows, our principal driving economic source is finance, banking and all related service industries.

That brings us to the primary focus of this article. Charlotte has just under 16,000 non-profit organizations. Combined, (according to the website *causeiq.com*) they employ around 85,000 individuals; earn more than \$12 billion in revenue each year and possess assets totaling \$35 billion.

That's a lot of money.

It's the kind of funding when used by nonprofit organizations that requires fiscal responsibility and transparency. In Charlotte's LGBTQ+ community, *QNotes* has increasingly encountered nonprofits that aren't willing to be as transparent as they should.

That's why *QNotes* staff has named **Carolinas CARE Partnership** (CCP) as the Worst Organization for 2024.

Their path to this achievement begins

in early 2024 when *QNotes* attempted to communicate with CCP's interim executive director, Tawana Denmark, about the departure of two well-known and respected staffers, Shannon Farrar and Bethany Corrigan.

But there was another matter. A \$2 million grant from the MacKenzie Scott Foundation, an organization created and managed by Scott, the ex-wife of Amazon founder Jeff Bezos.

Scott is reportedly worth an estimated \$34.7 billion dollars and hands out grants to organizations in need that are working for causes Scott deems of merit. In this case, the grant was earmarked for Transcend Charlotte, which had merged with Carolinas Care Partnership under the direction of Corrigan.

Multiple calls were made. Emails were sent. Text messages were sent. Even *QNotes* publisher Jim Yarbrough stopped by the organization's office, only to be told by interns that there was no staff in the office because they were on "sabbatical."

Since when do nonprofit employees suddenly become university professors and take a year off for study and travel? Did that mean the staff of CCP would not return for a year?!

That might as well have been the case.

While it's not as though *QNotes*



What happened to CCP and their \$2 million grant?

hired a SWAT team to take out a terrorist organization, the CCP's lack of response and avoidance tactics were incomparable. We simply wanted to ask a few questions about things that, considering the organization is nonprofit and largely exists on grants and donations, should be public knowledge.

But no one wanted to talk with us.

There was no transparency whatsoever.

QNotes and the LGBTQ+ Community both were concerned about the whereabouts of Farrar, a long time employee of CCP; and the future for Corrigan, an individual so dedicated to the concept of Transcend and the transgender community in Charlotte, it seemed inconceivable the organization could function without their presence.

But no comment was forthcoming from CCP.

QNotes was able to dig up a mobile number for Denmark, although once she determined who was calling her and what the call was about, she quickly hopped off the line, promising to be "back in touch."

She did not get back in touch.

Farrar was still nowhere to be found, and Corrigan declined to speak with us. Farrar's profile and commentary about CCP remained on the organization's website for several weeks past the time she and the organization parted ways. Today, when you visit the site and click on the link that says "Our Staff and Team," there are no links that go anywhere.

As of December 2024, it would seem there is still no transparency at CCP. You are not allowed to see who the board members, staff and volunteer teams are. But back to the initial attempt to determine the fate of the two employees and the \$2 million dollar grant.

Eventually, during another attempt to reach Denmark on her mobile, for some unknown reason, she decided to take the call. She confirmed that Farrar and Corrigan were no longer with the organization. At that time, she was either unable or unwilling to divulge any further information regarding the two individuals.

Weeks of back and forth attempts at connecting with CCP yielded little to no results. Ultimately, the organization responded to our inquiries with a vague statement of sorts from Denmark.

"Carolinas CARE Partnership looks

forward to a summer of programming and events, all dedicated to furthering our mission of seeking justice through health and housing. In addition to our year-long programs focused on areas like housing services, gender identity programs, mental health and substance abuse; we're excited to support AIDS Walk Charlotte in May, celebrate National HIV testing Day in June and host Queer Prom around Charlotte Pride week in August."

The Queer Prom CCP offered required another release that was a bit more in depth.

"We have experienced some logistical challenges and changes in leadership and have made the strategic decision to postpone Queer Prom until Pride Month in August. We believe this timing will give us adequate time to resolve all issues and ensure that the event is most successful. Timing it as a pre-Pride celebration will just add to our experience of that time [and] acknowledgement for the community. We remain steadfast in our commitment to the core values and mission of Queer Prom and commit to making it an unforgettable celebration of love, acceptance and diversity."

CCP's Queer Prom never materialized, and there was no follow-up statement. It would be remiss to note that Corrigan did produce a queer prom in conjunction with the Carolinas' LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce, though the event did not benefit from any of grant funding that should have been made available.

A quick visit to the organization's social media pages shows little to no involvement in any events since June of this year. Their Facebook account actually still has posted at the top of their page a video clip with former executive director Farrar talking about the importance of the organization and what they are doing in response to the COVID pandemic.

According to various sources in the community, CCP is now a barely functioning entity and a shadow of the organization it once was.

"It is my understanding they have a case worker, the interim ED and a

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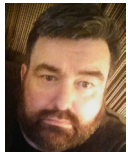


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Kasey King, beloved and once frequent performer on the Charlotte drag scene, dies at 68

King was a NC native and called CLT home since the 1970s



by David Aaron Moore
QNotes Staff Writer

Drag artist Kasey King has passed away at the age of 68. A native of Landis, N.C., she grew up in China Grove before moving to Charlotte, where she made her home in the Dilworth neighborhood.

The petite performer who made a name for herself in the Charlotte drag and female impersonation scene arrived in the Queen City in the mid-1970s. During the late '70s she dipped her toe in the waters of the gay cultural phenomena, taking to the stage as Kathy Kunt. By the mid 1980s she emerged as Kasey King, becoming a regular performer at such clubs as Oleen's and Scorpio, while also making occasional guest appearances throughout the southeast in LGBTQ clubs of the day.

Fans and friends will remember King for her performances of songs by Tina Turner, Donna Summer and music from the soundtrack of the film "The Color Purple." Not surprisingly, there is some mystery surrounding King's past and her exact age. Some friends insist she was 69 or 70, while others and public records indicate she was 68.

King's history in Charlotte dated back to 1976, when she made the decision to move here from the small town of China Grove. It was around that time she became reacquainted with a childhood friend she had attended school with.

According to friends and some public records, King was born sometime in July 1956. On a personal level, she did not identify as trans, and instead wore the tag of gender fluid, going by both her stage name of Kasey King as well as her birth name of Lovester Randall Murdoch with some friends and family.

King's schoolmate from her childhood years in China Grove, recalled the first time she reconnected with King, a few years after school.



Much loved Charlotte drag performance diva Kasey King passed away Nov. 26.
CREDIT: Facebook

"I remember the first time I ever laid eyes on her," Diana Salameh reflected. "I was in the seventh grade, and she was a grade ahead of me, in the eighth. It was the very first year of desegregation. That's how long ago that was, and she was just so little and so animated, and when she walked down the hall, she just twisted, smiled, and I mean, very obvious. She was such a girl. At that time, I wanted to hide it, so I tried to stay as away as I could from Miss Casey."

"But we noticed each other, to the point that one time we all had to go into the gymnasium, for some kind of [presentation], sitting on bleachers, and Miss Casey was sitting down below me. The boys had come up and started picking on her, you know how they pick on sissies in school. And she got tired of it. She turned around and said, 'Pick on that one back there.' He was talking about me! So all through the years, every time I would see her again, I would remind her of that, and we just yahooped over it."

Another long time friend, Bruno York, recalled the first time he encountered King. "It was in the dressing room at

Oleen's Lounge. I remember a bartender painted 'Beware the Sting of Kasey King' on the wall! Another recollection I have was one night while Kasey was hosting a show at Oleen's. Someone yelled, 'Get off the stage, Miss Thang!' As it was reported in a column in *QNotes*, 'Miss Thang' responded with a beer bottle over his head!"

York is emphatic that it's important for today's youth to know why King is an important figure in Charlotte's LGBTQ+ history. "She performed for free at many benefits over the years, giving up her time, her pay and her tips for many charities, including yearly benefits to raise money for [the] local AIDS charity Carnival of Hope and benefits for pageant queens to go to their national pageant."

Another performer whom King became pals with, drag performer Brittany Gwynne, concurs with York about the importance of King's career. "She was one of the first ladies of color to grace the Scorpio stage," Gwynne recalls. "And she succeeded like no other."

Gwynne and King became friends when the two first met at Oleen's. "It was 1980, and the first time I had ever gone to Oleen's. She called me over to her

table, and off I went." The two remained friends in the years that followed, and stayed close up to King's final days.

A memorial service will be held Dec. 6 at 11:00 a.m. at Rowan Funeral Services, located at 1709 North Long Street in Salisbury, N.C. ::

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From previous page

very minimal staff," said one Charlotte LGBTQ+ community leader, who asked to remain anonymous. "And as far as I know, most of the individuals who utilized their services have moved on to the county or another organization."

A question about what the organization had done with the \$2 million grant that was to be used for transgender-related services reveals even more questionable details.

"There is no Transcend that I know of, there are little to no services being offered. I've been told that the grant money is being used to pay bills with, although most of the staff jumped ship, so who knows what's going on?"

Attempts to reach CCP over the past several days have been greeted by an automated voice attendant.

Why is financial embezzlement so rampant in community nonprofits? How is it possible that an organization can apply for such a sizable grant, receive it, and then not be held accountable for how it is used? It remains unclear if the MacKenzie Scott foundation is aware of CCP's seeming misuse of the funds, despite attempts made by *QNotes* to reach out to the foundation.

"It is my fear," says Jermaine Nakia Lee, a Charlotte resident who has worked with the organization, "that it will slip through the cracks, and the organization will shut down after the board says it's no longer financially feasible." ::

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The Ultimate Guide to Gay Gift Giving – 2024 Edition

by Mikey Rox

The Holidays are an excellent distraction after an election cycle – makes ya wonder if it was planned like that, huh? – and this year is no exception. Instead of churning out endless political memes on social media (really, give it a rest), turn your attention to making memories and exchanging gifts, like these carefully curated selections that'll lighten the mood, facilitate festiveness and bring joy to those on your Nice List (because we not givin' Naughty List-ers nothin' this year).

Le Creuset Bread Oven



Honed your sourdough skills during Covid? Level 'em up in Le Creuset's handsome enameled cast-iron bread oven, available in seven of the French manufacturer's signature ombré hues, for stunning artisan loaves ideal for gifting or your own private gluttony. Make it a meal with Julia Turshen's Fastest Chicken Noodle Soup recipe from the queer cook's latest book, "What Goes with What." \$300, [Food52.com](https://www.food52.com); \$26, [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Beekman 1802 Advent Calendar



There's no place like home when you've got Beekman 1802's luxurious storybook-inspired advent calendar to see you through the holidays, each door revealing one of 24 cult-fave face and beauty products, including 16 full-size bestsellers. Bring the somewhere-over-the-rainbow sentiment 360 with a few selections from the boys' "Wicked"-branded lineup, like the Glamorous Gal Bodycare Gift Set or Make Your Own Magic 3-Pack Bar Soap Set, for all the good witches (and bad bitches) in your life. \$179, [Beekman1802.com](https://www.beekman1802.com)

La Boule Dinnerware Set

Home-based meals are anything but avante garde these days (and, no, Uber Eats doesn't count), but Villeroy & Boch brings a splash of panache to the table with its multicolored,



premium porcelain La Boule seven-piece dinnerware sets – in Miami and Memphis styles – which include two stackable regular bowls, two pasta bowls, two plates and one serving tray that form a single nesting round and an artistic conversation piece after the dishes are done. \$450, [Villeroy-Boch.com](https://www.villeroy-boch.com)

Pepper Pong Game



Make room, table tennis – there's a new player in the game. Pepper Pong – a 2023 Best New Game winner – is ping pong's "go-anywhere, do-anything, challenge-anyone cousin... with a mean mullet and pickleball-infused DNA," according to its website, and that translates to a whole lotta fun for the whole family... if you're into that sorta thing. \$70, [PepperPong.com](https://www.pepperpong.com)

The EnergyLounger



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DC Comics Style Guide/Batman DVD set



Pair a reissue of the 1982 DC Comics Style Guide – designed to assist licensees in delivering a consistent look for the brand's celebrated Super Heroes – with the Batman 85th Anniversary 10-Film Collection, which includes fan-favorite animated classics like "The Killing Joke," "The Long Halloween" and "Soul of the Dragon," among others, for a gift that'll instantly elevate you to Super Friend. \$95, [StandardsManual.com](https://www.standardsmanual.com); \$200, [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

FinaMill Grinder



Save your knuckles from skin-chewing microplanes and graters with a convenient automated replacement in the rechargeable FinaMill Grinder that allows kitchen whizzes to season with ease thanks to its one-handed click-grind-release technology. Max and Pro Plus pods pulverize everything from cardamom seeds to coffee beans sans blood, sweat or tears, in complementary culinary mill colors that include black, white, red and gray. \$100, [FinaMill.com](https://www.finamill.com)

Tom of Finland Duffel



Henry Cavill is a prime candidate for the anatomical embodiment of a Tom of Finland illustration, and it's hard not to fantasize about the oversized actor decked out in head-to-toe leather, especially after you cop Loqi's Tom of Finland Day & Night Recycled Weekender, featuring all-over printed ToF artwork that looks suspiciously like the Super Man that lives rent free in our collective spank banks. \$40, [Loqi.com](https://www.loqi.com)

Andy Warhol x Absolut Vodka



Art imitates life imitating art in Absolut Vodka's full-circle Andy Warhol collab featuring elements of the pop icon's overlooked 1985 blue bottle painting, rediscovered in 2020. With colors extracted directly from the original work and made with multi-layer screen printing to create an authentic sensory experience to touch, the spirited 2024 collector's item also includes a QR code that opens a portal into the world of Warhol and the story behind both brands' historic and enduring connection, this limited-edition release now among them. \$26, [ReserveBar.com](https://www.reservebar.com)

Mikey Rox is an award-winning journalist and LGBTQ+ lifestyle expert whose work has appeared in more than 100 publications around the world. Connect with Mikey on Instagram @mikeyroxtravels. ::

Pride is Family and the Family is Growing!

by Meredith Thompson (she/her), Managing Director



Volunteers at the 2024 Charlotte Pride Festival
CREDIT: Photo Courtesy of Charlotte Pride

Charlotte Pride is busy resetting and regrouping for another great year of programming. That means team-building – literally, building and growing our volunteer teams by recruiting new volunteers. We're enjoying getting to know more folks as we welcome new faces to the fold.

It may surprise you to hear that the thing we love most about planning the city's largest annual event in Uptown is that it's never the same thing twice. Although the Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade weekend is always the third weekend in August (we'll get to that later) and although we always have a two-day festival with a huge parade on the second day (Sunday), each year is different from the last.

As soon as our team wraps up one festival weekend, we can't wait to gather again and figure out how to make next year's celebration even better. It's free and open to all. We want everyone to enjoy the festival and find something for them, their friends and their family. From the entertainment to the activities, hard-working volunteers and staff are continually contemplating how to improve upon what we've created and how we can be more inclusive and accessible.

One of our favorite days of the year is a post-festival volunteer gathering in September. Folks from all of the various festival and parade teams meet up to eat, drink, socialize and reflect. This is a great time to celebrate everything we did right and to share our favorite moments; but also to self-critique and generate new ideas for the coming year's Charlotte Pride weekend. One thing about Charlotte Pride volunteers and staff is that we have ideas! And opinions! And we are really enthusiastic! There is a healthy exchange of feedback and ideas as we lean into what we want to tweak, get rid of, or add for the next event.

Clearly, what makes Charlotte Pride tick are our dedicated and experienced volunteers. But what also keeps us moving forward are NEW

volunteers with new perspectives, suggestions, and talents. We've been busy combing through volunteer applications (thank you to all of those who applied!) and interviewing prospective team members. It's so exciting to meet new LGBT and allied people, and to see where they might fit within our organization and teams.

We'll get to work in earnest together in January, but we're already so grateful for the energy and excitement these new volunteers bring. From Operations and Logistics, Flourish, Indoor Arts Activation, Youth and Family, to Entertainment, and VIP — our volunteer team leaders always appreciate additional help — ! In all, we have about a dozen teams, and — as this time of year reminds us — Charlotte Pride is truly volunteer-driven, and we couldn't do it without them. We're excited to make all of our 2025 volunteer teams official soon — and to get to work!

I mentioned earlier one thing that won't change this year is the timing of the event. You may be wondering why our festival always falls on the third weekend of August. You may be asking, why not June during Pride Month? Why not a cooler month? We're in the South! Good questions. Besides being the best timing from a logistical perspective — given major sporting event schedules and other large city planning considerations — we are not limited to June because Pride is every day! This gives Pride organizations the freedom to hold their events in many different months. This also gives Pride-goers time to uplift, spread the word about, and attend many different Pride celebrations.

Now that that's out of the way, if you have ever attended, participated in, were entertained at, or spread the word about our festival or parade (or other events), *thank you!*

We owe a *special thanks* to all our volunteers who make it possible for everyone to show up and enjoy free events and entertainment! To our new volunteers, we can't wait to welcome you to the family!

CHARLOTTE  PRIDE

We Need Each Other

Fear is a tool to divide us



by Cameron Pruette
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

You have seen memes or statements saying "Do not obey in advance" circulating on social media. This statement has gained renewed salience in our current political climate, and it's also the start of Timothy Snyder's book "On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century." It's a quick read with reflections and advice on how to respond to political leaders who threaten our rights and livelihoods. In these times of rising political oppression, this is an important reminder of the power of resistance, community and



solidarity, particularly as queer identities and relationships, especially for trans people, continue to be scrutinized and attacked.

This bold resolve is a reminder that the fear of what could happen often suppresses behavior more than actual government actions. This fear can be just as powerful and harming as the oppression itself. LGBTQ+ individuals are often subjected to this fear as their very existence, of queer relationships and trans identities are always one of the first to be attacked. LGBTQ+ folks are everywhere — from Sylva to Wilmington — and no law or government will be able to erase us. Queer history is rich with fierce and brave activists, survivors, healers and leaders who have pushed back in times of crisis and injustice.

Perhaps an equally poignant reminder from Snyder's book is to "make eye contact and small talk." In a world where division and isolation are weaponized, our social connections are one of our most powerful tools that can develop trust and build coalitions. These small acts, that can often seem as insignificant gestures, can help us build solidarity and grow our collective strength. As Snyder says, "having old friends is the politics of last resort. And making new ones is the first step toward change." This may seem a simple suggestion, but it is one that is incredibly profound. It highlights the importance of building trust within our communities, of knowing those who are around us, our friends, coworkers and neighbors and how to be connected to each other before a crisis point helps us build immunity to the fearmongering campaigns and divisive propaganda that authoritarian leaders rely on to maintain control.

This is particularly important in times like the one we are living through right now, where the politics of division play such a large role in our everyday lives. These are strategies and policies that target the most marginalized among us, whether it be based on race,

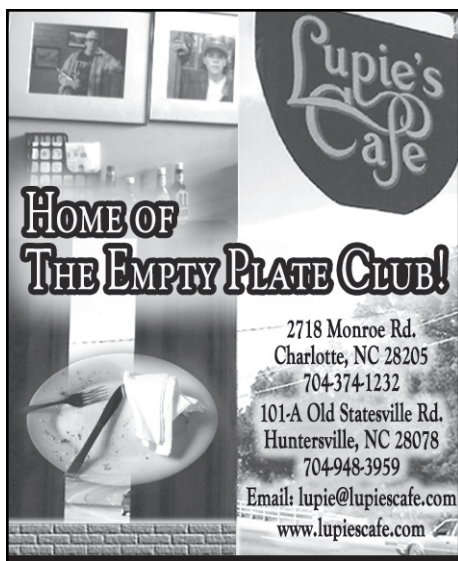
nation of origin, economic status or gender identity. We see it in the way that policies are crafted to single out vulnerable communities. It is designed to keep us apart, fragmented and powerless. Economic anxiety is one of their greatest assets, with far too many folks struggling with rising inflation, increased rent and food insecurity, many people are struggling to make ends meet. The more people are struggling to survive, the more difficult it is for them to focus on the larger societal issues that affect everyone. This ongoing economic hardship is designed to create a sense of desperation, which in turn makes people more susceptible to their divisive political messages. Any movement towards liberation must include a commitment to economic justice.

An example of these tactics is unfolding right now in our local and state politics. Our state legislature just enacted HB10 into law, overriding the veto of Governor Cooper. Part of this legislation aligns our local sheriffs with Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) just months before Donald Trump is sworn into office with a pledge for mass deportations. A lot of our migrant neighbors and their families will lose whatever trust they may have had to contact local law enforcement, and it makes palpable the fear their families may be separated from each other. The reality is that families, some who have been living in this country for decades, now face the fear of separation from their loved ones. They are afraid to seek help in times of need or to engage with their communities knowing that contacting the police, or risking someone doing so on their behalf could lead to deportation. For these families the law represents more than a political disagreement, it becomes a matter of survival. This is how fear is weaponized and how division becomes overwhelming, it's how people's lives and hopes are torn apart.

It can be easy to separate ourselves, to retreat away from each other. But it is crucial for us to stand together and recognize that our struggles are interconnected. The fight for one community's rights is the fight for all of our rights. The solution lies in solidarity and uniting to form relationships that go beyond political or cultural differences. It is not enough to simply endure. We must actively resist. We must engage with each other, listen to each other, and take action so that we can create a society where everyone has the chance to thrive.

From supporting legislation that protects trans rights to standing up for the rights of immigrants, our voices, our joint efforts and our collective action are the true forces that will help us weather the storm and build a brighter future. We must continue to resist the policies that seek to divide us, and work towards the inclusive and equitable future that we all deserve. Our strength lies not just in surviving, but in coming together, in holding the line and in fighting for each other — because when we fight for each other, we truly are fighting for all.





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Judy Garland's Ham Casserole with Sherry

Tasty Holiday Treats

by QNotes Staff

Judy Garland was born Francis Ethel Gumm on June 10, 1922, in Grand Rapids, Minn. If she was still with us today she would be 102. Regrettably, she passed away at just 47 on June 22, 1969.

Although she has been gone for 55 years now, she remains an LGBTQ+ icon that spans generations, for 20-somethings to senior citizens.

What was it about this woman that so captured the devotion and attention of our community? Historical records confirm she was supportive and always an ally long before mainstream society found that acceptable.

But many people think it's something more than just that.

Some believe her personal struggles with addiction, mental health issues and the pressure of fame resonated deeply with the LGBTQ community, especially during a time when being openly gay was highly stigmatized.

Her role as Dorothy in the classic film *The Wizard of Oz* led to the phrase "a friend of Dorothy" as a downlow phrase, which generally indicated someone was gay or lesbian.

Then there are her multiple marriages. Married a total of five times, two of them were gay men: Vincente Minnelli and Mark Herron.

Garland's film career is of exceptional note. In 1940 she won an Academy Juvenile Award for her role in *The Wizard of Oz* (and another performance in the film *Babes in Arms*). As an adult she was nominated for best actress in the film *A Star Is Born*, but lost to Grace Kelly; and in 1962 she was nominated for best supporting actress for her performance in the movie "Judgment at Nuremberg." She lost again, this time to Rita Moreno for her role in "West Side Story".

Garland's final film was made largely in the United Kingdom and released in 1963. In "I Could Go on Singing," she started alongside gay actor Dirk Bogarde as a troubled American stage performer who hoped to re-establish a relationship with the child she had with Bogarde years earlier. The film isn't easy to find for streaming, but it is available on digital



Judy Garland as seen on the European release poster for 'I Could Go on Singing' alongside gay actor Dirk Bogarde. CREDIT: Publicity image

disc, and, currently, YouTube.

Like many performers of her era, Garland was interviewed countless times over the years and often asked to share favorite recipes.

In this installation of Holiday Treats we've decided to step outside sweets and go for a main course. Judy Garland's Ham Casserole was one of her personal favorites. Perhaps you'll enjoy serving it at an upcoming seasonal celebration while listening to some of Garland's celebrated music or taking in one of her many classic films.

Judy Garland's Ham Casserole with Sherry

Preheat oven to 350 degrees, baking time 45 minutes. Serves six to eight.

4 cups ground or cubed cooked ham

- 2 cups cooked
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 2 tomatoes, peeled and chopped
- 2 tablespoons diced green pepper
- 1 tablespoon of grated or diced onion
- 1 teaspoon prepared mustard
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1/3 cup sherry wine
- 3/4 cup bread crumbs
- 1 tablespoon butter, melted
- 1/2 teaspoon paprika

Combine the ham, rice, cream, eggs, tomatoes, pepper, onion, mustard, Worcestershire sauce and sherry. Mix well and transfer to a greased two-quart casserole dish. Mix the bread crumbs, melted butter and paprika, then sprinkle on top of the ham mixture. ::

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Garland's Ham Casserole, with sherry.

The Holidays in Charlotte: Celebrating the Season

A list of shows and events coming in December with something for everyone



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

The holidays are here. Thanksgiving is upon us and Christmas, Hanukkah, the celebration of the Winter Solstice and even the Krampus Festival are right around the corner. As the end of the year approaches, the Queen City becomes a festive place, no matter which direction you look!

The seasons themselves blend into one another, culminating in a time of gathering together with friends and family. With those thoughts in mind, what better way to kick off the season than celebrating with any of these events.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever: The Musical

Location: McColl Family Theatre
Description: The Herdmans are back and ready to wreak havoc! What happens when the worst kids in the history of the world find out about free food at Sunday school? And what happens when they decide to audition for the annual Christmas pageant? Will the show go on? This hilarious and heartfelt musical comedy, adapted from Barbara Robinson's classic story, will have your family laughing and crying as we celebrate the holidays. (One Act, 70 minutes, For All Ages)

Dates and Times: Through Dec. 22. Weekdays at 7 p.m., Saturdays at 11 a.m. & 3 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m. & 4 p.m.

Hanukkah Breakfast with Clifford the Big Red Dog

Location: Levine Jewish Community Center, 5007 Providence Road
Description: This event is fun for families with children six and under. Enjoy breakfast, Hanukkah activities and fun with Clifford the Big Red Dog. \$12 for LJCC members; \$18 for non-members; \$6 for children. Free for children ages one and under.

Date and Time: Sunday, Dec. 1, 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Charlotte Ballet Presents: The Nutcracker

Location: Belk Theater at Blumenthal Arts Center
Description: In the heart of Uptown Charlotte at the Belk Theater, the Snow King and Queen bring about frosty festivity this holiday season. Be transported into a winter wonderland, making a delightful stop in the Land of Sweets with Nutcracker and Clara on their mystical adventure.

Dates and Times: Dec. 6 to 22, Weekdays at 7:30 p.m. Weekends at 2 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Krampus Fest

Location: NoDa and The Evening Muse
Description: Enjoy a wickedly fun night as you unleash your inner Krampus and embrace the dark side while you are transported to a world of macabre delights. Lose yourself in the eerie atmosphere as you enjoy live music,



Charlotte Ballet rehearsing "The Nutcracker."
CREDIT: Facebook

spooky performances and bone-chilling surprises around every corner. Dress to impress in your most devilishly creative costume and prepare for a night of frightful fun with fellow thrill-seekers.

Date and Time: Dec. 7, kicks off at 6:30 p.m.

Doggie on My Doorstep: A Holiday Tail

Location: Wells Fargo Playhouse
Description: When a mischievous stray dog shows up on a grumpy old man's doorstep, mayhem ensues! Jam packed with physical comedy, breathtaking puppetry and an incredible storyline, this heartwarming adventure is sure to become a new tradition for the entire family. Crafted with love and sprinkled with holiday magic, Doggie on My Doorstep is a testament to the power of companionship and what can happen when we open our doors—and our hearts—to the unexpected. (One Act, 45 minutes, For PreK)

Dates and Times: Dec. 12 - 22. Weekdays at 9:30 a.m. & 11 a.m., Saturdays at 11 a.m., 1 p.m. & 3 p.m. Sundays at 1 p.m. & 3 p.m.

The Jazz Room Presents - A Charlie Brown Christmas featuring The Music of Vince Guaraldi

Location: Booth Playhouse at Blumenthal Arts Center
Description: Join us for one of the most memorable JAZZ ROOM holiday season celebrations as we feature the music of legendary composer Vince Guaraldi, A Charlie Brown Christmas. This holiday weekend will feature four of your favorite JAZZ ROOM pianists, playing the music of

Guaraldi, best known for Charlie Brown, Peanuts television Christmas specials, including Skating, My Little Drum, Christmas Time is Here and more.

Dates and Times: Dec. 6 - 7. Friday & Saturday at 7:30 p.m.

Music for the Winter Solstice

Location: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 115 West 7th Street
Description: Part of the 7th Street Concerts 2024-25 collection. A wintry adventure through centuries of music featuring holiday carols and music inspired by the coldest and darkest time of year.

Date and Time: Saturday, Dec. 7, 6 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

Tosco Music Holiday Party

Location: Knight Theater at Levine Center for the Arts
Description: Come celebrate the season with an evening of great music! Since 2016, Tosco Music has gathered for a festive concert each December for Tosco Music Holiday Party, transforming Knight Theater into Charlotte's living room for an evening of holiday songs and singalongs.

Dates and Time: Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m.

Hanukkah Festival at Symphony Hall

Location: Symphony Park, 4400 Sharon Road
Description: Enjoy food, music, entertainment, doughnuts and latkes. The event culminates with the grand menorah lighting and a special performance.

Date and Time: Wednesday, Dec. 25 at 4:30 p.m. & 5:30 p.m.

Elf The Musical

Location: Belk Theater at Blumenthal Arts Center

Description: ELF The Musical is the hilarious modern Christmas classic about Buddy, a young orphan child who mistakenly crawls into Santa's bag of gifts and is transported back to the North Pole. Unaware that he is actually human, Buddy's enormous size and poor toy-making abilities cause him to face the truth. With Santa's permission, Buddy embarks on a journey to New York City to find his birth father, discover his true identity, and help New York remember the true meaning of Christmas. This must-see Broadway holiday production is sure to make everyone embrace their inner ELF.

Dates and Times: Dec. 26 to 29. Thursday at 2 p.m. & 7:30 p.m. Friday & Saturday at 2 p.m. & 8 p.m. Sunday at 1:30 p.m. & 7 p.m.

Ballet Premiere From the Grand Kyiv Ballet: Snow Queen

Location: Knight Theater at Levine Center for the Arts

Description: For the 2024/2025 season, the Christmas ballet "The Snow Queen" is based on the world famous fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen. This fascinating kind romantic story set to the music of Edvard Grieg, Jules Massenet, Mozart and Vivaldi, will give unforgettable bright emotions of happiness for adults and children.

Date and Time: Dec. 28 at 7 p.m. ::

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