

Family, Friends and Icons:



Remembering those we lost in 2024



Volunteers at Name Change Clinic offer a variety of help

-pg 10

WNC resident Roxanne Kelly shares strategy for survival

-pg 8

QnotesCarolinas.com



NEW YEAR



SHOW YOUR PRIDE

2025


White Rabbit

920 Central Ave. | Charlotte, NC 28204
704-377-4067

Follow us at

 WhiteRabbit

 Wrabbitnc

 Shopwhiterabbit

connect

qnotescarolinas.com

twitter.com/qnotescarolinas

facebook.com/qnotescarolinas

instagram.com/qnotescarolinas



contributors this issue

Writers: Jonathan Golian, Taylor Heeden Larkins, David Aaron Moore, Terri Schlichenmeyer, Gregg Shapiro

on the cover

Richard Simmons Problcity Photo

front page

Graphic Design by Brandon Scott
Photographer/illustration:
Facebook

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

Director of Strategic Initiatives:

Liz Schob

Digital Engagement Specialist:

Tim Kendra-Dell

chrisrudisill@qnotescarolinas.com

Sr. Content Editor: David Aaron Moore,

specialassignments@qnotescarolinas

Copy Editor: Bailey Sides

Production: Brandon Scott, 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.

charlotte NEWSALLIANCE

charlotteobserver.com/1166/

a local news partner of
The Charlotte Observer

inside this issue



feature

12 Remembering those we lost in 2024



news

- 5 Republican Senators push bans on college transgender sports during gambling hearing
- 6 State Board of Elections fines Mark Robinson 35K for campaign violations
- 6 Trans and Foster Advocate jailed after being accused of assaulting Rep. Nancy Mace
- 6 LGBTQ+ Marriages surge before Trump Inauguration Day
- 7 Virginia Republicans take control of public library after book ban controversy
- 7 Biden administration withdraws attempt to protect trans student-athletes



a&e

- 11 Out in Print: 'Cher: The Memoir Part One' by Cher
- 14 Q-Music: To Ani and beyond



views

- 4 A guide to the Cabinet confirmation process



life

- 8 Through Discord, The WNC Helene Recovery Community seeks to help Asheville and beyond
- 10 How to change your name: Qnotes explores the topic with the legal and Trans communities
- 15 Our People: Steve Mowry



events

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

Q Music

Indie music multi-talent **Ani DiFranco** released her debut album nearly 25 years ago. After (almost) an album a year until around 2008, DiFranco began taking some time between records. Her latest collection of music is "Unprecedented Sh!t." The artist returns to the Carolinas in March for three stops in Charleston, Durham and Asheville.



PAGE 14



Our People

Former Charlottean turned Winston-Salem resident Steve Mowry is one of the hosts of the podcast "Comic Book Bears." Along with fellow cast members Bill Zanowitz, Bryan Pittard and Caleb Alexander-McKinzie, the group shares and learns about the cultural significance and impact of both mainstream and queer comic books and their creators.

PAGE 15

NOW FIND notes 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 = \$62 1/2 yr - 13 issues = \$32

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

name: _____

address: _____

city: _____

state: _____

zip: _____

credit card - check one: mastercard visa discover american express

card #: _____

cvv #: _____

exp. date: _____

signature: _____

SUBSCRIBE!

A guide to the Cabinet confirmation process

Trump apparently hopes to skirt tradition by using recess appointments



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

In the days following former president Trump's election win over Kamala Harris, the president-elect has begun to name his picks to fill the positions in the Cabinet.

With less than a week before the new Congress — both the House of Representatives and U.S. Senate — is sworn in, it's important to know just how the process of confirming cabinet picks works and what is not possible under the U.S. Constitution.

What Is the President's Cabinet?

The Cabinet is a part of the Executive Branch, which is one of the three main branches of the federal government. Established under Article II, Section II of the U.S. Constitution, the Cabinet is to "advise the President on any subject he may require relating to the duties of each member's respective office," according to the White House's official website.

The Cabinet comprises 15 departments: agriculture, commerce, defense, education, energy, health and human services, homeland security, housing and urban development, the interior, justice, labor, state, transportation, treasury and veteran affairs.

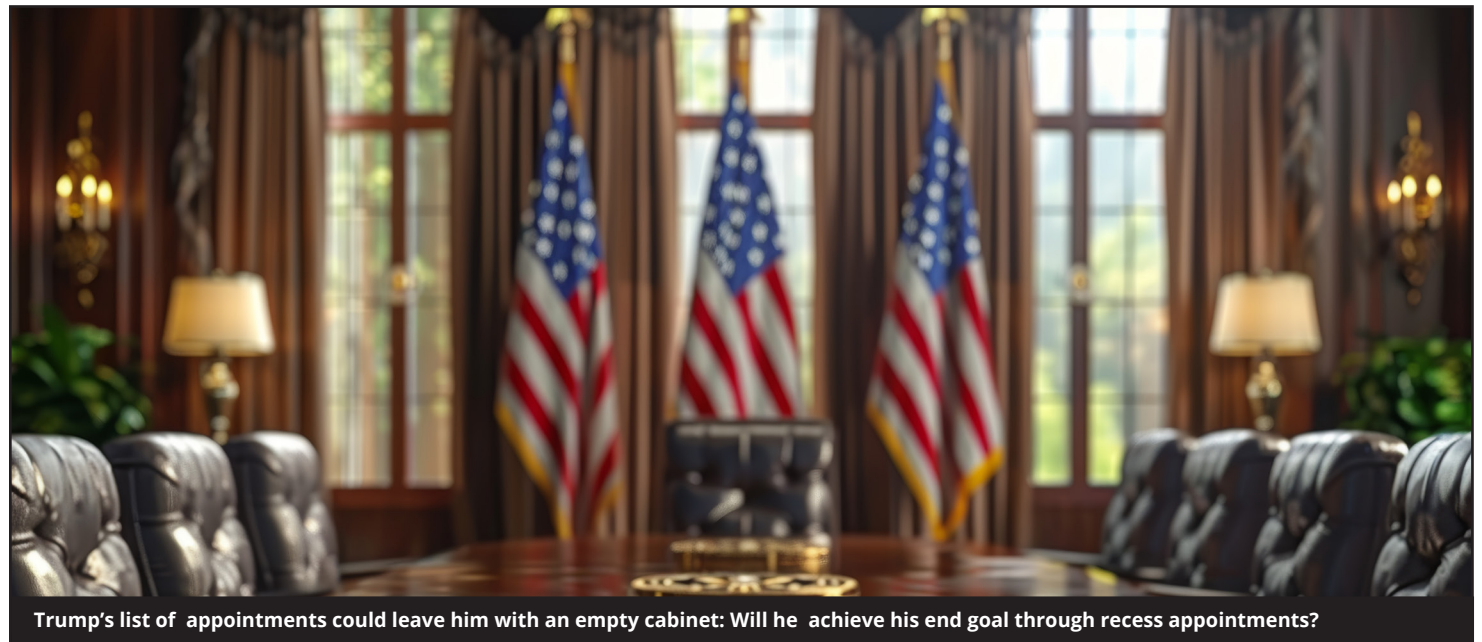
The heads of each of these departments serve as the closest confidants to the President, according to the White House's website.

"In addition to running major federal agencies, they play an important role in the Presidential line of succession," according to the White House. "After the Vice President, Speaker of the House, and Senate President pro tempore, the line of succession continues with the Cabinet offices in the order in which the departments were created."

How Is the Cabinet Selected?

The Cabinet is handpicked by the president-elect, but once the picks are named, a thorough process must be followed to ensure those who are named as department heads are fit to serve in those roles.

The Cabinet, in addition to over 1,000 positions picked by the president, must be confirmed by the U.S. Senate,



Trump's list of appointments could leave him with an empty cabinet: Will he achieve his end goal through recess appointments?

per the U.S. Constitution. Each person the president chooses must undergo an intense background check process through the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) before they can proceed with the confirmation process. The FBI clarified which members are subject to vetting: presidential appointees, White House staff, positions requiring Senate confirmation and other national security positions requiring

they will answer questions about their qualifications — much like a job interview.

These hearings can be contentious, as both political parties are able to question nominees about their backgrounds and plans for the post. After the initial hearing, the committee votes on the nomination. If a candidate is approved, the full Senate then votes on the nominee.

Historically, the upper chamber has been able to confirm appointments

the foundation of American Democracy — they're an obstacle in the way of achieving their vision of a traditional, conservative America where differing opinions are squashed and silenced.

Trump has mentioned recess appointments on multiple occasions since his election. Recess appointments are one of the only exceptions to the Senate confirmation rule. When Congress is in recess — aka it's not in session for a duration of time - the president can make appointments temporarily without congressional approval or vetting.

This process was established at a time when Congress met less often and has been deemed by a majority of legal experts as outdated and unnecessary with how often the legislative body meets. Recess appointments are also meant to be temporary and expire at the end of a congressional session — so at most, one year.

Trump has continuously said the Senate "must agree" to recess appointments, otherwise "we will not be able to get people confirmed in a timely manner." However, it's normal for cabinet confirmations to take time after inauguration, sometimes months at a time.

However, Trump isn't the first president to utilize recess appointments to skirt the slow down brought by partisan politics. According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), George W. Bush made 171 recess appointments, Bill Clinton made 139 and Barack Obama made at least 32. But in 2014, the Supreme Court essentially put an end to these types of appointments when it ruled against Obama and some of his appointments, deeming them unconstitutional.

Trump's attempts to pressure the Senate to agree to recess for him to make appointments without vetting or both political parties doing their due diligence is a direct attack on the foundation of America's democratic processes. ::



security clearance.

The FBI "does not adjudicate or render an opinion on the results of the background investigation," when they are then sent to the office of the president-elect or the office of White House Counsel for their use.

Once that is complete, nominees must fill out a questionnaire tailored to their specific seat and submit the completed document, along with financial disclosure forms, to the Senate. Then, each nominee will testify before a Senate committee where

without much debate in the past, but "political and partisan conflicts between the president and senators have at times produced dramatic fights over cabinet nominees and led to their ultimate withdrawal or rejection," the Senate's historical website claims.

Where Are We Now?

This round of confirmations is different from the first Trump administration, as now the president-elect appears to have created more enemies on Capitol Hill both outside and in his political party. The return of Trump has resulted in the rise of those ignorant to the process interjecting, disavowing the system established by the Founding Fathers and searching for ways to circumvent the democratic processes laid out in the Constitution.

The vetting and Senate confirmation processes serve as a "check and balance" to the Executive Branch. Remember that concept from civics and economics class in high school? The one ensuring not one branch of the federal government is overpowering another?

To Trump and his crew, these checks and balances aren't a cornerstone in



Rubio, Kennedy and Gabbard: Will they make the cut or slither in through a back door recess appointment?
CREDIT: Publicity

Republican Senators push bans on college transgender sports during gambling hearing

Senators redirect a panel about college sports betting effect on banning trans women from women's sports



by Jonathan Golian
Quotes Staff Writer

On Tuesday, Dec. 17, what had been a hearing on sports betting and gambling addiction between the Senate and NCAA chief Charles Baker ended up turning into a conversation about transgender athletes.

While discussing the Supporting Affordability and Fairness with Every Bet Act (SAFE Bet Act), Senators John Kennedy (R-LA) and Josh Hawley (R-MO) shifted the conversation from the Dick Durbin (D-IL) led session to one about trans women in college sports. Making a decided shift from questions about the fairness of where most of the advantages in gambling are, with the room agreeing the "House" has much of it, Kennedy then asks Baker if his organization is there to promote fairness in sports.

To this, Kennedy begins the new line of questioning: "A transgender woman is a biological male, yes? And a biological male is always going to have a physiological advantage competing in a collegiate sport

against a biological female." Baker's reply, that "There's not a lot of research on it, but it's certainly debatable," began an uproar between Kennedy and Hawley about Baker's support and allowance of trans-athlete competition in college sports.

"You think it's debatable? You don't think a biological male has an advantage, every time, competing against a biological female?" Kennedy asked.

Where Baker stands with the five federal court cases that have consistently sided with participation, Kennedy, in his time on the mic, pushed for the NCAA Chief to "stand up and take a leadership position," and to "go to Amazon and buy a spine online," while fully admitting that pushing for a ban on transgender sports participation could get Baker rightly sued and disparaged for such a move.

After taking over from the preceding senator to question the NCAA panel, Hawley immediately began badgering Baker over allowing trans women to play against women, stating "there is no federal law" for the participation, and that "this is your federal policy that you will not defend because it is indefensible." He repeatedly shouted and spoke over Baker at various moments during the exchange.

Republicans have largely opposed trans inclusion in sports and vilified trans athletes and their allies as harming cis female athletes. There have been recent scientific and political debates about whether trans female athletes have biological advantages over cisgender competitors, however, there is no concrete evidence that trans women have an unfair advantage in sports.

A recent study by the British Journal of Sports Medicine has found that trans women have equivalent physical metrics to cisgender women after being on hormone replacement therapy. Few other studies examine trans athletes in comparison to cisgender athletes.

In response to the redirection of Kennedy and Hawley's line of questioning, Sen. Dick Durban (D-IL) asked how many trans athletes there were. Out of 510,000 total athletes, Baker said, there are less than 10 total in NCAA schools (a figure that

translates to fewer than 0.002 percent of all NCAA athletes).

Minority Whip of the West Virginia House of Representatives Shawn Fluharty summarized his thoughts on X (Twitter) after the hearing, stating, "Congressional hearing on sports betting turned into a hearing on political tantrums on manufactured outrage over NCAA trans athlete policy. If Congress wants to jump in on sports betting, maybe find some adults in the room first. That was embarrassing." ::



Senators John Kennedy and Josh Hawley stoke the flames of transphobia CREDIT: Facebook

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

Charlotte's Only Exclusive Piercing Studio

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

State Board of Elections fines Mark Robinson 35K for campaign violations

The State Board of Elections has reached a settlement agreement with Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson's political committee, Friends of Mark Robinson, that includes a fine of \$35,000 for hundreds of campaign finance violations committed during the 2020 election cycle.

The fine follows a nearly four-year investigation prompted by a February 2021 complaint by veteran government watchdog Bob Hall.

The violations, detailed in a September 2024 audit report, include illegal anonymous and cash donations, contributions beyond the legal limits, undisclosed sources, improper cash payments, misreported expenses, and improperly reported contributions. While some of the violations resulted in fines, others did not.

"It's good that the State Board finally

finished its investigation and fined the Robinson campaign for extensive illegal activity," Hall said in a statement. "The investigation documented the Robinson team's magnificent disregard for obeying the law and flagrant mismanagement of campaign finances."

Hall also expressed disappointment that the findings were made public only now — a month after the general election— even though the audit was completed in September.

"It's unfortunate it took so many years to finish this investigation," Hall said. "The public should have known about the scope of Robinson's illegal activity in the 2020 campaign well before the 2024 election ended. We should have known about the audit report that was finished in September 2024 — except a law promoted by General Assembly leaders

prohibited its release."

Hall was referring to a state statute that requires the Board of Elections to keep investigations confidential until it receives a recommendation regarding the appropriateness of a criminal referral from the State Ethics Commission.

Despite the breadth of violations, the State Board's settlement agreement released the committee from filing amended reports, which would have corrected errors and disclosed missing information. The committee was also not required to cover the cost of the investigation, a move Hall calls "unfortunate" given the staffing challenges at the agency.

Friends of Mark Robinson will also face no additional penalties that could have ranged from more fines to criminal charges.

The committee paid the fine on Dec. 10, and proceeds will go to the North Carolina Civil Penalties and Forfeiture Fund.

The violations occurred as Robinson was running for lieutenant governor in 2020, a race he ultimately won.

Key Findings from the Audit:

Anonymous Contributions: \$11,402, including one large anonymous donation of \$1,410.



North Carolina Lt. Gov. Mark Robinson

Excessive Contributions: \$11,800 from three donors exceeding the limit.

Prohibited Contributions: \$12,500 from national political committees not permitted in North Carolina.

Undisclosed Contributions: \$38,850 from 33 political committees that were not reported. Other contributions were reported on the wrong report.

Cash Payments: \$347.50 in improper cash transactions.

Personal Expenses: \$263.52 in prohibited medical expenses.

Occupational Information Missing: 34 percent of 6,521 of contributions lacked required donor occupational information.

This story appears courtesy our media partner NC Newsline under the Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Trans and Foster Advocate jailed after being accused of assaulting Rep. Nancy Mace

On Dec. 10, James McIntyre, a 33-year-old Illinois man, was charged with assaulting South Carolina U.S. Rep. Nancy Mace, a vocal member of Congress who has recently positioned herself as a prominent figure in the right's anti-transgender movement.

Of the incident, Mace stated in a few posts on her X (Twitter) account that she was accosted by a "pro-trans man" and that her injuries required a brace for her wrist and ice for her arm.

Mace's pinned post reads: "I was physically accosted tonight on Capitol grounds over my fight to protect women. Capitol police have arrested him. All the violence and threats keep proving our point. Women deserve to be safe. Your threats will not stop my fight for women!"

Included in the incident report obtained by Charleston's The Post and Courier, a

witness told police the suspect "violently shook" the victim's hand and made threats. No details about the nature of the threats were disclosed in the police report. However, witnesses have disputed Mace's allegation, claiming that the only contact they saw between Mace and McIntyre was a handshake after a reception involving a foster care group.

Elliott Hinkle, a foster care advocate from Wyoming, told The Washington Post that he had been standing near McIntyre as Mace headed for the room's exit after a reception celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Foster Care Independence Act of 1999. In the interview with reporters, Hinkle said McIntyre reached out one hand first, then used both to shake Mace's hand after she offered hers.

"What we witnessed was a handshake,

a passionate shake, but it didn't look like an assault or intended aggression," Hinkle recanted of that moment, adding that several other people were present and witnessed the encounter.

Hinkle also overheard McIntyre telling Mace: "Trans youth are also foster youth and they need your support."

Lisa Dickson, an advocate for foster youth in Ohio that also attended the reception, expressed her frustration toward Mace over a series of public Facebook posts.

"I want to express deep disappointment in the fact that Congresswoman Nancy Mace came to a national foster youth event, told participating youth that it was a safe space, and literally had one of them arrested by Capital police for simply shaking her hand and asking about trans rights," Dickson wrote.

A spokesperson for Mace declined to answer questions about the incident and the nature of the assault, instead pointing reporters to her posts on social media and the Capitol Police's statement.

After being arrested and charged, McIntyre was released from jail, with the judge ordering the accused to stay away from Rep. Mace, refrain from possessing firearms, and only be in the District of



Pro-trans activists protesting Nancy Mace's office. CREDIT: Facebook

Columbia for court-related matters.

In the weeks leading up to the foster care reception, Mace has been flooding her social media with inflammatory posts about transgender people, accusing them of being "mentally ill" and defending her repeated use of a derogatory slur to refer to such individuals. Starting after calling for the U.S. House to block transgender people from using restrooms of their choice in the U.S. Capitol, she then filed a bill to ban transgender people from using bathrooms that align with their gender identities on all federal property. ::

LGBTQ+ Marriages surge before Trump Inauguration Day

Leading up to Donald Trump's next term in office and the history of conservative intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community, it's not surprising same-sex marriages are on the uptick. Indeed, around the nation LGBTQ+ couples planning marriage and couples sharing a mixed immigration status have been tying the knot in fear of the loss to same-sex marriage, as well as the ability to stay in the United States.

Detailed in a recent National Public Radio (NPR) report, New York City has become one of the more visible centers for comparison. According to the report,

not only had the metropolitan hub seen an increase of vows taken, there were also 33 percent more licenses issued this November compared to the same month last year, according to the city clerk.

Hannah and Pet, a couple who chose not to use their last names to avoid conflict with family, spoke with NPR and confirmed it was both potential fears of what is to come that fast-tracked their wedding plans to the night of the election. "You know, we're going to do this in a couple of years, [but] why not just get this down legally?" Hannah told NPR reporter Gwynne Hogan.

New York City isn't the only place seeing this rise. NPR also found, after reaching out to county clerks across the country, more than half that responded to requests for comment were seeing similar trends. "I'm not at all surprised," said Douglas Nejaime, a law professor at Yale University who specializes in family and constitutional law. "There is certainly a genuine fear of marriage being taken away, but I think it's also this more generalized fear that LGBTQ rights are on the chopping block."

While concurring that the fear is certainly valid, Nejaime says he's skeptical the Supreme Court will overturn the 2015 Obergefell ruling that legalized same sex marriage. However, even if that does happen, there are now other protections under federal law, like the 2022 Respect for Marriage Act that requires states to



Same-sex couples across the country are marrying before MAGA regime takes over.

recognize marriages that happen in other states. So, theoretically, a couple could still get married in New York or another state, and no matter where they go in the United States, under federal law protection, they would be treated as married. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Virginia Republicans take control of public library after book ban controversy

In a twisted turn of events, after a public library in Virginia had successfully pushed back against book bans in 2023, Republican officials have instead opted to take the entire library over. Despite objections from the local community, the all-Republican Warren County Board of Supervisors voted 4-1 early Wednesday morning to assert greater control over Samuels Public Library.

Nearly 100 residents from diverse backgrounds, ranging from grandparents to home-schoolers, teachers and students, attended the Dec. 10 hearing in Front Royal, about 70 miles from Washington, D.C. Even with public support and opinion claiming the move to be excessive overreach by government officials, the Warren County Board of

Supervisors pushed their plan forward.

The result will be a new county-appointed library board with direct oversight over Samuels' policies and budget. For 2024, The institution was lauded as Virginia's Library of the Year and will be the beneficiary of a substantial \$500,000 grant from the Mellon Foundation.

The move comes as Supervisor Richard Jamieson claimed that the 15-member nonprofit trustee structure of Samuels Public Library no longer aligns with taxpayer interests, adding that the oversight it has now isn't enough to ensure fiscal responsibility and operational efficiency.

Jamieson was joined by Supervisor Vicky Cook, who previously had

supported the library's inclusive stance on LGBTQ+ titles. The chair of the board, Cheryl Cullers, was the sole vote against the move.

Jamieson justified the board's move by citing potential cost savings through a competitive procurement process, all while maintaining his denial of any intention to ban books. However, library supporters view his claims with much deserved skepticism, as he previously was involved in the 2023 efforts to challenge the LGBTQ+ titles available on Samuels' bookshelves.

Mark Nelson, a vocal advocate of the institution, underscored what the library had recently achieved in 2024. "It's the Library of the Year," he asserted, speaking with The Post. "You guys tried to ban some gay books, got beat, now this. Everybody knows the truth. Let it be."

The library is currently controlled by an independent board and the Samuels Family Foundation, a nonprofit organization. The move would displace the foundation as the primary library service provider by June, the end of the fiscal year. In response, Melody Hotek, president of Samuels' board of trustees, has announced that the library is exploring



The Samuels Public Library, which serves residents of Front Royal and Warren County, Virginia. CREDIT: Facebook

all possible options, including seeking private funding to achieve complete independence from county oversight.

The move by the Republican board could potentially lead to a domino-effect of sorts, inspiring other systems and states to the same overreach. With the new administration incoming to the White House, there may be challenges for cases like this heading to courts, but with the anti-LGBTQ+ sentiments already alive and well-known on Trump's team, any resulting rulings may hold strong biases. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Biden administration withdraws attempt to protect trans student athletes

After a misguided attempt to bring its version of fairness to trans student-athletes, the Biden administration has withdrawn a proposed ruling through Title IX guidelines.

The rule had sought to generally allow trans elementary school students to play on sports teams matching their gender identities. However, higher school levels would still be able to ban trans students from certain sports if they claim it's to preserve "fairness" or avoid the possibility of sports-related injuries. In such a case that a school did ban trans students from a sport, it would also have had to "minimize harms" by providing other participation opportunities, the Department of Education said, which was essentially vague wording that could be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Trans lawmakers spoke up against the

proposed rule, sending a letter to Biden and urging him to reconsider a rule that would prevent schools from discriminating against trans athletes in any manner. "There is no such thing as an acceptable 'compromise' that limits trans Americans' access to equal rights," the letter declared. "When it comes to policy addressing trans athletes, our stance is this: Trans athletes belong in sports. Full stop."

During the public comment period, a memo announcing the withdrawal was read: "Numerous commenters expressed concerns about the application of the proposed regulation in practice, arguing that the proposed regulation was unclear or too complex for recipients to implement, and many commenters offered alternative regulatory text for the Department's consideration to clarify, simplify, elaborate on or substantively change the focus and impact of the



The language in the ruling to protect trans children in sports left post-pubescent youth open to discrimination.

proposed rule."

"Additionally," it continued, "a significant number of commenters included discussions of case law, scientific studies and research papers, and existing athletic association policies and practices regarding athletic eligibility criteria that, according to the commenters, supported the adoption, modification or withdrawal of the proposed regulation."

Multiple pending lawsuits associated with the proposed rule were also

acknowledged in the writing, as well as lawsuits related to other applications of Title IX "in the context of gender identity."

From the response memo: "In light of the comments received and those various pending court cases, the Department has determined not to regulate on this issue at this time."

As of now, there has been no further word regarding the future possibility of another ruling before Biden leaves office. ::

—Jonathan Golian



Jim Yarbrough
GEMINI MANAGEMENT

Executive Offices For Rent

PO Box 221841 • Charlotte • NC • 28222

Ph. (704) 965-5214 Fx. (704) 531-1361



Through Discord, The WNC Helene Recovery Community seeks to help Asheville and beyond

The server became a phone book-like directory for many in need



by Jonathan Golian
QNotes Staff Writer

When Hurricane Helene finished passing through North Carolina, the immediate needs of the community were among the first priorities of those in the damaged areas and those witnessing from the outside. Many townships were damaged to varying degrees along the mountain region of the state. Homes had been lost, as well as sources of water and electricity, with food next to go if action wasn't taken immediately.

A mad dash toward restoration was in play not even a day after the storm, thankfully, and one modern resource was still available to most even after the devastation. If you had a phone signal, chances are you also had some access to the internet, and this train of thought is how a group of people took to Discord to craft a server with the region's needs in mind.

Roxanne Kelly, a group therapist that lives in Asheville, had already moved herself and her wife to a nearby hotel to avoid getting trapped in their home by the storm, fearing it being flooded. In the early morning hours, as the storm raged, she remembered first seeing the call to action. "I was scrolling Reddit to kind of distract myself while my wife slept, and I saw a call out for folks to join this Discord," Kelly recalled. "The initial posts had said something like, 'We're just starting this, but if anyone else wants to talk, here's a place we can do it.' And I thought to myself, You know what, I would actually really enjoy helping work with that. Discord is a lot quicker than Reddit, and this seems like it would be a great experience."

"We had a lot of folks who just wanted to offer support as well, so we made that space for them. And then there's also not just [for the] counties, but also [channels for] logistics and medical, and there are also [sections] for anyone who's just in a specific field. My wife is a pharmacist, so people had questions about their medication, and they were like, 'I don't have access. What do I do?'" So, she stepped up, and she would answer questions, and when it came to some of our LGBT members who perhaps are on hormones or trans individuals – my wife is trans – they knew that not only were they talking to a pharmacist who was knowledgeable, they also knew that she was someone who was safe and would not provide misinformation."

Not only having a background as a mental health professional, Kelly also holds a wealth of experience in ways to craft and utilize servers on Discord. With those talents, she saw this as a way to help out those affected by the storm. From there, she volunteered to be part of the team structuring the Discord hub. The result of the team's combined

work became the WNC Helene Recovery Community, a server that packs in as much information as possible, all in very nuanced and easily navigated channels and threads.

For those who have never used Discord before, the social platform is located at <https://discord.com/> and is advertised as an easy-to-use community builder, featuring thousands of servers on its network. Many of the servers on Discord range from being community chat extensions for independent creators to more specific ones, where small communities can create a hub for friends or those within a given area to tap into.

The Helene Recovery Community, which **QNotes** found through <https://disboard.org/server/1289141014573092917>, fits more of the latter's frame. The disaster-specific server uses the platform to allow incoming users to label themselves through the initial entry requirements with details about where they live in the affected areas, it also maintains help-channels that pertain to things going on in those sections of the Appalachian region.

Scrolling down the left side of the server's channel lists, users can find resources under labels like "Recovery Hub" and "Useful Links," which themselves also host a substantial number of different channels, tackling everything from health care and mutual aid to logistics and recovery updates.

Looking beyond North Carolina – Fall 2024 had multiple disaster areas affected by the year's hurricane season – there are sections for other states, like Florida and Tennessee. At the bottom of the lists, there's even a section dedicated to helping with any future hurricane or natural disaster that might strike.

While the identities of many users

are left anonymous, locked behind their usernames, it is apparent by reading through the channels that the overall server has helped those on it. In the missing persons channel, a post made by username maddbalz put out information about a friend's missing mother, describing her and giving possible whereabouts. From where the post was made on Oct. 7, it only took a day after putting out the information on the server for the friend's mother to be found, with maddbalz putting out a "thank you" post to close the case.

Scrolling up, another user, jubilant_starfish_44882, was able to track down two missing friends that lived in a trailer in Burnsville, N.C. within a day. After a few post replies with other users, a reporter in the server operating under username canto6517 had already tracked down the individuals and reported them as being safe. Similar stories of users within the community helping each other can be found in many of the channels, showing that any type of problem outreach most likely will be met with a helpful voice on the other end willing to pitch in for the cause.

With all of the good the server does, however, what good is it if those joining Discord have little idea of how to navigate or utilize it? Kelly, among the creators and moderators helping manage the server, foresaw this issue could limit many people's ability to access what they needed in a quick fashion.

"We were not expecting [to see] Discord utilized in such a way it was, it was wild to see," Kelly explained. "So, we had discord-help placed right up there with the general chat [near the top of the channels]. If you go to Discord-help, you will see that there are pictures and there are arrows, and it's like, 'Hey, this is where you can do this.'" Some of our [moderators] took a video. We have

amazing people on our team like Madison and Charlie, who helped create some of the instructions. We made sure that at the top of the Discord there was, announcements, and then there were guides."

One of the other issues that kept coming up was the vetting process, to see who was there to help, and who was potentially netting users in scams. Kelly, one among the many operators with Discord experience, wanted to keep an eye on the situation to prevent taking advantage of those affected by the hurricane. To add as an extra defense outside of vetting users coming in, a tab is available at the top of the channel list named Useful Links, allowing any who have seen or heard of those scamming others to list the information in the channel posts.

If there was anything helping pitch in on the WNC Helene Recovery Community Discord had taught Kelly, it was that in the moments of crisis, the communities in North Carolina's mountain regions, and especially in Asheville, have each other's backs.

"What I saw the most, and what I learned the most from this Discord is that even in times of dire crisis, people just want to help. There was no one I saw post only asking for themselves. You hear all these stories about people setting aside differences and coming together for their community, but you don't expect you're going to be in a once-in-500-year experience. I'm just a telehealth therapist with a dumb golden retriever. I didn't think I'd be thrust into this position, and it was just really encouraging to see, especially when I feel like there are a lot of efforts to divide community. That's my number one takeaway, that it was just fascinating to see that people who had been impacted wanted to help others as well, like they weren't seeking help." ::

Sponsored Content

Opportunity and Economic Uplift for LGBTQ+ Students and Jobseekers

by Meredith Thompson (she/her), Managing Director



Attendees at Charlotte Pride's 2024 Job Fair network with local employers like Duke Energy and Lowe's Home Improvement. CREDIT: Bobby Kerns, Bobby Kerns Productions

Charlotte Pride may be best known for their Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade weekend that graces the streets of Uptown each August, but they don't just host a party once a year. While you may not immediately associate "economic uplift" with the organization that curates a huge parade, they do, in fact, create programs that foster economic growth and offer upward mobility.

In early January, they'll launch their annual Charlotte Pride Scholarship and Internship Program -- generously supported by Principal Foundation® for a third year. The program offers opportunities for a dozen local college students, including 11 scholarships and one paid Charlotte Pride summer internship that includes a scholarship award. Scholarship awards will range from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Charlotte Pride's summer intern will work alongside Charlotte Pride staff and volunteers from their offices as the team conducts their day-to-day tasks and meetings, organizes volunteer functions, and participates in community events. Depending on their areas of interest, the intern will be able to select a major project to lead, potentially including: learning how to create and run a social media marketing campaign, assisting with the creation of the annual Charlotte Pride Magazine, writing articles, assisting in the planning and implementation of Charlotte Pride programs and community events of which Charlotte Pride is a part, or supporting development work.

"I work closely with our staff," said Charlotte Pride board member, Daniel Valdez, "and I can tell you, they are always thrilled to have the extra help and fresh energy during the summer, as they prepare for our festival and parade weekend. Having an intern on board in the busy season is a huge asset to them and to the organization. The team also really loves the chance to mentor an aspiring young queer or ally leader."

Following the launch of the annual Scholarship and Internship Program, generously supported by Principal Foundation®, Charlotte Pride will host its third annual Charlotte Pride Job Fair. On Feb. 11, it will return to Central Piedmont Community

College's Central Campus for a third year, with employers and supporting organizations convening on two levels of the Parr Center to meet eager LGBTQ+ and other jobseekers. Open to all, the Charlotte Pride Job Fair will connect attendees with dozens of employers who value a talented, diverse workforce, as well as education and resources to aid their professional development, from workshops to headshots.

In addition to drawing several of the companies that sponsor their festival and parade, the job fair also attracts a host of other local businesses and corporations. "Even those one or two sponsors who now may not want to participate in our festival and parade, like Lowe's Home Improvement, have expressed interest in our job fair," said Managing Director Meredith Thompson. "Every sponsor I've talked to is supportive of helping us create career and economic opportunities." Participating companies will include Merrill, Brighthouse Financial, and DCLI, among others. In addition, Charlotte Trans Health, City of Charlotte, and other municipal and nonprofit groups will be present to offer resources and support.

The organization aims to make the fair accessible to as many jobseekers as possible. Free parking is available just across the street from the venue, and the host campus is also conveniently located along the LYNX street car and CATS bus line.

"Accessibility is important to us with all the programs we create. And I'm super excited to build on the growth we've seen the past couple of years," said Programs Coordinator Maurice Clark. "We're aiming to offer workshops throughout the day, so that no matter when you attend, there'll be a career-building resource opportunity for you."

For more details on these and other Charlotte Pride's upcoming events, please visit charlottepride.org and check out the programs page. If you want to support their work financially as they kick off another year of programs, events, and initiatives for our local LGBTQ community, go to charlottepride.org/friends to donate and directly support programs like their job fair and scholarship programs.

Connie J. Vetter, Esq.
Attorney at Law, PLLC

Your LGBTQ+ Law Attorney
serving Clients from across
North Carolina

Website/Email at CJVLaw.com

Talk/Text 704-333-4000



CAROLINAS
LGBT+ Chamber of Commerce

**CONNECT.
ENGAGE.
EMPOWER.**

To Become a Member or
Partner: 704.837.4050
www.clgbtcc.org
info@clgbtcc.org

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](https://www.facebook.com/amitymedicalgroup)



How to change your name: QNotes explores the topic with the legal and Trans communities

A talk with the Pauli Murray LGBTQ Bar Association and Trans United Charlotte shows the required steps and potential challenges



by Jonathan Golian
QNotes Staff Writer

Between the Pauli Murray LGBTQ Bar Association, Charlotte Trans Health, Trans United Charlotte, and Charlotte Gaymers Network, the partnered organizations have started a well-needed monthly for Charlotte's transgender community. The Name Change clinic provides multiple services for those looking to blossom into their true selves on a more recognized and official scale via paperwork and documents.

At these clinics operated by this group of organizations, clients can find help in resume writing, having a large donated set of clothes to choose from that corresponds to their identity, access to medical professionals about where and how to find healthcare and learn about the process for changing their names on all official documents.

Prior to the recent conservative party victories in the Nov. 5 election, the clinics had been held less frequently. The incoming Trump administration made it immediately clear, especially for trans individuals, that resources should be made available as quickly as possible. With that in mind, an additional date was added to the schedule in December ahead of Jan. 18, the final clinic before the next administration officially moves in.

Candelario Saldana, a lawyer in the Pauli Murray Bar Association, pointed out that the first step in the process wasn't about the documentation. "I think the first step is a mental one," said Saldana. "It's being ready to take the leap. For a lot of people, getting there mentally in order to get rid of a name that's been associated with them for a long time, and then changing it, requires being in the correct mental space.

"Whether you're going to be okay with telling family, living [with] this name, letting go of a name that you've been living with for 20 to 30 years or whatever amount of time that you've been with this name, I think mental



Candelario Saldana (right), a lawyer in the Pauli Murray LGBTQ Bar Association, reviews information about the name change process with individuals who attended a recent name-change clinic.
CREDIT: Jonathan Golian

preparation is key, and that's why we don't want to force anyone to speed up their journey. This is their journey, and it's a mental journey. So just by being mentally prepared, we can meet everyone, wherever they're at - step one or step thirty."

The Name Change clinics themselves are places for information, not direct legal representation or advice. Armed with a few documents that give directions as to how the name process works, Saldana outlined three phases that each set of steps can be grouped into.

To start off with, there are a few requirements that have to be met for the state of North Carolina. The person seeking the name change, with some rare exceptions, must be over 18 years of age, live in North Carolina, had not

previously had their name changed under North Carolina General Statute Chapter 101 and not of desire to change their name for any other reason, including due to marriage, divorce, or death of a spouse.

After meeting these conditions, Phase One starts off by grouping together a set of documents. For pre-filing, a certified birth certificate is needed, along with background checks (if filing at ages 16 or 17), two affidavits of good character, and fingerprints. Once those files are gathered, Phase Two starts, requiring multiple trips to the courthouse.

During those trips, a notice of intent to change the name will be required, as well as affidavits covering outstanding taxes and child support along with an additional document of good character. If the person going through the process is 15 to 17 years old, a petition will also be needed together with an affidavit of parental consent. Lastly, a notarized verification document is required, along with the birth certificate, the background check reports, and paperwork showing proof of address (driver's license, utility bill, etc).

The last phase seems to be the most rigorous. After going through the court processes, the post-name change steps require the person in question to visit and call all of the places where their then dead name would be on file. These places include the Social Security Administration, the Department of Motor Vehicles, the passport office, any banks or credit card companies, and so

on. Anywhere the previous identity is on record would need to change the listing to show the new name.

Morgan Callahan, one of the founders of Trans Unite Charlotte, has been through the process. "It's very tedious, but it's not hard," Callahan explained. "There [are] a lot of steps, [such as] getting the money orders, going to the post office, going to UPS, going to the courthouse, and posting your date."

"As long as you're okay, mentally, with the fact that you are going to be driving



Continued on next page

'Cher: The Memoir Part One' by Cher

Out In Print



by Terri Schlichenmeyer
Qnotes Staff Writer

'Cher: The Memoir Part One'
by Cher
c.2024, Dey St.
\$36.00
413 pages

At least that's what she'd like you to think because she said it a hundred times while you were growing up, until you actually believed. One day, though, if you were lucky, you learned that Mother didn't always know best, but she did her best – like in the new book **"Cher: The Memoir Part One" by Cher**, when Mom helped make a star.

Though she doesn't remember it, little Cheryl Sarkisian spent a few weeks in a Catholic Charities orphanage when she was tiny because her father had disappeared and her mother couldn't afford to take care of her. "Cheryl," by the way, was the name on her

birth certificate, although her mother meant to name her "Cherilyn."

That first time wasn't the last time little Cher was left with someone other than her mother, Jackie Jean—a beautiful, talented struggling singer-actress who'd been born into poverty and stayed there much of her life. When money was tight, she temporarily dropped her daughter off with friends or family, or their little family moved from house to house and state to state. Along the way, relocating in and out of California gave Cher opportunities to act, sing and to learn the art of performance, which is what she loved best.

In the meantime, Jackie Jean married and married again, five or six husbands in all; she changed her name to Georgia, worked in the movies and on TV, and she gave Cher a little sister, moved the family again, landed odd jobs, and did what it took to keep the lights on.

As Cher grew up in the shadow of her glamorous mother, she gained a bit of glam herself, becoming sassy and independent, and prone to separation anxiety, which she blamed on her abandonment as a small child. In her mother's shadow, she'd always been surrounded by movie and TV stars; and, as she took acting classes, she met even more.

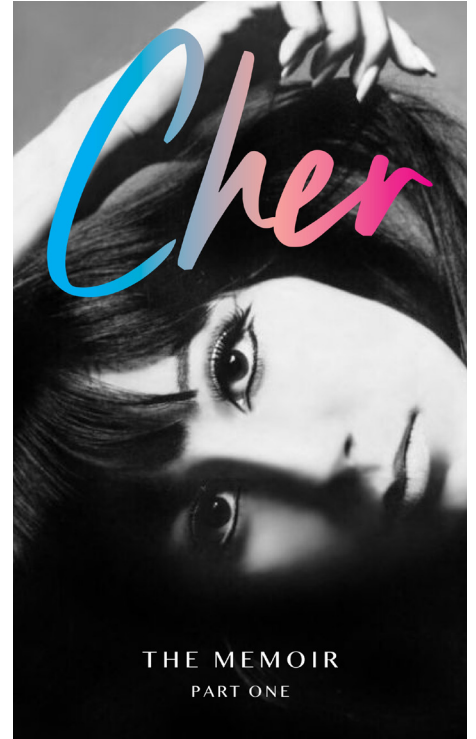
And then she met Salvatore "Sonny" Bono, who was a friend before he was a lover....

So, here's the very, very happy surprise: "Cher: The Memoir Part One" is a downright fun book to read.

If you've ever seen author Cher in interviews or on late night TV, what you saw there is what you get here: bald-faced truth, sarcastic humor, sass and no pity-partying. She tells a good story, ending this book with her nascent movie career, and she leaves readers hanging in anticipation of the stories she'll tell in her next book.

The other happy surprise is that this memoir isn't just about her. Cher spends a good amount of the first half writing about her mother and her grandmother, both complicated women who fought to keep their heads and those of their offspring above water. Readers looking between the lines will be enthralled.

Surely, "Cher: The Memoir Part One" is a fan's delight, but it's also a great memoir for anyone who particularly loves the genre and doesn't mind a bit of profanity. If that's you, then you got this, babe. ::



From Previous page

around or taking public transportation. You're going to be moving around a lot, and you're going to have to talk to a lot of different people, but it's not difficult. It's just that there are a lot of steps that need to be done in order to actually get the whole thing completed. I wouldn't say that it was overly stressful, or anything like that. It was more just like a set of annoyances."

Conversation with Saldana and Callahan about what needs to happen made the process feel a lot less strenuous than one might initially

imagine, which is likely the key reason organizations involved have offered the clinics. For such a major life event, proving who you are on paper to the world can seem daunting. The name-change clinics began as an idea from Katie Jennifer, a board member of the Pauli Murray Bar Association. The series of clinics has made that challenge look much more attainable.

Moving forward, the Charlotte Name Change clinics aren't the only such presentations the LGBTQ+ Bar Association expects to offer. Saldana and Jennifer, along with the rest of their staff, intend to make this type of information distribution a state-wide priority, especially with

challenges the LGBTQ+ community will be facing under the next administration.

"We've done our name change clinics [with] other partners ... because we believe in collaborating as a community and creating spaces that are beneficial and welcoming for all individuals," Saldana said. "So, we've done Durham, [where] we have those quarterly with the Durham County Library and with the LGBT Center of Durham. We also did one in Wilmington with a trans group there, and Equality North Carolina joined forces on that one. We had one planned in Asheville with the library system there, but then Hurricane Helene hit, so that's ... postponed for now."

In the near future the LGBTQ+ bar association is looking to work with the Mecklenburg County Bar Association and the Mecklenburg County Library System.

If you or a loved one are in need and looking for info, the Pauli Murray LGBTQ Bar Association provides details on upcoming clinics through social media and their website, <https://lgbtqbarnc.com/>. The next Charlotte clinic date takes place Jan. 18 and will be held at Tabbris Co-Working Center at 1300 South Boulevard, Unit D.

Information provided in this article is not legal advice, and should only be used as a loose guide, based on documents provided to QNotes for use in this article. ::

Q-munity connections 

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

Jim Yarbrough
GEMINI MANAGEMENT

Executive Offices For Rent

PO Box 221841 • Charlotte • NC • 28222

Ph. (704) 965-5214 Fx. (704) 531-1361

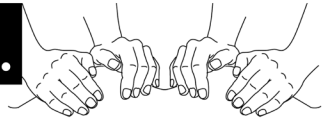
Bright Businesses
deserve well-lit

AD SPACE 

Call Q-Notes
704.531.9988

MANSCAP

BODY WAXING
MIKE THOMAS
704-400-2434
CALL OR TEXT
NGBARBERMIKE@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.

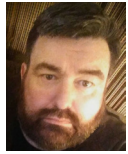
 **MCC.**
NEW LIFE
METROPOLITAN
COMMUNITY CHURCH

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

Remembering those we lost in 2024

List includes LGBTQ+ community, allies and icons



by **David Aaron Moore**
Qnotes Staff Writer

Anytime we lose a loved one or someone we admire or look up to, it's difficult. After scouring the media resources, we took a look back over 2024 at whom we've lost. Community members, allies and icons make up the list included here. While it is by no means exhaustive, it touches on the lives of the many people who perhaps touched ours during their time spent on planet Earth.

President Jimmy Carter, Dec. 29



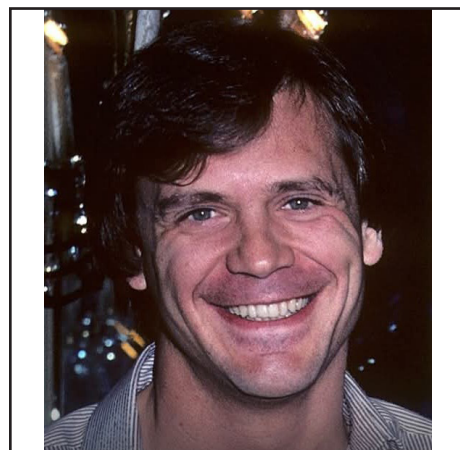
Carter passed away Sunday afternoon, Dec. 29 at the age of 100. Carter's commitment to the LGBTQ+ began in March 1977 when he became the first president (1976-1980) in history to allow a formal discussion of gay civil rights to be held in the White House. The meeting was led by then White House senior adviser Midge Costanza, the first woman (and a lesbian, who had yet to come out publicly) to serve in that position. Carter became increasingly vocal about his support for LGBTQ+ rights in later years, including marriage equality, confirming that he supported it and doing so was not contradicting his Christian faith. His advocacy for our community continued well into his 90s. "I think Jesus would encourage any love affair if it was honest and sincere and was not damaging to anyone else," Carter said in an interview with the Huffington Post. "And I don't see that gay marriage damages anyone else," he said. "I believe Jesus would approve."

Nikki Giovanni, Dec. 9



Best known for her work as a poet, Giovanni was a well-known author and professor. She passed away peacefully with her wife Ginney Fowler at her side. Aged 81, Giovanni was a civil rights activist and committed to social issues, especially in areas of gender and race. A native of Knoxville, Tenn., she was born June 7, 1943, and graduated from Fisk University in 1967 with a degree in history. From her website: "My dream was to publish or to even be a writer. My dream was to discover something no one else had thought of. I guess that's why I'm a poet. We put things together in ways no one else does."

Mark Withers, Nov. 22



A straight actor and ally for the LGBTQ+ community. Withers, 77, was best known for the character of Ted Dinnard on the 1980s primetime drama "Dynasty," where he played the love interest of central character Stephen Carrington. Withers appeared in multiple programs throughout his career, including shows like "Matlock," "Magnum P.I.," "The Dukes of Hazzard," "Dallas," "LA Law" and "Days of Our Lives." Of his role as Ted Dinnard, Withers called show creators "brilliant and ... years ahead of their time."

Paul Teal, Nov. 15



Only 35 years old, the film and TV actor is likely best remembered for his role in the CW teen drama One Tree Hill. In the series the actor played Josh Avery a closeted movie star who eventually

comes out. The cause of Teal's death was reported as pancreatic cancer. He was engaged to marry fellow actor Emilia Torello, although that was not to be. The two men met while working on the 2022 production of "Newsies" and began dating shortly thereafter. Torello shared a tribute on Instagram, calling Teal his "soulmate, my soon-to-be husband, my rock and my future."

Ted Olson, Nov. 13



Olson, 84, was a former solicitor general, serving during the terms of Presidents Reagan, Bush 1 and Bush 2. Although a conservative, the attorney successfully argued on behalf of same-sex marriage. Of the case, Olson said this: "It is the right of individuals, not an indulgence, to be dispensed by the state. The right to marry, to choose to marry, has never been tied to procreation." Olson's wife, Barbara, was a well-known commentator on CNN and Fox news. She was killed in one of the three planes that crashed on Sept. 11, 2001. In a documentary about the marriage case that followed years later Olson said, "this is the most important thing I have ever done, as an attorney, or a person."

Terri Garr, Oct. 29



The comedic actress, 79, began her career as a background dancer for Diana Ross and The Supremes as well as Elvis Presley. During the 1960s she appeared in such notable television programs as "Star Trek," "Dr. Kildare" and "Batman." In the years that followed she achieved acclaim in such films as "Young Frankenstein," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind" and "Mr. Mom." During the 1990s she experienced a resurgence when she appeared as the character of Phoebe's mother on the popular television series "Friends." Garr passed after a long-term

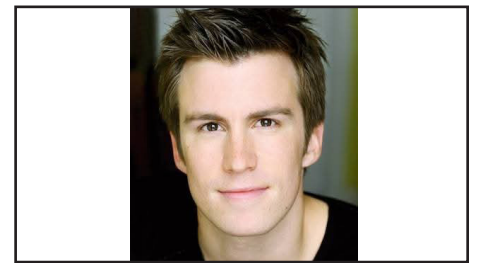
battle with multiple sclerosis.

Mitzi Gaynor, Oct. 17



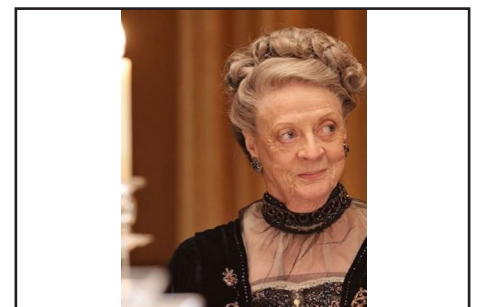
Gaynor was 93 years old when she passed away from natural causes. One of the last remaining recognized "stars" of the classic Hollywood musical era, she was best known for her roles in the films "South Pacific" and "White Christmas." Gaynor was active on social media and known to be an ally for the LGBTQ+ community.

Gavin Creel, Sept. 30



The Broadway actor, singer and songwriter, 48, was an openly gay man who appeared on stage and in such roles as Jimmy Smith in "Thoroughly Modern Millie," which earned him a Tony Award nomination and "Hair," his second Tony nomination. He finally captured the Tony award for his role in "Hello, Dolly!" and won a Lawrence Olivier Award for his role in "The Book of Mormon."

Maggie Smith, Sept. 27



Smith appeared on stage, and films and television in a career that spans more than 60 years. With roles in more than 50 films she was known best for her appearances in the Harry Potter films and "Downton Abbey," which left her much endeared to the LGBTQ+ community for her loving wit and cynicism. The winner of two Academy awards, Smith racked up a number of

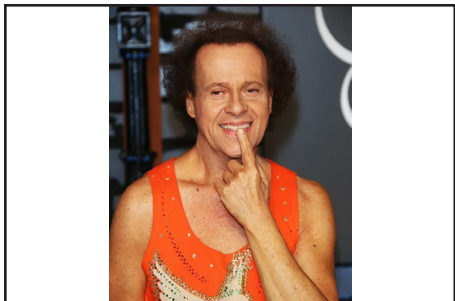
Emmy awards, Golden Globes, Screen Actors Guild awards and a Tony award. She was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1990. At the time of her death, Smith was 89.

Gena Rowlands, Aug. 14



Actress Rowlands was 96 at the time of her death. She began her career in film and television in 1954. Married to actor and director John Cassavetes until his death in 1989, she appeared in such notable films as "Woman Under the Influence" and "Gloria," a film that endeared her to the LGBTQ+ community. A winner of two Golden Globes and four Emmy awards, she received an honorary Academy Award in 2016. In later years she appeared in the film "The Notebook" and such television programs as "Monk" and "NCIS."

Richard Simmons, July 13



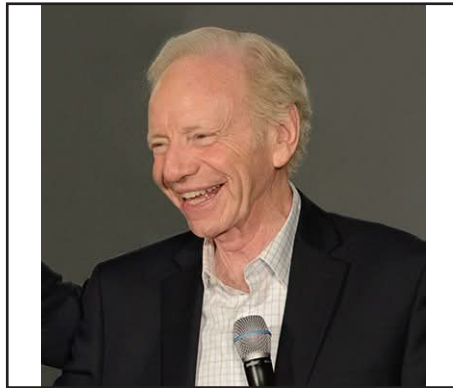
Simmons was gay but chose to remain closeted throughout most of his life. A comical fitness guru, he came to the realization he wanted to help inspire others after his own weight loss journey. That led to the opening of a fitness center in Los Angeles and later the release of popular workout videos like "Sweating to the Oldies," among others. In addition to appearances on the soap opera "General Hospital," he appeared in his own television series, "The Richard Simmons Show," which won four daytime Emmy awards. He was the author of nine books, among them an autobiography. Simmons, 76 at the time of his passing, was inducted into the National Fitness Hall of Fame in 2006.

Rodger Corman, May 9



Corman began his career as an actor but was better known as the king of b-movies for directing such classic low budget films as "Attack of the Crab Monsters," "The Wasp Woman" and "Bucket of Blood" in the 1950s and 1960s. He is recognized for giving such acclaimed directors as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Ron Howard and Peter Bogdanovich a foot in the door when others would not. Corman received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1991 and was awarded an honorary Oscar in 2009. He was 98 at the time of his passing.

Joe Lieberman, March 27



Lieberman is best remembered as the running mate for progressive candidate Al Gore during his presidential campaign in the year 2000. From 1983 to 1988 Lieberman served as the Connecticut attorney general after 10 years in the state senate. He was elected to the US Senate in 1989 and maintained his seat for 24 years. Lieberman officially retired in 2012 but then joined forces with former Charlotte mayor Pat McCrory to form the No Labels party, which politically flopped. Lieberman was 82 at the time of his death.

Glynnis Johns, Jan. 4



Legendary actress Johns, another of the very few classic "Hollywood golden era stars" appeared in more than 60 films during a career that touched eight decades. Among her most notable roles was Mrs. Banks in the film "Mary Poppins," with Julie Andrews and Dick Van Dyke. Other films of note include "The Cabinet of Caligari," "The Weak and the Wicked," "No Highway in the Sky" and "Mrs Venable." In later years she appeared in such films as "Cheers," "Murder She Wrote" and "The Love Boat." Johns was 100. ::

INMIGRANTE CONOCE TUS DERECHOS

Conoce tus derechos cuando te llega una orden de deportación, ICE llega a tu casa o trabajo, o te para la policía. La información es tu mayor protección.

11 ENERO, 2025

4:30PM-6:30PM

**ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH
300 HAWTHORNE LANE
CHARLOTTE, 28204.**

Los primeros 40 adultos que lleguen recibirán una tarjeta de regalo de \$40.

Cuidado de niños disponible y comida gratis.

¡Llama al 704-313-1668 para reservar tu cupo!

NEIGHBOR KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Know your rights when you receive a deportation order, ICE comes to your home or work, or you are stopped by the police. Information is your greatest protection.

JANUARY 11 TH, 2025

4:30PM-6:30PM

**ST. JOHN'S BAPTIST CHURCH
300 HAWTHORNE LANE
CHARLOTTE, 28204.**

The first 40 adults to arrive will receive a \$40 gift card.

Childcare available and light refreshments will be provided.

To Ani and Beyond

Q-Music



by **Gregg Shapiro**
Qnotes Contributing Writer

Singer/songwriter and indie music mogul **Ani DiFranco** released her eponymous debut album on her own record label almost 25 years ago. After releasing (almost) an album a year until around 2008, DiFranco, who maintained a rigorous tour schedule, began taking her time between records. Her latest, "Unprecedented Sh!t" (Righteous Babe), arrives a little over three years after its predecessor. While DiFranco maintains her reputation as a singular lyricist (see "Virus," "New Bible," "Spinning Room," "You Forgot to Speak," "The Think at Hand"), it's her approach to the audio component that offers listeners a revolutionary change. Sonically experimental (and exciting), with some songs clocking in at under three minutes, and a couple just over five, the "unprecedented" sound (listen to title cut) matches some of the "unprecedented" subject matter she addresses.

As soon as you hear **Sophie Gault's** voice on "Kick The Devil Away," the opening track to her second album "Baltic Street Hotel" (Strong Place

Music), you'll understand why she was featured as a backing vocalist on Lucinda Williams' 2023 album "Stories from a Rock 'n' Roll Heart." The similarities in their voices are so striking! Gault also has Williams' knack for balancing rockers ("Christmas in the Psych Ward," "Fixin Things," "Jealousy," "Poet in a Buick") with breathtaking ballads ("Lately," "Lights," "Over and Out"). Gault's cover of Patty Griffin's "Every Little Bit" deserves to be heard by everyone.

Speaking of Patty Griffin, you can hear her influence, as well as that of Kacey Musgraves on singer/songwriter **Madi Diaz's** amazing new album "Weird Death" (Anti-). Musgraves even joins Diaz on "Don't Do Me Good." An exceptional set of 12 modern folk-pop tunes, Diaz's ability to musically slip an arm around our shoulder and pull us into her world makes us not want to leave her orbit. Songs such as "Hurting You," "Girlfriend," "Same Risk," "God Person," "Get to Know Me," and "KFM." Definitely one of the best albums of the year.

While we're on the subject of influences, it's hard to name another artist who wears the impact of Lana Del Rey more audibly than **Suki Waterhouse**. That's meant as a compliment, especially in the way she takes the Del Rey ball and runs with it and makes it her own on her

new album "Memoir of a Sparklemuffin" (Sub Pop). It comes through loud and clear on "Could Have Been a Star," "Faded," "To Get You," "Legendary," "Lawsuit," "OMG," "Model, Actress, Whatever," and "To Love." Of course, there's much more to Waterhouse as you can hear on the "Blackout Drunk," "My Fun," and "Big Love."

If you don't count the soundtrack to "The United States vs. Billie Holiday" (in which she starred), **Andra Day** took nine years between her lauded debut album and her new one, "Cassandra (Cherith)" (Warner Records). Beginning with opener "Maybe Next Time," Day comes across as Erykah Badu crossed with Holiday, and the results are compelling. But we must wait until the next song, "Probably," to hear Day stretch out, belting to the sky and beyond. Other moments of fantastic brilliance include "Midnight," the Amy Winehouse-esque "Bottom of the Bottle," the subtly brassy "More," the deceptive simplicity of "Chasing," and the begging-for-a-remix "Champagne Flutes." All in all, it was well worth the wait for this Day to come.

When you first hear the timeless "On Tonight," the opening cut on "Bite Down" (Merge) by mono-monikered **Rosali**, you might think you were listening to a vintage folk-rock tune, but you'd be wrong. To her credit, Rosali (Middleman) has a gift for creating contemporary Americana that sounds deeply rooted in the Laurel Canyon tradition. Backed by fantastic musicians, that retro energy carries on throughout Rosali's wonderful record, creating a sense of sonic nostalgia, especially on "Rewind," "My Kind," "Slow Pain," "Hopeless," "May It Be on Offer," and the keys on the title number.

Louisa Stancioff stands out from the pack in interesting ways. First, her soprano lilt is approachable and pleasing. It's also tricky in the way that as sweet as it sounds, it belies the darker aspects of her lyrics, as in the case of "Cigarette," "Nobody's Watching," "All Fuck'd Up," and "Quarantine." As if that wasn't enough of a recommendation, she does it all in under 40 minutes. Brava!

Adding some international flair to this column, singer/songwriter **Jana Mila**, an Amsterdammer, has released her



Ani DiFranco

debut album "Chameleon" (New West). A thoroughly pleasant folk-pop mélange, the album opens with the gorgeous "Like Only Lovers Could" which floats in on stunning harmonies and a stirring cello. "Somebody New" picks up the pace and feels like a hit single. The bare bones "Love Let Go" captures the break-up mood, while "I Wasn't Gonna" builds until it gets its point across. The piano and vocal "In Between" shows another side of Mila.

Keeping with the global theme, Australian-born **Ruth Moody**, who made her name as one-third of the Canadian trio The Wailin' Jennys has released her latest solo effort "Wanderer" (Blue Muse). Even with that pedigree, Moody has crafted some of the loveliest Americana you're likely to hear. Highlights include "Seventeen," "North Calling," "Comin' Round the Bend," and the incredible "Twilight."

Ani DiFranco performs on March 11 at The Charleston Music Hall in Charleston, S.C., on March 14 at the Carolina Theater in Durham, and on March 15 at The Orange Peel in Asheville. ::



Peaches
Adult Boutique & Arcade

OPEN 24/7

115 Swain Street, Fayetteville, NC, 910-339-2770
facebook.com/PeachesAdultBoutique1

We buy interesting & worthwhile used books & Compact Discs.

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

Lupie's Cafe

HOME OF THE EMPTY PLATE CLUB!

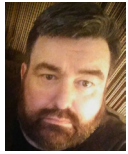
2718 Monroe Rd.
Charlotte, NC 28205
704-374-1232

101-A Old Statesville Rd.
Huntersville, NC 28078
704-948-3959

Email: lupie@lupiescafe.com
www.lupiescafe.com

Our People: Steve Mowry

Longtime NC resident is a co-host of Comic Book Bears podcast



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

A native of Pennsylvania, Steve Mowry made his way to North Carolina via Connecticut before he landed in Charlotte in 2005 with his then husband-to-be Jason Estrada. The two met in 2004, got married in 2013 and celebrated their eleventh anniversary Dec. 27. In 2017, Mowry and Estrada made the decision to move to Winston-Salem, and they continue to call the city home today.

For his day job, Mowry works as a logistics specialist, but if you're a comic book fan, it's his non-business hours hobby that you might recognize him for. Combining his love for comic books and conversation, Mowry serves as one of three hosts for the podcast "Comic Book Bears." Other regulars on the podcast include founder Bill Zanowitz, Bryan Pittard and Caleb Alexander-McKinzie.



Steve Mowry (left) with (most of) the Comic Book Bear crew: Bill Zanowitz (center) and Bryan Pittard. CREDIT: Facebook

David Aaron Moore: Tell me about Comic Book Bears.

Steve Mowry: It was started back in 2012 by Bill Zanowitz and Justin Allen, who are two friends that met through various internet boards. They became really good buddies and decided they wanted to do a podcast that spoke to a section of the comic book fan population that isn't really represented in media much: gay bears.

DAM: Wow! Twelve years. What is your audience like today?

SM: So the podcast is not only for gay bears, it's for anybody who wants to listen: gay, straight, queer, questioning or other. But you know, originally it was set up as a way to give some gay bears who wanted to talk about comics a voice and a platform to do that.

DAM: How did your involvement come about?

SM: I met Brian at HeroesCon in Charlotte, because it is such an amazing comic book convention and it brings people in from all over the country and beyond. We met and became fast friends. He invited me onto the Comic Book Bears podcast, just to be sort of like a guest friend of the podcast that got to hang out with them, and I came on for one episode. They really liked me, so they asked me back for a second episode. That was in early 2014 and at the end of the recording [they] asked, "Do you want to be on full time? Do you want to be a full time cast member?" So I, of course, said yes, and I have been on the podcast consistently for the past 10 years.

DAM: So you guys are all over the place. You're not in one studio recording, you're in different parts of the country?

SM: Yes! The current core podcast team is myself here in Winston-Salem;

Caleb Alexander McKenzie, who's out in Little Rock, Ark.; Phil Zana – he's sort of our fearless leader – in Princeton, N.J.; [and] Bryan Pittard is in Seattle.

DAM: How long have you been collecting comic books?

SM: So I started reading comic books and collecting them when I was a kid. So probably when I was about eight, nine years old. I bought my first comics with my own little allowance or birthday money. And then from the age of probably 10 to 14, I went almost weekly to a local comic shop that wasn't too far from home to pick up whatever I saw off the wall that sparked my fancy. Eventually I stopped buying comics regularly and reading single issue comics for almost 20 years. I of course read a lot of the really prestigious graphic novels that were coming out from independent publishers and things like that. But I stopped reading superhero comics altogether. But starting in 2011, I got back into reading comics again full time, and I haven't stopped since.

DAM: Is there a large portion of the LGBTQ+ community that are comic book fans?

SM: I think there is, I think there's a sizable minority of the community that does read comics, or at least is interested in comics, whether they buy them regularly, or they read them digitally, or they go to conventions whenever they can. I think there is a pretty sizable minority within the community, and a lot of times they don't always see themselves represented in comic media, because a lot of times you have the general idea that if you are a comic book reader, you're probably, you know, 30s, 40s, middle-aged, straight, white, and that's basically your average comic reader, straight white male.

DAM: I've thought it seemed to skew that way, but that's not representative of the entire community, though, right?

SM: No. There are great female and female-presenting fans of comics that, again, also from their perspective, don't always get the recognition they should or really get. I think a lot of people who may be interested in comics, especially in the queer community, might get kind of unnerved if they try to go into what they perceive as a very straight white male space. You know, comic fans are notoriously stereotyped as being very gatekeeping. Just a certain type of person that you don't want to spend time with. Obviously there are people like that, but that's not everybody. There are plenty of wonderful, pleasant comic fans that are from all walks of life and all types of people.

DAM: What's it been like for you watching that develop over the years?

SM: Just being able to meet a lot of them over the years, since being part of a podcast, but also just generally hearing from fans and seeing the growth in the industry and the number of creators that are from generally underrepresented groups and part of the queer community as well, getting to have their books published, getting to write big publisher titles at Marvel and DC, having queer characters as superheroes, as well as on the independent scene. I mean, it's been amazing.

DAM: How many followers do you think you have now?

SM: We regularly have about 1000 listeners per episode and we do both [video and audio streaming]. During the pandemic, we started live streaming as a way of being able to see each other during COVID. You know, getting to

actually see and interact with each other, because we knew we wouldn't be able to hang out in person at conventions, because all the conventions were canceled that year and into 2021, as well. So we started live streaming, so we could connect on a weekly and bi weekly basis. And then we started broadcasting those on Facebook Live and on YouTube and on Twitch.

DAM: Do you have a favorite comic book or two you'd like to share?

SM: Sandman. It's by Neil Gaiman. His works as a writer are one of my favorites. They have aspects of Shakespeare, Greek mythology and superheroes. It's all very interesting and it made me realize how a fictional narrative can change your perspective on life. I'm also a fan of X Men. Of course, it's fun and exciting when you're a kid, but then you realize it addresses discrimination, treatment of marginalized groups like the LGBTQ community and others, and civil rights. X men started way back in the mid-60s and took off in the '70s when Chris Claremont started writing.

DAM: What motivates you to do this?

SM: I think a big portion of it is I absolutely love comic books. I love reading comics. I love reading about comics. I love looking at art. You know, the artists' work. I love the writers. It's really, really fun. And, you know, it's a way of sharing my hobby with others and also to have them share the same hobby with me.

The Comic Book Bears will celebrate podcast #300 in January. To watch them live or see previous episodes, check out Facebook and YouTube; @comicbookbears on IG and @comicbookbears.bsky.social. ::



**Start 2025 off with
a bang!**

**Call us to set an
appointment today for
ALL your LGBTQA+
Healthcare solutions**



ROSEDALE
HEALTH + WELLNESS



704-977-2972

