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Corrigan talks
about community**

-pg 15



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inside this issue



feature

10 Surfing The Winter Wonderland: An LGBTQ Guide to Skiing and Snowboarding in North Carolina's Mountains



news

- 6 FL Judge Rejects Injunction in Trans Inmates Case
- 6 The Queer Community takes up arms ahead of Inauguration Day 2025
- 6 Clinical Trial shows twice-a-year injection more effective with HIV prevention
- 7 BOOM Charlotte moves to University City in 2025
- 7 Legal battle over pronoun rules in school districts is spearheaded by South Carolina AG
- 7 Republican Strategist defends Fox News anchor over Nancy Mace attacks
- 8 Remembering Jimmy Carter, the first Presidential LGBTQ+ Ally
- 9 President Biden gives Presidential Citizens Medal and Medal of Freedom to LGBTQ activists



a&e

- 13 We Rock CLT
- 14 Q-Music: Chicago then and now
- 14 Out in Print: 'When the Band Played On: The Life of Randy Shilts, America's Trailblazing Gay Journalist'



views

4 Trump's hand picked cabinet is detrimental to the lives of LGBTQ+ Americans



life

12 When it's too cold outside, stay fit and active inside
15 Our People: Bethany Corrigan



events

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

Staying active indoors during winter

While the winter months bring many exciting opportunities for outdoor exploration and activities, not everyone who enjoys keeping physically fit enjoys a crisp cold wind or the sting of snow and ice on their face. Just because the temperature drops below freezing doesn't mean you have to go into hibernation. Check out our article on ways you can stay active indoors.

PAGE 12



Queer community takes up arms

As President-elect Donald Trump and MAGA devotees lay plans to makeover American culture, self-protection through gun ownership has become an increasing priority. Not only have firearm sales shown an uptick with LGBTQ+ individuals, many in our community are preparing for worst-case scenarios to protect themselves and their loved ones through classes and training.

PAGE 6

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Trump's potential cabinet picks are detrimental to the lives of LGBTQ+ Americans

Those selected to serve in country's highest positions have a history of advocating for dehumanizing policies



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

A fear of many Americans is going to become a reality in less than two weeks: On Jan. 20, Donald Trump will be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States. Despite a less than glamorous exit in 2020, highlighted by election denying, an attempted violent overthrow of government, and a second impeachment, Trump is set to return to the Oval Office.

Along with the controversial president comes an even more controversial set of cabinet picks, each of whom have their own record of where they stand on various issues and political topics. Some of these handpicked officials have an extensive history of not only turning their back to marginalized communities, but of demonizing, degrading and demeaning LGBTQ+ Americans and their allies.

In this column, *Qnotes* looks at a handful of Trump's cabinet picks we believe have the potential to be the most harmful to America's queer and trans community. Here is what we found:

Marco Rubio — Secretary of State



Qnotes dove into the Florida U.S. Senator's LGBTQ+ record when it was speculated he was a potential vice president and running mate for Trump. Rubio has been called out multiple times by LGBTQ+ advocates and organizations, and for good reason.

In 2022, the Human Rights Campaign released a statement saying Rubio received a "score of 0 out of 100" for his HRC Congressional Scorecard for the 117th Congress, which scored members of Congress based on a range of

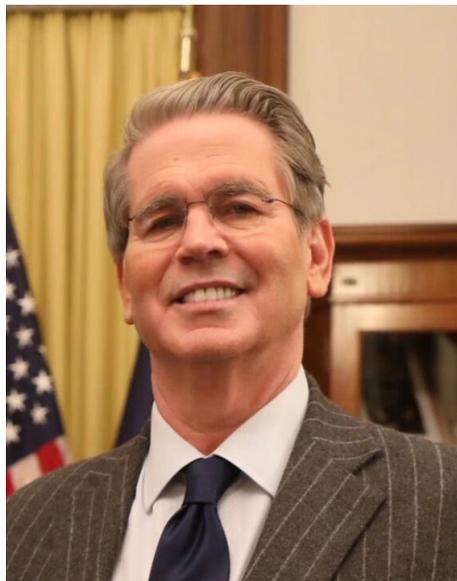
indicators regarding their support for the LGBTQ+ support.

"He has a dismal voting record, supports restrictive abortions laws, and opposes marriage equality and nondiscrimination protections," said then Human Rights Campaign National Campaign Director Geoff Wetrosky. "And, on more than one occasion, Rubio has used anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric that makes clear he doesn't care about LGBTQ+ people and our families."

Rubio faced criticism for calling the Respect for Marriage Act a "stupid waste of time," and then he went on to vote against the act, which passed bipartisanship.

According to the GLAAD Accountability Project, Rubio also has targeted drag, falsely claiming it exposed children to "sexually charged content." He has also opposed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), which makes it illegal to discriminate in hiring or firing employees based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

Scott Bessent — Secretary of the Treasury

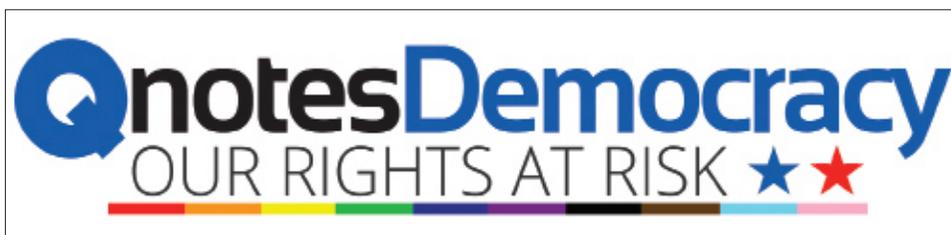


It's important to note Trump's second administration could see the first out gay Treasury Secretary and first LGBTQ+ person nominated to a cabinet position by a Republican president — hedge fund manager Scott Bessent. Bessent is the founder of Key Square Capital Management and is affiliated with George Soros — a liberal philanthropist who donates billions of dollars to progressive causes — serving as chief investment officer for Soros' fund in the past.

Bessent served as the economic advisor to Trump during his 2024 campaign in addition to donating millions to Trump's reelection efforts. It was reported by CNBC Bessent was likely selected as he supports most of Trump's proposed economic policies, such as tariffs and deregulation of multiple industries.

"Scott has long been a strong advocate of the America First Agenda," Trump said in a statement. "On the eve of our Great Country's 250th Anniversary, he will help me usher in a new Golden Age for the United States, as we fortify our position as the world's leading economy, center of innovation and entrepreneurialism, destination for capital, while always, and without question, maintaining the U.S. dollar as the reserve currency of the world."

Republican congressional representatives are working in the upcoming legislative session to give Trump abilities to strip the nonprofit status of entities deemed to be "harmful" to the American people, which could include LGBTQ+ advocacy groups. If this were to come to fruition, such statements would have to be made by the Treasury Department.



Pete Hegseth — Secretary of Defense



The Fox News host was one of the first named to the Trump cabinet, and since then, scandal and controversy has tarnished Hegseth's legacy and name before he's even stepped into office.

Hegseth attended Princeton University, and while there, he served as the publisher of the school's conservative paper. He contributed plenty of editorial content, including an op-ed where Hegseth wrote "the homosexual lifestyle is abnormal and immoral." He then joined the Minnesota Army National Guard, where he rose to the rank of major. Deployed three times, Hegseth served in Guantánamo Bay, was a platoon leader in

Iraq and later taught counterinsurgency tactics in Afghanistan. His military honors include two Bronze Stars.

However, Hegseth has found himself facing an uphill Senate confirmation process after the release of his 2024 book showcased demeaning rhetoric toward women and LGBTQ+ folks who served in the military. According to reporting from *The Advocate*, "Hegseth criticized the repeal of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, lamenting what he called a loss of military cohesion and effectiveness." 1

In his book, "The War on Warriors," Hegseth recalled when his commanding officer briefed him and his comrades on the reversal of the policy barring openly gay people from serving in armed forces.

"Our commander briefed the unit, peppered with a few jokes," he wrote. "You know, infantry stuff. We mostly laughed it off and moved on. America was at war."

Gays and lesbians were already serving in the military. I had seen the enemy with my own eyes. We needed everybody."

However, Hegseth revealed he "regretted" being so open minded to the policy.

"Not because I have a newfound axe to grind with gay Americans," he wrote, "but because I naively believed that's what ending 'Don't Ask Don't Tell' was all about. Once again, our good faith was used against us. The Left never gives an inch and always takes a mile."

Pam Bondi — Attorney General



Bondi hails from Florida, where she served as the Sunshine State's attorney general from 2011 to 2019. However, life was not sunshine and happiness for queer

and trans Floridians during Bondi's tenure.

The former attorney general has ties to several Scientologists — whose organization has a history of abusing its LGBTQ+ members. She also has very close ties to Trump, as Bondi received an illegal donation of \$25,000 from the Trump Foundation. Her LGBTQ+ record is just as suspect as Bondi's connections to Scientology or her alleged breaking of the law.

During her first term, Bondi opposed marriage equality, arguing same-sex partnerships and marriages "impose serious public harm" in a 2014 court case. Two years later, however, Bondi attempted to repaint herself as an ally in the aftermath of the Pulse Nightclub shooting, saying the shooter would be "punished to the full extent of the law."

CNN's Anderson Cooper grilled Bondi on her sudden shift, calling her out for trying to save face.

"Ms. Bondi's big complaint seems to be that I asked in the wake of a massacre of gay and lesbian citizens about her new statements about the gay community and about her old ones," Cooper said at the time. "Ms. Bondi is championing efforts to help survivors, but the very right that allows gay spouses to bury their loved ones — that's a right that wouldn't exist if she had her way."

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. — Secretary of Health and Human Services



A man who needs no introduction, Kennedy has become synonymous with the anti-vaccine movement and medical misinformation overall. Now, he's set

to become the person in charge of formulating the United States' policies on medical and health related policy. On Jan. 9, over 17,000 doctors signed a letter urging the Senate to reject Kennedy as the health secretary, citing him as "unqualified to lead" and "actively dangerous."

One of the concerning beliefs held by Kennedy relates to HIV and AIDS, both of which disproportionately impact LGBTQ+ Americans. Kennedy has promoted the falsehood that HIV isn't the cause of AIDS, instead attributing the cause of the autoimmune disease to amyl nitrite — aka poppers — and lifestyle stressors.

The connection between HIV and AIDS has been confirmed, and in fact, the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine was granted to Françoise Barré-Sinoussi and Luc Montagnier for their discovery of HIV being the cause of AIDS. Kennedy's proposed hypothesis has already proven to be not just wrong, but ignorant to real science and facts.

"RFK Jr.'s history of denying basic scientific truth, from the cause of AIDS to the legitimacy of transgender health care ... represent a grave threat to the health and well-being of the LGBTQ+ community, and he is poised now for one of the most powerful and consequential positions in shaping the nation's health care and public health policies. In this context, disinformation isn't just harmful, it is deadly," said Alex Sheldon, executive director of GLMA, an association of LGBTQ health care professionals.

Kennedy has also suggested there are chemicals in public drinking water causing children to become transgender. He told anti-trans commentator Jordan Peterson that kids are "swimming through a soup of toxic chemicals," including atrazine, a common herbicide, and that, "a lot of the problems we see in kids, and particularly boys, it's probably underappreciated that how much of that is coming from chemical exposures, including a lot of the sexual dysphoria that we're seeing."

Kennedy also swore to "shake up" the department he seeks to lead, stating he would cut the positions of over 600 federal employees in the the National Institutes of Health, a division of HHS that includes the Office of AIDS Research. As HHS' head, Kennedy would have direct oversight of the President's Plan for Emergency AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) — which provides HIV prevention and treatment in more than 50 countries. ::

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FL judge rejects injunction in trans inmates case

Before the start of the New Year, a preliminary injunction against a new Florida Department of Corrections (FDC) policy targeting transgender inmates was rejected by a federal judge in Florida's Northern district.

The case in question, *Keohane v. Dixon*, amounts to emergency litigation, filed on Oct. 24 by the ACLU of Florida, on behalf of Reilyn Keohane, a transgender woman in custody of the department who has been receiving treatment since 2016. The injunction also includes other transgender inmates, all being represented on the grounds that the new policy constitutes a violation of their Eighth Amendment right to medically necessary care.

The FDC bulletin with the policy

change, titled "Mental Health Treatment of Inmates with Gender Dysphoria," was introduced on Sept. 30, 2024. The policy effectively strips transgender inmates of gender-affirming care along with amenities, such as clothing and grooming standards that align with their gender-identities. Mental health professionals, addressed in the fourth section of the document, are told to assert to patients that "no psychotherapeutic, medical or surgical therapy can permanently eradicate all psychological and physical vestiges of one's biological sex."

In the document, gender dysphoria is framed as "short-term delusions or beliefs, which may later be changed and reversed." In an attempt to back up this statement, the section uses the

mention of "published and unpublished case histories" regarding cases where the subject in question has regretted undergoing hormone therapy debilitating to the patients. The FDC bulletin also suggests psychotropic medications and psychotherapy as sufficient alternatives to medical transition, ignoring widely accepted medical guidelines.

In his 23-page decision, Judge Allen Winsor, a Trump appointee with a record of anti-LGBTQ+ rulings, threw out the request, arguing that the FDC's policy does not constitute a blanket ban on hormone therapy, despite evidence showing the policy effectively forces the de-transition of hundreds of inmates.

In a press release lambasting the decision, Li Nowlin-Sohl, senior staff attorney at the ACLU's LGBTQ+ HIV Project, pressed that "Florida officials are waging a baseless campaign to dehumanize and degrade incarcerated people like our client."



Hate legislation aimed at trans community headed for Supreme Court?

"Allowing this policy to move forward threatens the basic human rights of transgender people in the state's custody and the court's order today affords the state's policy more credulity than it deserves, when the clear intent of the state is to ban this health care outright." ::

—Jonathan Golian

Queer community takes up arms ahead of Inauguration Day 2025

As fear heightens in queer communities around the U States with the day President-elect Trump retakes the White House coming closer, self-protection through gun ownership has become an increasing priority. Not only have firearm sales shown an uptick with LGBTQ+ individuals, but many are reportedly joining gun clubs and signing up for classes in case the worst possible scenarios happen to them or their loved ones.

"Three months before the election, that's when the alarm bells started to ring," said A., a 24 year-old trans woman who, speaking to *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, identified by the first letter of her first name because of her perceived safety concerns.

According to data collected about trans citizens experiencing violence, the reason

for A.'s caution is clear. In a 2021 report conducted by UCLA's Williams Institute, trans people were found to be more than four times as likely as cisgender people to be victims of violent crime. Corroborating with that study, a poll conducted by health-policy research nonprofit KFF and the Washington Post found that one in four trans people say they've been physically attacked because of their identity.

"Minorities that are armed are more difficult to legally oppress," A. expressed on the subject. She indicated she found some peace of mind by owning a gun "in the event of hate crimes or terrorist attacks, knowing that, 'OK, I'm personally armed and I can protect my property and people that are close to me.'"

A. is just one of many people voicing caution and preservation through the

possession of legal arms. Gun-affirmative groups like Rainbow Reload and the Socialist Rifle Association are seeing a surge in memberships. Many of these groups, to match their growing numbers, are seeing just as many requests for proper gun training.

"There's definitely a feeling among a lot of LGBT individuals: 'If I can't protect myself, who will?'" said Madeline Shearman, a trans woman based in Glen Mills who runs a casual and growing "2A social group" in Pennsylvania. "I feel that way myself."

Meanwhile, right-leaning talking heads like Fox News' Jesse Watters continue to exacerbate the conversation. Recently, the news host mocked LGBTQ+ people for buying guns as a safety precaution ahead of Trump's second term, claiming they have no reason to be fearful, even in spite of skyrocketing hate crime rates and legislation stripping away queer rights, including the right to equal protection under the law.

Watters is no stranger to using speech that is homophobic, misogynistic and racist during his on air time. The Fox News anchor has a history of inciting



Now more than ever before, individuals in the LGBTQ+ community are choosing to arm themselves.

political volatility.

During a segment last August on the Fox news segment "The Five," Watters encouraged purchasing and using firearms for self-defense and supported Kyle Rittenhouse's deadly use of force at a Black Lives Matter rally.

From Watters' perspective apparently, the LGBTQ+ community can look forward to a carefree existence with no protection needed during the Trump presidency, despite the mountain of evidence that indicates otherwise. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Clinical trial shows twice a year injection more effective with HIV prevention

As often the case with treating or preventing medical conditions, consistency is key with prescription drugs. Specifically, when dealing with a new HIV infection, only by taking regular doses of oral antiretrovirals, more commonly referred to as PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis), can patients expect to have an effective defense against HIV. Missing even a daily dose of medications could mean greatly compromising once risk in contracting the virus.

However, in a recent Gilead-funded clinical trial led by physicians at Emory University and the Grady Health System, results have been found that a twice-yearly injection of a new drug called Lenacapavir would offer a 96 percent reduced risk of

infection overall, making the medication significantly more effective than the daily oral PrEP.

In the clinical trial comparing the efficacy of the two medications, Lenacapavir and Truvada, 99 percent of the participants in the Lenacapavir group did not acquire an HIV infection. Of the 2,179 people the group comprised, only two participants contracted an HIV infection. Compared to the nine new HIV infections in the Truvada group, which had 1,086 people, the trial showed that adherence to the injectable was higher than of the daily oral pill.

"Seeing these high levels of efficacy, at almost 100 percent, in an injectable that people only have to take every six months

is incredible," says Colleen Kelley, MD, lead author of the study and professor in the School of Medicine at Emory University. "This is a considerable and profound advancement in medicine, especially for people whose circumstances don't allow them to take a daily oral medication, and for those among populations disproportionately impacted by HIV."

Kelley, also the co-director of the Emory Center for AIDS Research, and associate dean for research for Emory at Grady added that while PrEP is incredibly effective at preventing infection, part of what made the injection more effective in the clinical trial was the challenges associated with adherence to a daily oral pill.

The trial groups included cisgender men and gender-diverse people at 88 sites in Peru, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, South Africa, Thailand and the United States. The inclusion of racially, ethnically and gender-diverse participants in the trial, all with different circumstances in being able to access daily medication, is notable because



Test results show injection far more effective than oral medication.

it was representative of populations disproportionately impacted by HIV.

"What we see over time is that about half of people who start taking daily oral PrEP stop within a year due to various factors," says Kelley, referencing healthcare disparities in general. "Having an effective injectable that is only needed twice annually is very significant for people who have trouble accessing healthcare or staying adherent to daily, oral pills." ::

—Jonathan Golian

BOOM Charlotte moves to University City in 2025

After spending multiple years in its second home, Camp North End, BOOM Charlotte will be moving to a new location in 2025, settling down in the University Area, north of the city.

The festival will take place at the University City lakefront April 25-27. The move is part of a new partnership with University City Partners, a nonprofit dedicated to encouraging growth in the University area.

"Partnerships and collaboration are at the heart of everything we do, and we're thrilled to join forces with University City Partners for the 8th Annual BOOM Festival," Manoj Kesavan, founder and executive director of BOOM Charlotte, said. "Hosting this iconic event in

University City not only allows us to engage with new audiences but also opens up exciting opportunities to further support and elevate Charlotte's vibrant creative community."

Over the last few decades, the University area has seen a rise and fall in traffic. During the 2000s and early 2010s, the plazas were the home of big department stores, multiple boutiques and a lively nightlife scene that catered to the college crowd in Charlotte. Later in the 2010s, many of those centers of commerce had moved out of the store fronts, leaving the area somewhat bare.

As the following decade progressed and into the 2020s, the area has seen a revitalization, with many of the old

buildings demolished and rebuilt, providing new generations other ways to enjoy the surroundings. According to the press release, the University area had seen more than three million guests by the end of 2024. With that statistic in mind, the move to University City has the potential to grow the festival and put local artists' work in front of more eyes.

"This is definitely the most scenic place we've ever done the festival in," Kesavan said. "It's a very diverse community there, a lot of people from all over the world, so we think we'll be reaching a new audience."

The three-day event is an array of artistic experiences and installments, including dance, poetry, visual art, film, music and other performances. Guests will have the opportunity to experience two components of the festival: BOOM Fringe and BOOM Intersection in University City.

BOOM Fringe features ticketed indoor experimental art performances, while BOOM Intersection offers free, family-



The NC Brazilian Arts Project poses for a photo during BOOM Charlotte 2024. CREDIT: Facebook / BOOM Charlotte

friendly performances in an outdoor environment. Specific details regarding vendors, performers and artists will be announced closer to the event date.

For more details, visit their website here. ::
—Jonathan Golian

Legal battle over pronoun rules in school districts is spearheaded by South Carolina AG

For South Carolina's attorney general Alan Wilson, his priorities in 2025 are starting off with leading a legal battle over gender pronoun rules in U.S. public school districts.

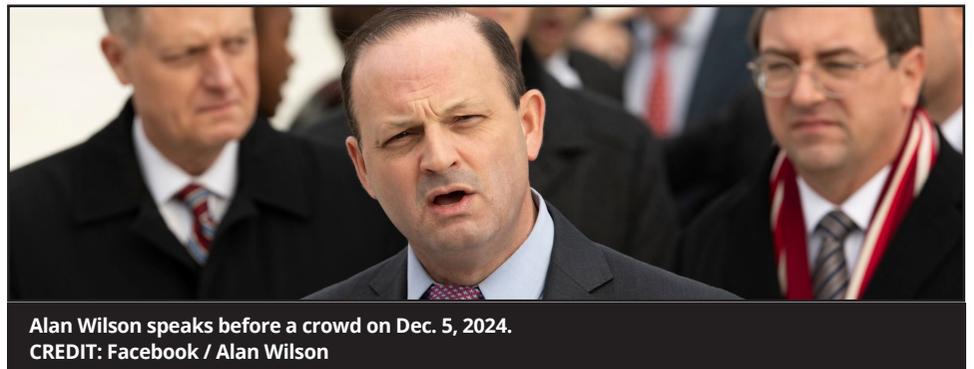
Beginning with the Olentangy Local School District in Columbus, Ohio, the national conservative group Parents Defending Education filed a lawsuit in May 2023, arguing that the policies mandating the use of transgender students' preferred pronouns violated the First Amendment. Last July, the group asked a federal court for an injunction on the policies, which had been declined.

After the injunction request went to the Sixth Circuit court, the majority of a three-judge panel also declined,

stating that the policies didn't "compel" certain speech. The circuit judges ruled that students could simply avoid using pronouns when referring to transgender classmates. Since the rules also generally banned all gender or sexual identity-based discrimination, the court compared them to common school prohibitions on racial slurs.

Citing this case as the background for his new anti-LGBTQ+ campaign, Wilson is joining together with conservative leaders and groups across 23 states, including South Carolina and Ohio, to erase pronoun policies in every school district.

"That is something that we cannot abide in Ohio, South Carolina or any state in this country," Wilson said of the Olentangy



Alan Wilson speaks before a crowd on Dec. 5, 2024. CREDIT: Facebook / Alan Wilson

District rulings, during a segment of Fox News' 'The Faulkner Focus.' "Yes, the lawsuit has gotten struck down, or we have lost at the district court and the court of appeals level, but this is one of those cases that I think is best served by going to the US Supreme Court."

By pointing to a 1969 U.S. Supreme Court case, which ruled that teachers and students don't shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate, Wilson argues that the school district in Ohio is trying to force all students to say things that many might not believe in.

"Parental rights groups are doing

what I think groups around the country are all doing, and it's trying to protect their children from being compelled to not only violate their First Amendment rights inside the schoolhouse," Wilson stated, "but this policy, the one in Ohio in particular, would do the same thing outside of school. If you were at a mall on a Saturday or you were texting a friend or putting something on X or Twitter or whatever, you could be penalized when you showed up at school on Monday morning for using the wrong pronoun that someone found offensive. ::

—Jonathan Golian

Republican strategist defends Fox News anchor over Nancy Mace attacks

Adding to the storm of controversy surrounding South Carolina Representative Nancy Mace, a Republican strategist spoke up in late December about his interactions with her. Wesley Donehue, who is the CEO of a South Carolina political consulting agency, lashed out at Mace months after he said he fired her as a client, dubbing the far-right lawmaker a "pitiful embarrassment."

Taking to X (Twitter) on Dec. 20, Donehue had much to say within a string of posts. "You can stop texting me," Donehue wrote, starting off the thread. "I fired Nancy Mace as a client a few months

back because I'm a political consultant and not a babysitter, a sex therapist or a doctor who can prescribe fixes for chemical imbalances. I don't have time for her constant egotistical bulls - and drama in my life."

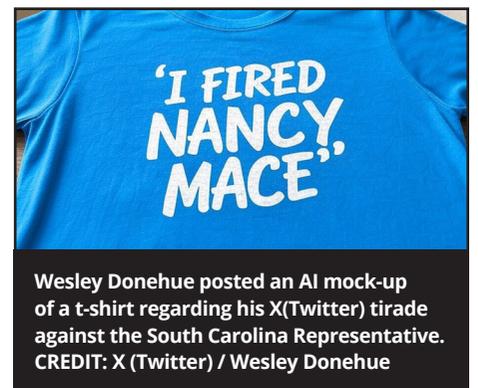
Donehue's tirade against Mace seems to have started directly after she attacked Fox News host Trey Gowdy, formerly a congressman from Mace's home state, who had criticized her for voting against a Donald Trump-backed spending bill on Thursday night. As if to loop the anchor into the hate campaign Mace has been waging against transgender

citizens and the LGBTQ+ community in general, most recently on Capitol Hill, the representative fired back, questioning whether Gowdy was himself transgender.

"Which bathroom do we think Trey Gowdy uses?" she wrote on her X profile, including a photo of his face. In response, Donehue defended Gowdy and criticized Mace: "Imagine wanting to run statewide and thinking this is a good idea. The upstate loves Trey Gowdy. This is what happens when a person cannot control their emotions enough to think strategically."

This is far from the first time Mace has found herself being distanced away from those who once backed her. In fact, several former staffers previously told the right-leaning outlet The Daily Beast that Mace begged her team to let her "get punched in the face" to garner "media attention" as a mob stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

One of the last tweets posted Dec. 20 signified how Donehue felt about Mace, along with situations like hers in



Wesley Donehue posted an AI mock-up of a t-shirt regarding his X(Twitter) tirade against the South Carolina Representative. CREDIT: X (Twitter) / Wesley Donehue

general. "Loyalty still matters," he wrote. "You can go fast alone, but you can go far with others. A major red flag is when a 'leader' has extreme turnover and even their closest allies bail on them. It's because they don't care about anyone but themselves. Extreme narcissism is the path to failure." ::

—Jonathan Golian

Remembering Jimmy Carter, the first Presidential LGBTQ+ ally

Carter's love, empathy and understanding grew from a meeting in the Roosevelt Room



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

Former President Jimmy Carter, a man whose life had shown him unafraid to extend a hand to anyone and everyone in good faith, passed away at age 100 on Dec. 29. Chip Carter, his son, confirmed that his father died peacefully at his home in Plains around 3:45 that afternoon.

For the LGBTQ+ community, President Carter is a pivotal figure, who was the first president in United States history to allow a formal discussion of gay rights in the walls of the White House. On March 26 of 1977, the conversations about gay rights took place in the Roosevelt Room, led by Midge Costanza, the first woman to serve as a senior adviser on the presidential staff. While Carter himself was not in the room, he had made consistent calls back and forth from his location at the time in Camp David.

Costanza herself was a closeted lesbian at the time, secretly dating Jean O'Leary, the co-executive director of the National Gay Task Force, the then fairly new activist organization springing out of New York City four years earlier.

The meeting the couple organized in that room consisted of twelve gay rights leaders from across the country. George Raya, now 75 and a longtime LGBTQ+ activist, is one of the last surviving attendees of that meeting. When asked by the Advocate to explain the significance of the meeting, Raya doesn't hold back on the feelings of the moment.

"It started the ball rolling for gay rights, because back then, we had no rights," Raya explained. "Many people don't know just how big this meeting was, and the fact it occurred in the Roosevelt Room, which is the main White House conference room. I recall all the paintings on the wall of Theodore Roosevelt and FDR. It was extremely exciting."

Raya's contribution at the meeting focused on the pressing issue of hepatitis in the LGBTQ+ community. He advocated for increased research and action. "I had friends diagnosed and in the hospital because it was a serious illness that just totally destroyed the liver. People were dying," he remembers. "The data collected later became pivotal in the fight against AIDS, as it provided crucial insights into how the virus was transmitted."

The visit catalyzed key shifts in federal policies, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development ceasing its discrimination

against gay people seeking federal housing, the Immigration and Naturalization Service stopping its practice of barring gays from entering the country, and the Internal Revenue Service granting tax-exempt status to gay-oriented nonprofits like any other charitable organization.

Where this historic occasion started his legacy in backing LGBTQ+ rights, Carter would over time expand his vision, knowledge and views of the queer community. A year later, in 1978, together with Former President Gerald Ford and future President Ronald Reagan, Carter spoke out against Proposition 6, also known as the Briggs Initiative, which asked voters to bar gays and lesbians from teaching in the public schools.

After his one term ended in Washington, defeated by Reagan, Carter would go on to put his time into humanitarian causes alongside his wife, Rosalynn Carter. Eventually, he and his wife's work culminated in the creation of the Carter Center, which to this day focuses on making peace around the world through providing means for healthcare and being active in democracy.

LGBTQ+ rights group the Human Rights Campaign remembered Carter's queer rights legacy in a statement on Sunday.

"All of us at the Human Rights Campaign



President Jimmy Carter

feel an immense loss with the passing of former President Jimmy Carter," said Kelley Robinson, president of the Human Rights Campaign. "In recent years, he became a prominent voice in support of LGBTQ+ rights, speaking out for marriage equality at a time when most national leaders in the U.S. still opposed it. For decades after he left the White House, he continued to make public service his enduring priority through his work with Habitat for Humanity and the Carter Presidential Center, cementing his reputation as a champion for human rights and as one of the all-time great former presidents. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and all who mourn him." ::

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President Biden gives Presidential Citizens Medal and Medal of Freedom to LGBTQ activists

Each recipient, all with decades of work behind them, continue to push for greater rights in the queer community.



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

With a few weeks left of his presidency, Joe Biden has awarded individuals who have made their lives about contributing to American society and the world at large with the Presidential Citizens Medal and the Medal of Freedom.

In the ceremony held on Jan. 2, among the group of recipients, Biden honored LGBTQ+ activists Evan Wolfson and Mary L. Bonauto with the Citizens Medal. Speaking to the crowd that day, Biden said of the winners of the Citizens award, "Together, you embody the central truth: We're a great nation because we're a good people. Our democracy begins and ends with the duties of citizenship. That's our work for the ages, and it's what all of you embody."

Wolfson and Bonauto's inclusion in the 2025 ceremony is preceded by their collective work in advancing marriage equality in the United States. Their work individually and together culminated in the 2015 Supreme Court case Obergefell v. Hodges, which ruled that same-sex marriages are a constitutional right.

Bonauto, the senior director of civil rights and legal strategies at GLBTQ Legal Advocates & Defenders (GLAD Law), argued the Obergefell case before the Supreme Court. However, even that victory was in line with her collective work in securing marriage rights in multiple north-eastern states, including Vermont, Connecticut, and Maine, before taking on the 2015 landmark court case.

"Her efforts made millions of families whole and forged a more perfect Union," the White House offered in a statement.

Wolfson, the founder of Freedom to Marry (FTM), has been an advocate for same-sex marriage for decades, from his time working as a part of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a gay rights advocacy non-profit, to starting his own in 2001. Through his organization, Wolfson and his team led marriage equality work in almost every state, working from the ballot up to partners in the legislative realm.

At the time of forming FTM, Wolfson gave a rousing vision of it and the work to be done. "I'm not in this just to change the law," he expressed, "It's about changing society. I want gay kids to grow up believing that they can get married, that they can join the Scouts, that they can choose the life they want to live."

At the January ceremony, Wolfson gave thanks for the collective efforts of the marriage equality movement. "This medal is a tribute to the transformative, democratic work we all did together, and to the power of hope, strategy, determination and love," he said of the award. "I'm honored to see the profoundly positive impact that the freedom to marry has had for so many families across the country, and for the LGBTQ community and American people as a whole."

Bonauto echoed his sentiments, painting a broader picture as to the significance of the award. "It is an astonishing honor to receive this recognition, and to be in the company of other incredible individuals who have had such a significant impact on the lives of Americans," she said. "The Presidential Citizens Medal represents something

fundamental: that we each have a role to play in fulfilling our country's promises of equality, dignity and freedom. I stand alongside so many courageous individuals who fought for the right to marry, and others across our nation who share a deep desire that all of our community members be treated with fairness and dignity. This recognition today is a testament to the profoundly positive impact marriage equality has had on individuals, families and communities across our country."

Two days later, on Jan. 4, Tim Gill, an American computer software programmer as well as LGBTQ rights activist, was one of 19 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Gill, much like Wolfson and Bonauto, has been involved in several decades worth of LGBTQ activism, starting from his time at the University of Colorado at Boulder, volunteering for the campus gay-liberation group and giving support for local HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns. Gill was also involved in LGBTQ political response to 1992's Colorado Amendment 2, which prevented non-discrimination ordinances in the state from protecting people based on sexual orientation, which in turn was struck down as unconstitutional during the 1996 Supreme Court case, Romer v. Evans.

From his formation of the Gill Foundation alongside his husband, Scott Miller, in 1994, to establishing the Gill Action Fund in 2005, Gill has been credited through these organizations as a visionary strategist and mega-donor for making significant contributions to many LGBTQ rights initiatives over the years.



The LGBTQ winners of this year's Presidential Citizens Medal and Medal of Freedom ceremonies: Mary L. Bonauto, Evan Wolfson and Tim Gill (Left to Right)
CREDIT: Facebook/Freedom To Marry/Tim Gill

As well as having a hand in helping back the work through funding in 2015's Obergefell v Hodges, in North Carolina, he also helped fund Governor Roy Cooper's campaign in 2016, aiming to push Republican Gov. Pat McCrory out after his support toward and passing of the anti-LGBTQ HB2 "bathroom bill". Of his contributions, the White House said in a statement that Gill "is a visionary entrepreneur whose work has advanced LGBTQI rights and equality." It continued, "After transforming the publishing industry through groundbreaking software, he leveraged his success to secure key victories in the fight for marriage equality and anti-discrimination protections."

President Biden also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to former Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton, who has long been an ally to the LGBTQ+ community. She served as first lady to President Bill Clinton (1993-2001), a Senator representing New York (2001-2009) and as the Secretary of State (2009-2013). ::

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Surfing The Winter Wonderland: An LGBTQ guide to skiing and snowboarding in North Carolina's mountains

Along with the love of trekking the snow, there's also a bit of history tying the queer community to the sports

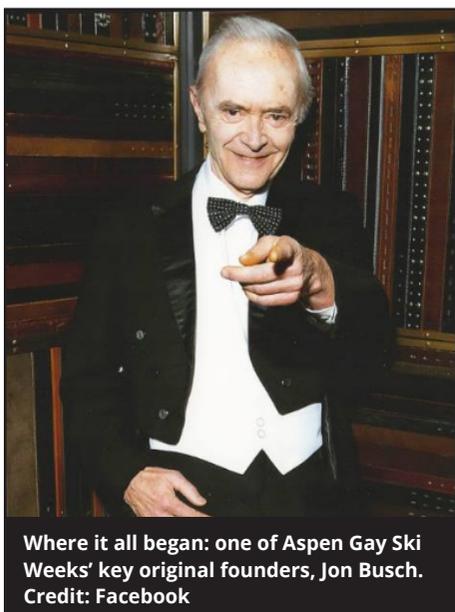


by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

The queer community loves skiing as much as the rest of the world. One might ask, why specifically skiing? Is there something to the sport in particular? Well, maybe yes, but also it might have to do more with making the ice-encrusted spaces safe for the LGBTQ+ community. Less than a decade after the Stonewall riots in New York, a man named Jon Busch was confronted and attacked for dancing with another man in 1977 at the Aspen Ski Resort bar.

Having helped officially found Aspen Gay Ski Week in 1974, where snow-bound condo parties may have originated, Jon and the queer community were not strangers to the area or the sport, but the 1977 attack would solidify the union of each. Inspired by the bar event, as well as recent news from Busch's hometown of Portland, Ore. having passed a gay rights ordinance, he and a few local friends, including David Hoch, Tom Duesterberg and Russell Anderson, decided to bring that fight to Colorado's snowy hills.

After kick-starting the effort by taking a customized version of Portland's ordinance to Aspen's City Council in 1978 and having it passed unanimously, 1979 took that step a bit further, making Aspen the first municipality in Colorado to pass an anti-discrimination policy for gays and lesbians. With Boulder and Denver shortly following suit, a legend had been born, as well as a new winter tradition for the LGBTQ+ community. Some of the notable LGBTQ+ athletes that participate in the sport are; Gus Kenworthy, a former U.S. freestyle skier who came out on ESPN in 2015; Anja Parson, a Swedish alpine skier



Where it all began: one of Aspen Gay Ski Weeks' key original founders, Jon Busch.
Credit: Facebook



North Carolina ski resorts offer plenty of fun for all to enjoy.
Credit: Facebook

who came out as lesbian in 2012; and Erik Schinegger, who came out as transgender and intersex way back in 1968.

In North Carolina, when it comes to celebrating those fights for civil rights, or just enjoying the sport itself, one only needs to look westward, where the elevations climb and the temperature drops and there's usually no shortage of the white stuff. Whether thinking of a visit to Asheville, or heading over to Boone, chances are there are places among the ski slopes that would give all the opportunities necessary to create great memories in the snow. Of the resorts in Western North Carolina's Appalachian hills, here are a few long-standing sites that will help you make your own winter wonderland memories.

Cataloochee Ski Area



Located in Maggie Valley in Haywood County, the Cataloochee Ski Area is one of the earlier opening resorts during each year. In the region the ski area takes up, Cataloochee has eighteen slopes and trails, with nearly half rated

for beginners before getting to the more intermediate skill levels. If you or anyone in your group haven't had the chance to ski or snowboard before, the Ski Area does have classes for both youth and adults. While the season passes for Cataloochee might cost as much as a couple hundred, the day and night passes are affordable, ranging from \$30 to \$42 depending on age.

Appalachian Ski Mountain



Where Cataloochee provides a good amount of the fun by providing the basics, Appalachian Ski Mountain (ASM) is the full package. Located in Blowing Rock in Watauga County, ASM is as similarly storied as Cataloochee. In fact, the opening of the former inspired the founding of Appalachian in North Carolina's High Country region in 1962.

While the ski areas are a little less varied, with the trails counting up to 13 in total, it is the accessibility and wealth of activities at the area that make it worthy of checking out. The lodge that it originates out of also happens to be the home of the French Swiss Ski College, which in its tenure has instructed those from as high up as US military divisions, to handicapped athletes and southerners who have never seen snow.

If your direction is looking for more intensive courses to conquer, ASM has that, as only two of its ski trails are cleared for the beginner level.

When not taking to the hills, the resort also sports an ice-skating rink as well as a restaurant at the lodge. For vacationing accommodations, ASM offers slopeside lodgings for those who want to be as close as possible, and even if the cabins owned by the resort are fully booked, ASM also partners with a few hotel chains in the area in order to give thrill seekers discounted rates.

Sugar Mountain Resort



Based in the town it shares a name with and located next to Banner Elk, Sugar Mountain Resort (SMR) is the largest ski area in the North Carolina mountains. Sporting a whopping 125 acres of skiable terrain, the resort has 20 trails to choose from that go up the area's 5,300 foot peak elevation. For expert skiers as well as those looking to test their skills, SMR also has the state's only double black diamond ski run, a label used for particularly steep inclines, making them the most dangerous thrills to newcomers of the pastime.

Among the outdoor activities the resort offers, SMR also holds the area's



largest ice-skating rink as well as an area for snow tubing. When the fun out in the snow is done, visitors can take advantage of the Last Run Lounge, a full-service bar and restaurant on the grounds. For housing inquiries, SMR unfortunately doesn't have lodges for rental, however, there are many in the area, advertised on the ski area's website.

Beech Mountain Resort



Differing from the other resorts, Beech Mountain is a year-round location that, in the winter, provides visitors with slopes to ski and board on, and along other parts of the year are proving grounds for those looking for downhill mountain biking trails. Within the 95 acres that make up the Beech Mountain Resort, there are 17 different slopes to choose from, including one of their specialty runs, West Bowl, which measures out to a mile in distance.

One of the great details about this specific location is how much the resort offers in other activities. Visitors have ample ways to warm up and refresh for the slopes ahead, whether that is bringing families into the Play Yard Provisions outdoor space, grabbing something hot in the First Chair Coffee Shop, or heading to the Beech Mountain Brewhouse for

drinks, a full-menu and occasional year-round live music entertainment.

Sapphire Valley Ski Area



Finally, the Sapphire Valley Ski Area (SVSA), located in the town of Sapphire, presents itself as a great beginner spot for learning to ski and snowboard. Other than being a proving ground for new skiers, SVSA also has one of the largest tubing offerings in Western Carolina, all encompassed in the Frozen Falls Tube Park. Those looking to stay a while in the area can grab a cabin or house lodging through their website link.

Each of these sites operate with snowmaking machines for the times of the year when the temperatures drop off and stay in the lower degrees, so no season in the mountains of North Carolina is ever missing a winter forecast. Many of these resorts are fully open from early-December to mid-March, but there is also a couple that open their doors for business before Thanksgiving weekend, so whether deciding to have a White Christmas, or just wanting to break in the season before the crowd, there's always something available for skiers during North Carolina's winter seasons. ::

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When it's too cold outside, stay fit and active inside

Multiple ways to keep moving during the long, cold winter



by Wendy Lyons (She/Her)
Qnotes Contributor

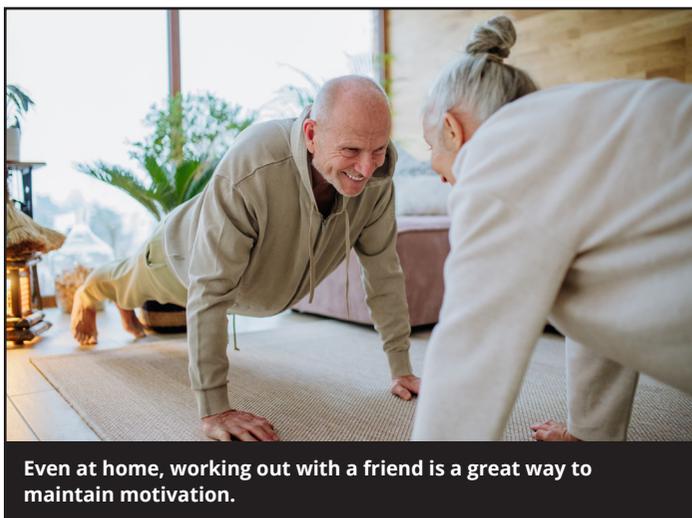
Staying active in winter can be challenging due to colder temperatures, shorter days and the temptation to stay indoors. However, with determination and creativity, you can increase and maintain your fitness levels and elevate your mood during winter months. Here is a look at how to incorporate home workout circuits, dancing and stair climbing into your winter routine, ensuring you remain active and healthy.

Home Workout Circuits

Home workout circuits are a great way to stay active during winter, as they can be done in the comfort of your own home without the need for gym memberships or equipment. Here are some tips to create an effective home workout circuit.

Select a mix of strength, cardio and flexibility exercises that target different muscle groups. Hand weights can be used with some cardio exercises. A few effective bodyweight exercises include lunges, push-ups, planks and squats. Some exercises can be incorporated as chair exercises.

Aim for a circuit that consists of 5-10 exercises, but start at your comfort level.



Even at home, working out with a friend is a great way to maintain motivation.

Perform each exercise for 30 seconds to 1 minute, followed by a 15-30 second rest. After completing one round of the circuit, rest for 1-2 minutes before repeating. Aim for 3-5 rounds and pace yourself, depending on your level of fitness.

Designate specific days and times for your home workout circuits. Consistency is key to forming a habit, so treat your workouts like appointments that can't be missed.

There are countless online or streaming platforms like YouTube offering free workout videos and challenges. Websites and apps like My Fitness Pal can help guide you in creating effective circuits or provide inspiration for new moves to keep your routine fresh and exciting.

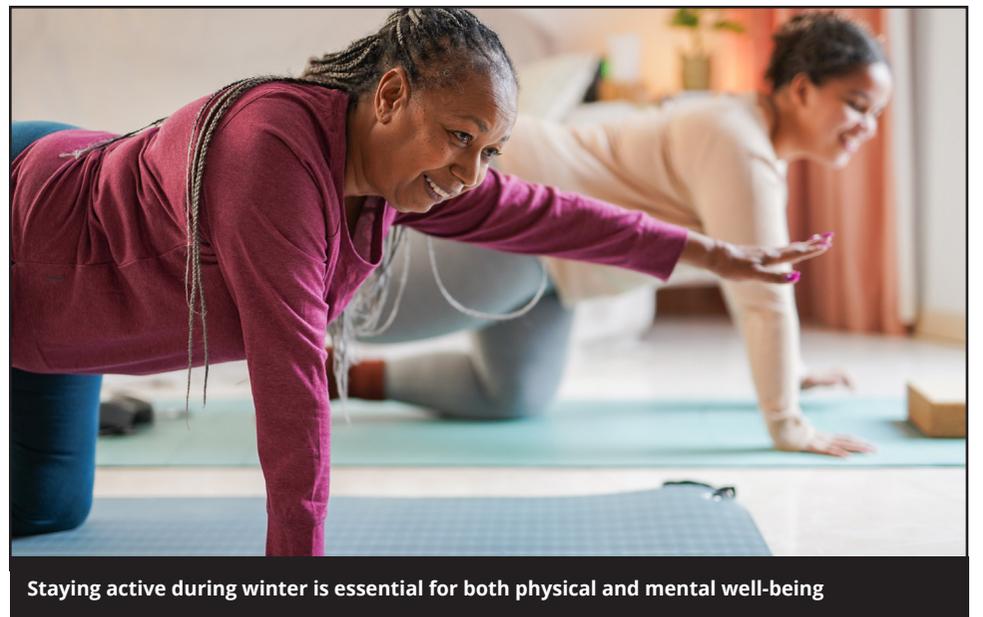
Dancing

Dancing is a fun way to stay active and it also offers a fantastic cardio workout. Whether you want to groove in your livingroom, kitchen or prefer structured dance classes, you can include dancing into your winter fitness activities.

There are many different dance style options to explore so find what you enjoy most and dance, dance, dance! Options include Zumba, hip-hop, salsa, line-dancing or even ballet. The more you enjoy the style, the more likely you are to stick with it.

Set aside an area in your home where you can dance freely without any obstacles. Clear some space, add your favorite music and let loose. Have fun dancing in front of your favorite mirror.

Many dance studios and dance groups offer virtual classes, allowing you to learn from the comfort of home. These classes often cater to various skill levels, so you can find one that suits your experience. Invite friends



Staying active during winter is essential for both physical and mental well-being

or family to join you for a dance party at home or via Zoom. Not only does this make it more fun, but it also fosters social connections, which are vital for mental health during the winter months.

Do not hesitate to change your music and dance styles regularly. Keeping your routine varied can prevent boredom and promote continuous improvement in your dance skills.

Stair Climbing

Stair climbing is a highly effective workout that can be done in many settings as part of your winter fitness regimen. Look for a staircase in your house, apartment building or office building. If you do not have access to stairs, consider using a sturdy step or a low platform for step-ups.

Aim to include stair climbing in your weekly exercise schedule. You might start with short sessions of 5-10 minutes and gradually increase the duration as your endurance improves.

To maximize the benefits of stair climbing, try interval training. Alternate between fast-paced climbing and slower recovery periods. For example, sprint up the stairs for 30 seconds, then walk back down for one minute. Repeat this for a total of 15-20 minutes.

After stair climbing, follow up with strength training exercises like squats or lunges. This combination enhances muscle tone and increases calorie burn.

When climbing stairs, maintain proper posture to prevent injuries. Keep your back straight, engage your core, and land softly to protect your joints.

Consider using a fitness tracker like a smart watch or a simple notebook to log your stair climbing sessions. Seeing your progress can be motivating and help you set new goals. Play your favorite music in your ear buds and get to stepping!

In Conclusion

Staying active during winter is essential for both physical and mental well-being. Home workout circuits, dancing and stair climbing offer enjoyable and effective ways to maintain your fitness levels despite the chilly weather. By incorporating these activities into your routine, you can boost your mood, enhance your health and ensure that you emerge from winter feeling strong and revitalized. Embrace the winter season, stay motivated and enjoy the many benefits of staying active. ::

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We Rock Charlotte: A look into how the non-profit changes conversations through music and societal messaging

The main structure of the organization, the prior-named Girls Rock Charlotte, has been operating in the area since 2014.



by Jonathan Golian
Qnotes Staff Writer

Living in a place like Charlotte, a constantly growing metropolitan city, it is still surprising how some voices get drowned out among the chorus of activity. While LGBTQ+ spaces have grown in number over the years, some spots and organizations are not as visible as one might want.

When thinking about spaces for the city's queer youth, there will always be a need for areas where one can find community with other peers, along with leadership that recognizes that sentiment. Thankfully, in the Queen City, we have a few organizations with that goal always in mind. One of the ongoing success stories is the music-based non-profit We Rock Charlotte.

Great ideas often thrive best when many hands are at work with the same effort. In 2022, two organizations melded into one. Girls Rock Charlotte, a local area chapter of music summer camps for young girls founded by Kelly Finley and Krystle Baller (they/them), merged with



Krystle Baller & Brit Swider hosting Rock Roulette 2024.

Baller's Pachyderm Music Lab, a youth-directed music school, to form We Rock.

With Brit Swider joining the group as executive director and Baller taking the creative director role, along with the several hands that help out as leaders and teachers in the organization, an expanded dream was born. What was once programming for adolescent girls became a place where young students of numerous queer backgrounds could come together and grow their talents, whether femme, non-binary or transgender identifying individuals, or anywhere in the queer community.

Displayed on one of the walls in the We Rock headquarters on 22nd street, by North Davidson, is the organization's vision statement. It reads, "We are an inclusive nurture and creative space that empowers all voices through music and arts in order to create a more just and equitable society."

The inscription not only underlines the music aspect, the artistic medium We Rock's foundation was built upon,



The winners of 2024's Rock Roulette on stage at Free Range Brewing.

but also a hope that the generations going through the programs learn value for each other, breaking the barriers and expectations of sex, gender and class.

Part of the rebranding, replacing "Girls" with "We" was an initial first step to signaling to those gender-diverse in their care that it was safe to be there.

"We were talking about changing the name for a few years, because when we started, gender language wasn't where it is now, it changed really quickly," Baller said. "From, I'd say 2018 and on, we started having a lot of non-binary kids and a lot of trans youth that identified as he/him, but definitely still fit in the bucket of what the Girls Rock camps were founded on, like social justice."

Swider noted that the changes were not only present in the new faces, but in the returning ones as well. "Some of our youth started at [for example] maybe 10 years old," she said, "and by the time we changed our name, they were 16 or 17. Some kids had transitioned and changed, growing into their gender identity. And so, we wanted to make sure that they all felt welcome, and We Rock was a perfect name."

Another way the staff at We Rock has helped open up the conversation is by being the medium in bringing gender language to older generations, helping the parents of the teens being taught have a better understanding of the changes. "Teens are going to be confusing their parents forever about everything," Swider quipped, laughing as she did so. "We have workshops where the adults will start talking, and we're able to facilitate a conversation in order to help them understand their kids too, which is really cool, because you have some straight parents that say 'I don't understand pronouns, and I feel embarrassed to ask anybody, and my kid doesn't want to tell me, because they're a teenager, and we're like, 'We got you covered. Ask us anything.'"

The way We Rock brings social justice into their programming embraces elements both subtle and in plain view. For the latter, it is all about building with the community immediately in front of us. A giant step in that direction is being open and honest with the people in the programs the non-profit puts together.

"The social justice aspect is really just having real conversations with people ... doing something like joining a class and being a part of something that maybe you wouldn't have necessarily done," Baller explained. "Going and meeting new people is really hard, and so you're already in this kind of vulnerable place. But then, we introduce discussion questions that get people to talk about their past or their hopes, their dreams and then you really get to know people in a short amount of time through our camps and our programs."

"And so you build genuine, real relationships. It's not just like, 'Oh, I'm going to go play music with my bro.' It's like, 'Oh, I'm going to go play music with this group, and we're actually going to have a real connection.' And that's what we're all hungry for, a connection, and that's what We Rock is."

"Most everything is on a screen now, and the relationships are fake. We get lost in that, but our programs are like a hub for people and talking about things like issues that are pressing, especially now more than ever, and having space for those tough conversations, allowing everyone to be on the same level and get to know one another."

The organization seeks to open doors and create possibilities for their students and aims to fill the gaps in modern music today. On the local and regional levels, there are Charlotte favorites that came directly out of We Rock's programming, like Baller's band Hey Richard and the female-punk outfit Obsidian Femmes. Members of local music groups have also come in through classes and gatherings, whether to gain more connection to musicians like them or to even pass on their lessons, like Laura Staples of Mercury Dimes.

"For example, [there's a] gender gap in the music industry, and [that's one of our responses], just a safe place for girls to go play music together. Girls can be drummers too. Girls can write their own songs. The statistics in the music industry are still really low. That was a survey done in 2020. I keep thinking [that] only two percent of music producers are women. So that means, even if you write your own songs, you're always going through this filter of a man's perspective, which is just

not diverse."

Already in 2025, We Rock Charlotte is hitting the ground running with a full outline of where they'd like to take students this year. Currently starting now are the Rock N' Reel program and the Amplify! Workshops, both of which will go from January to May.

For Rock N' Reel, students ranging from the first grade and up will be working one-on-one with instructors to put together an original song, along with using the Logic Pro X application to make a music video for it. Students will also learn how to create a video storyboard, which will be used for producing the video they make, giving each participant a starting education in audio and music production.

Then, in the Amplify! Workshops, a free program that welcomes people of all ages, (each age bracket in their own individualized classes), applicants will get to learn a variety of skills as well as discuss topics based in collaboration and intersectionality. Swider and Baller laid out a preview of the Jan. 25 event for us, with the central musical element involved being Beat-Making.

Through the class session, participants will go through activities together involving both arts and social



Krystle Baller and staff help a student create a music video during Rock N' Reel.

justice aspects, all before splitting into groups where everyone will work as a team to accomplish a goal by the end of the class. Other activities will be included in the workshops, from set-building to stop-motion animation, all leading to the participants using what they had learned to create, a feature-length film, to be shown on a later announced date at the Independent Picture House.

Throughout the year, We Rock aims to be extremely involved in the city's community, teaching and sharpening music skills through programs like their kid and teen Rock Camps in July and "Rockstars: Femmes & Them." In 2025, the non-profit will also start putting on all-ages punk and metal shows in their newly renovated setup behind the organization's house. With both free and paid programs available, there's always something both fun and perspective-changing to experience from We Rock Charlotte.

For more information, visit their website at <https://www.werockclt.org/>.

Chicago then and now

Q-Music



by **Gregg Shapiro**
Qnotes Contributing Writer

Compared to other big cities, Chicago arrived late to the punk rock scene, but when it did, it was first embraced in gay bars such as The Greenleaf (which later became Oz) and La Mere Vipere. It was in these venues that bands such as the **Effigies** and **Verböten** first got their starts.

Praised by the late, great musician and audio engineer Steve Albini, the Effigies return with "Burned" (BFD), the band's first new album in 17 years, and the final release featuring vocals by the late lead singer John Kezdy, who died in a 2023 bicycling accident during the recording of "Burned." The Effigies driving, scorched sound, which has more in common with LA punk than NY punk (say Black Flag as opposed to the Ramones), is in full force on the album. The mood and view is unsurprisingly political, particularly given the age of the band members and what they've lived through. This comes through loud and clear on the songs "Incident on Lost Nation Road," "Manifesto," "Everything's Coming Off," "Johnny and Dan" and "Cede the City."

In addition to playing shows at La Mere Vipere, Verböten has other

connections to the LGBTQ community. Lead vocalist Tracey Bradford, who also happens to be the cousin of Dave Grohl (of Nirvana and Foo Fighters fame), is a queer woman. Guitarist and vocalist Jason Narducy, a longtime friend of the community, is known for recording and touring with queer music legend Bob Mould. Considering Narducy's collaboration with Mould, it's not surprising that some of the songs on Verböten's long-awaited self-titled debut album, on Inside Outside Records, have a sound reminiscent of Hüsker Dü. Of course, there's an art to sustaining this kind of musical blast, and the band members aren't as young as they were in the early 1980s, so they deserve kudos creating this record. Additionally, with age comes rage and wisdom, two things that the album has in abundance, as you can hear "Dark Things," "Bodily Autonomy," "Full Disruption," "No More Indecision," "Human Division," "Radiate" and "Conviction of Youth." This album could easily be the resistance soundtrack we need as Trump returns to power.

After the early days of the Effigies and Verböten, a lot occurred in the Chicago music scene, especially during the 1990s with the rise of huge acts such as Smashing Pumpkins, Liz Phair, Fall Out Boy and Wilco, as well as the comeback of Mavis Staples.

Chicago continues to be fertile ground



Effigies
Credit: cyatter@gmail.com

for new musical acts including **Dehd** and **Friko**. It's unclear if the members of Friko, led by Niko Kapetan and Bailey Minzenberg (who identifies as queer and uses they/them pronouns), ever listened to the Effigies or were aware of Verböten before making their debut album "Where We've Been, Where We Go from Here" (ATO), but they travel a similar punk rocking path on songs such as "Chemical," "Crashing Through" and "Crimson to Chrome." In other places, Friko makes some of the most unexpectedly lovely sounds, especially on "For Ella," "Until I'm with You Again" and "Cardinal."

If you didn't know better, the first time

you hear the song "Dog Days," the opening track on "Poetry" by Dehd (Fat Possum), you might think you were listening to a new song by queer band The Drums. But you'd be wrong. Of the Chicago bands included here, Dehd could be described as the most sonically accessible. The song "Mood Ring" (with the music video starring a couple of drag queens) continues to be in regular rotation Sirius XMU. From the subtle country punk of "Hard To Love" to the other worldly "Alien" to the heights of "Don't Look Down" to the cutting edge of "Knife," Dehd give listeners reasons to live, in spite of the current state of the world. ::

'When the Band Played On: The Life of Randy Shilts, America's Trailblazing Gay Journalist'

Out In Print



by **Terri Schlichenmeyer**
Qnotes Staff Writer

"When the Band Played On: The Life of Randy Shilts, America's Trailblazing Gay Journalist" by Michael G. Lee
c.2025, Chicago Review Press
\$30.00
282 pages

You spent most of your early career playing second fiddle.

But now you've got the baton, and a story to tell that people aren't going to want to hear, though it's essential that they face the music. They must know what's happening. As in the new book **'When the Band Played On'** by **Michael G. Lee**, this time, it's personal.

Born in 1951 in small-town Iowa, Randy Shilts was his alcoholic, abusive mother's third of six sons. Frustrated, drunk, she reportedly beat Shilts almost daily when he was young; she also called him a "sissy," which "seemed to follow Randy everywhere."

Perhaps because of the abuse, Shilts had

to "teach himself social graces," developing "adultlike impassiveness" and "biting sarcasm," traits that featured strongly as he matured and became a writer. He was exploring his sexuality then, learning "the subtleties of sexual communication," while

sleeping with women before fully coming out as gay to friends.

Nearing his twenty-first birthday, Shilts moved to Oregon to attend college and to "allow myself love." There, he became somewhat of an activist before leaving for San Francisco to fully pursue journalism, focusing on stories of gay life that were "mostly unknown to anyone outside of gay culture."

He would bounce between Oregon and California several times, though he never lost sight of his writing career and, through it, his activism. In both states, Shilts reported on gay life, until he was well-known to national readers and gay influencers. After San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk was assassinated, he was tapped to write Milk's biography.

By 1982, Shilts was in love, had a book under his belt, a radio gig, and a regular byline in a national publication reporting "on the GRID beat," an acronym later changed to AIDS. He was even under contract to write a second book.

But Shilts was careless. Just once, careless.

"In hindsight," says Lee, "... it was likely the night when Randy crossed the line, becoming more a part of the pandemic than just another worried bystander."

Perhaps not surprisingly, there are two distinct audiences for "When the

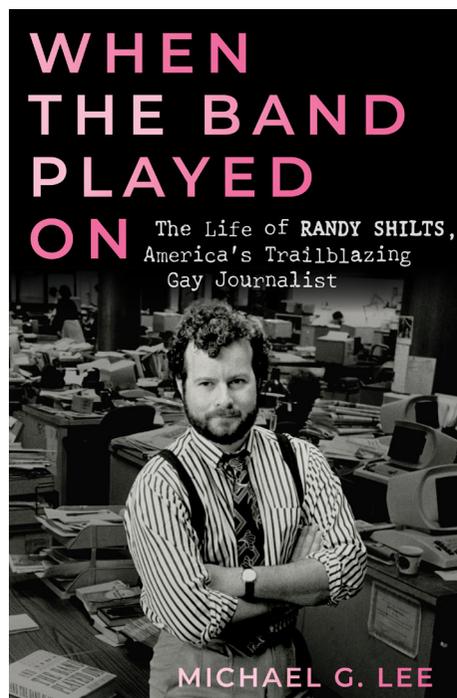


Michael G. Lee

Band Played On." One type of reader will remember the AIDS crisis and the seminal book about it. The other is too young to remember it, but needs to know Randy Shilts' place in its history.

The journey may be different, the result is the same: author Michael G. Lee tells a complicated, still-controversial story of Shilts and the book that made America pay attention, and it's edgy for modern eyes. Lee clearly shows why Shilts had fans and haters, why Shilts was who he was, and Lee keeps some mystery in the tale: Shilts had the knowledge to keep himself safe but he apparently didn't, and readers are left to wonder why. There's uncomfortable tension in that, and a lot of hypothetical thinking to be had.

For scholars of gay history, this is an essential book to read. Also, for anyone too young to remember AIDS as it was, "When the Band Played On" hits the right note. ::



Our People: Bethany Corrigan

LGBTQ activist shares thoughts on identity and community.



by L'Monique King
Qnotes Staff Writer

Bethany Corrigan is a DEI warrior with wavy black hair, piercing steel blue eyes and a luminous smile. With a master's degree in public health and a history of fighting for equality around the globe, queer LGBTQ advocate Corrigan has contributed much to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion worldwide, with a concentrated effort in the Carolinas. During this interview, *Qnotes* gained deeper insight into the identity and life's work of Corrigan, a Holiday Wish Foundation honoree for the organization's 2025 Community Impact Award.

L'Monique King: Where are you from originally?

Bethany Corrigan: South Carolina, right over the Buster Boyd bridge. I still live there. People often think I live in Charlotte because I do so much work here, but I'm actually a South Carolina resident.

LMK: What are your pronouns? How do you identify?

BC: My pronouns are they/them. I am nonbinary, femme and demi. In all relationships for me, it's about respect, how a person lives their lives, their energy, how they interact with others, what their priorities are and how they think.

LMK: Nonbinary femme? That sounds a little oxymoronic: How are you nonbinary but identifying as femme, when the connotation of femme is female associated?

BC: Because femme and masculine are nonbinary in and of themselves. And if we can accept that as a society, culturally we'll be so much better off. Language is power because it can provide valuable information. However, when we start to become by labels and adjectives that were once helpful to us, we are actually restricting our growth and it becomes harmful. Language is a tool – an ever-evolving tool. Remembering that is important.

LMK: In seeking greater clarity on another of your identifiers, can you explain what you mean when you say "demi?"

BC: To me, demi means that I am only able to enter into any type of relationship where there is a foundation of respect, trust and emotional bond first. There are no automatic connections.

LMK: Thank you for your explanation. On a more serious note, what did you have for breakfast today?

BC: <chuckles> I don't eat breakfast; I'm fueled by caffeine. I do like cereal though and generally eat it in the middle of the night. Sometimes I just shovel handfuls into my mouth. On rare occasions, I might have it [in a bowl] with oat milk.

LMK: Fruit Loops or Corn Flakes?
BC: Fruit loops, one hundred percent.

LMK: Is there anyone special in your life you might be having cereal with? Are you partnered?

BC: I am. I am married.

LMK: How long have you been married?

BC: Five years. Marriage was not always a priority for me. But the person I married is a social justice warrior and the best human you'll ever meet – who made the venture of marriage so worthwhile.

LMK: You mentioned your spouse being a social justice warrior. How do you make your livelihood?

BC: I am a public health gender specialist. I work with nonprofits, government entities and social equity systems to identify areas of program expansion, especially as it relates to marginalized communities being left out to planning and benefiting from those programs.

LMK: Any thoughts or concerns regarding the recent presidential election?

BC: My concerns are regarding the way our legislation is moving, regarding our voter rights. In Georgia and North Carolina, we're seeing a lot of redistricting happening and laws being passed that make it difficult for many groups of people to have their voices heard. That concerns me with any democracy. I'm also concerned about legislation that will harm queer people – especially trans people. The thing about civil rights movements is that people think we're fighting for a greater piece of pie that's not deserved – when in fact we're fighting for the right of all people to have pie. The civil rights movement is protective and fighting for all people.

LMK: When you're not fighting for equality or educating others on equity and inclusion, what do you do for fun?

BC: I'm a beekeeper. I love it. It's a matriarchal society. It's the most beautiful representation of a socialist society and leadership. The Queen takes the cues of what needs to be done based on what's happening in the hive itself. The workers tell her what needs to be done and she does it, she leads. It's really powerful. I've learned a lot about emotional regulation, community and adaptation within the context of evolving to meet the needs of the now while investing in the future.

LMK: How about self-care? Is there a go-to routine or practice for you?

BC: Beekeeping and being outside in the natural world, that's very healing for me.

LMK: If reincarnation is an actuality – what would you like to come back as in your next life?

BC: <Long thoughtful pause> A bird maybe. Being human is so emotionally taxing I'd love the freedom of being able to fly. As grateful as I am for my existence and the experiences I've had, if given the



Bethany Corrigan takes a stand for the rights of the marginalized.
CREDIT: Adam Cannavo

opportunity to have a [break] in being human I would appreciate that opportunity.

LMK: Book or movie?

BC: Book. I don't have the attention span to sit through a whole movie. It drives people crazy. I haven't seen a movie in a theater in about seven years. I haven't even seen "Wicked" yet, though I loved the play – but the idea of sitting through a three hour movie – I just can't. And I talk. I was on a date once and they moved two rows back because I wouldn't stop talking.

LMK: Share another fact most folks might be surprised to know and learn about you.

BC: I like to ride motorcycles. I own a Honda Rebel, it's cherry red and not too big. Riding my motorcycle or a horse is probably the closest thing to flying for me.

LMK: Sounds cool and for some reason not surprising that you're finding freedom and comfort in Rebel. We also have an additional fun fact many may not know about, your upcoming Holiday Wish Foundation award. How'd you feel

learning that you would be a recipient of this year's Community Impact Award?

BC: I was so touched. I am very humbled and honored. I think a lot of us have the same gut reaction of, gosh there must be 30,000 more deserving people than me. So many people are fighting for our causes to the extent that we will never know. And that's the thing about impactful relationships, you don't always know the impact you've had on another person. If there's one thing we should always strive to do, it is be a person in whose presence others can exist as their authentic self.

LMK: What is Bethany doing 20 years from now?

BC: I would love to say that I've put myself out of business, but I would hope that I'm continuing my contribution to the fight – but hopefully in a more progressive state/world. I really hope that in my lifetime there are significant markers of successful progress.

LMK: Is there a thought or word of advice you'd like to leave our readers with, in closing?

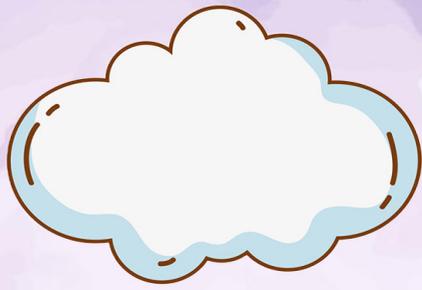
BC: There is no right way to be you. ::

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