

**Our democracy is at risk!
If we are complacent it will FALL**

What to do when you need a good handyman



**Butterfly House
opens with a crowd
of supporters**
- pg 13

**Mecklenburg
County needs us
to cast our votes**
- pg 7





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Graphic Design by Danny A. Mannanov
Photographer: Adobe Stock

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
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Printed on recycled paper.

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



Our People: Miles Perry

Miles Perry has his hands in many things LGBTQ+ and health and wellness-related. Originally from Rochester New York, he's been a CLT resident for three years. In that time, he's already made a mark on our community as the youngest Charlotte Black Pride board member (he's only 27) and organizer and a community public health worker.

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Out on Film: Writer and director discuss 'Honey Don't'

Non-traditional married couple Ethan Coen and Tricia Cooke (check out their story on google – she identifies as queer) are on a roll with the queer noir film "Honey Don't!" The second installment in co-writer/director Coen and co-writer Cooke's lesbian trilogy, following 2024's "Drive-Away Dolls," "Honey Don't" is dark and comedic.



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The People speak on Social Media



Trump's answer to numbers he doesn't like: Change them or throw them away

From D.C. crime rates to census collection to labor statistics, the administration has suppressed inconvenient data and conjured inaccurate statistics to bolster policy objectives.

Yesterday at 12:08 p.m. EDT

11 min 1,624



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Michael Whatley will send us backwards if elected

The loyal Trump RNC chairman announced his U.S. Senate campaign in July



by Taylor Heeden Larkins
Qnotes Staff Writer

When U.S. Senator Thom Tillis (R-NC) announced he wouldn't seek reelection, some of the familiar faces in North Carolina politics started to throw their hats into the race. Most notably, former Gov. Roy Cooper announced his bid for Tillis' seat on July 28 — sparking excitement for Democrats, reigniting hope for obtaining the same seat they last secured in 2008 with Kay Hagan.



Trump endorsed candidate for senate Michael Whatley.
CREDIT: Screen Capture

Republicans made their own announcement just three days after Cooper's when Republican National Convention Chairman Michael Whatley came out with his own U.S. Senate campaign with the intention of keeping Tillis' seat red. Whatley, though versed in the behind-the-scenes aspect of politicking, has never sought public office until now.

President Donald Trump has already thrown his endorsement behind Whatley, the same man Trump tapped to be the chair of the RNC in 2024.

"Mike would make an unbelievable Senator from North Carolina," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "He is fantastic at everything he does, and he was certainly great at the RNC where, in the Presidential Election, we won every Swing State, the Popular Vote, and the Electoral College by a landslide!"

So who is this new pawn in the MAGA movement's goal to undermine American values and democratic systems? Who is Michael Whatley?

Qnotes has examined Whatley's past involvements in North Carolina politics, ranging from volunteering on Sen. Jesse Helms' reelection campaign in high school to serving as chief of staff to former North

Carolina Sen. Elizabeth Dole. Here's what we uncovered.

A more than questionable history

Originally from Watauga County, Whatley's introduction to the North Carolina political scene began when he was a sophomore in high school and volunteered on then-Sen. Jesse Helms' reelection campaign in 1984. Helms is infamous for his pro-segregation and anti-LGBTQ+ policy stances, in addition to his statement on one of North Carolina's oldest cities, "why build a zoo when we can just put up a fence around Chapel Hill."

Additionally, Helms opposed busing, the Civil Rights Act, and enforcement of the Voting Rights Act. He called the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "the single most dangerous piece of legislation ever introduced in the Congress," and sponsored legislation to either extend it to the entire country or scrap it altogether. In 1982, two years before Whatley volunteered for the campaign, Helms voted against the extension of the Voting Rights Act.

Helms' view on the LGBTQ+ community was no better: during the height of the AIDS epidemic, he fought to cut funding for HIV/AIDS research and treatment, saying the disease resulted from "unnatural" and "disgusting" homosexual behavior. He also held up the appointment of lesbian Roberta Achtenberg to assistant secretary

responsible for initiating the vote recount in Florida for former President George W. Bush. He then worked in the U.S. Energy Department during Bush's administration, before moving to become State Senator Elizabeth Dole's chief of staff.

Whatley and his leader, Trump

Whatley has been a Trump supporter since day one, first vocalizing his support for the real estate mogul turned establishment politician all the way back in 2016. It was during the first Trump administration Whatley was named the chair of the North Carolina Republican Party after outgoing chair, Robin Hayes, faced bribery charges following a massive corruption scandal (Hayes was pardoned by Trump in 2021 prior to President Joe Biden's inauguration).

Following the 2020 election, Whatley was one of the loudest voices crying, "stolen election" after Trump lost to Biden. He urged state election officials to call the statewide presidential election results, even though the State Board of Elections doesn't call a winner in any election.

Whatley sought to undermine North Carolina elections by launching an Election Integrity Committee under the guise of preventing voter fraud in the Tar Heel state. Undermining democracy even further, it was under Whatley's leadership the NC

Republican Party moved to censor former U.S. Senator Richard Burr for voting to convict Trump in his second impeachment trial for inciting the Jan. 6 insurrection. He was still in the position when the party moved to censor Tillis for working across the aisle on policy involving same-sex marriage and gun laws following the mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas, in 2022.



Michael Whatley's estimable past includes volunteering for Sen. Jesse Helms' reelection campaign and serving as chief of staff to former Sen. Elizabeth Dole.
CREDIT: Facebook

these irregularities, but it was thrown out by a judge later.

The North Carolina sellout

Whatley's political history is enough to make eyebrows raise in concern — whether it be from his introduction into politics backing one of America's most notorious racist, homophobic and bigoted Senators to allegedly undermining the chair election in North Carolina's Republican Party to secure his seat again.

If elected to represent North Carolina on Capitol Hill, Michael Whatley will sell out North Carolina to Trump and his administration. If this happens, Whatley and the rest of Trump's allies will be known for their cowardice and their inability to stand up to an administration set on turning the United States

over to the clutches of authoritarianism, effectively erasing the work of all of the freedom fighters before us.

It's up to the people of North Carolina to ensure our state is on the right side of American history. Regardless of party affiliation, North Carolinians need to take the stand to ensure corrupt, morally questionable leaders like Whatley never see the seats they seek. It's time to make North Carolina a state fighting for the American Dream, where everyone has a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. ::



of the Department of Housing and Urban Development during the early years of the Clinton administration because, "she's a damn lesbian," he said, adding "she's not your garden-variety lesbian. She's a militant-activist-mean lesbian."

After volunteering on Helms' campaign at a young age, Whatley studied history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and later got his master's degree in religion at Wake Forest University. He then worked as a federal law clerk in Charlotte, and in 2000, Whatley was a part of the team

Republican Party moved to censor former U.S. Senator Richard Burr for voting to convict Trump in his second impeachment trial for inciting the Jan. 6 insurrection. He was still in the position when the party moved to censor Tillis for working across the aisle on policy involving same-sex marriage and gun laws following the mass shooting in Uvalde, Texas, in 2022.

The former NC Republican Party chair also has a knack for skirting around the rules, falling right in line along with his fellow MAGA minions. In summer 2023,

How will the Carolinas and the country fare in a renewed marriage equality struggle?

Will the Supreme Court decline to hear the case entirely, or kick responsibility to the states?



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

Since the announcement hit mainstream media the morning of Aug. 11 that a case requesting the overturn of *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015, many in the LGBTQ+ community are reacting with shock that marriage equality could be reversed. Others feel like the writing on the wall has been there since Donald Trump was elected to a second term in the White House.

Technically, Trump is not involved in this case, although he has expressed support for Kim Davis's rights and fellow Republicans did trot her out during a 2015 campaign rally following her release from jail.

While the Biden era-established Respect for Marriage Act (RMA) provides federal recognition for same-sex and interracial marriages, it does not prevent the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) from potentially overturning the *Obergefell v. Hodges* decision that legalized same-sex marriage nationwide.

What could happen?

RMA ensures that all states recognize marriages legally performed elsewhere, but it never established a national, constitutional right to same-sex marriage. So if *Obergefell* is overturned, states could potentially ban same-sex marriage, though the Respect for Marriage Act would still require them to recognize existing marriages performed in other states. Most political pundits and 24-hour news talking heads are theorizing the court will aim for the "let the states decide" routine, which would likely result in a patchwork quilt of some 30-plus states enacting constitutional amendments that remain on the books.

A little history

A former Rowan County Clerk in Kentucky, Kim Davis, refused to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples following the *Obergefell* ruling, citing her religious beliefs. Federal Court Judge David Bunning held Davis in contempt of court for refusing to comply with the court's order to issue licenses, leading to her incarceration for six days.

She was sued by same-sex couples whom she denied licenses to - David Moore and David Ermold - and a federal



jury awarded damages of \$100,000 to the couple, finding Davis liable for violating their constitutional rights. She was also ordered to pay \$260,104 in attorney's fees and expenses to the couples' lawyers. Davis and her legal team, Liberty Counsel, are appealing these rulings and continue to challenge the constitutionality of *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

How would the overturning of *Obergefell* impact the Carolinas?

Combined, the Carolinas have an estimated 28,000 same-sex married couples. No one will suddenly become unmarried, but both North Carolina and South Carolina have constitutional amendments that would likely be reinstated in the event *Obergefell v. Hodges*

is overturned. If SCOTUS opts to let states decide the fate of same-sex couples without a specific overturn, both North Carolina and our neighbor to the south - largely controlled by conservative Republican factions - will probably see a return to pre-*Obergefell* days.

However, **RMA mandates that all states, including North Carolina and South Carolina**, continue to recognize all same-sex and interracial marriages performed before any potential overturn *and after*, which take place in a state that recognized or recognizes marriage equality. This also includes a decision not to overturn and a return-to-the-states action.

For any future same-sex marriages, if the court agrees to hear the case and takes any of the aforementioned actions, such states and territories as California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Hawaii, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington and Wisconsin, which do not have any restrictions on same-sex marriage, will probably be prepared to accommodate a new couple with a marriage certificate that would be recognized across the nation. ::

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LGBTQ+ Democrats of Mecklenburg County announce their 2025 scorecard

As we gear up for the upcoming 2025 Municipal Elections, the LGBTQ+ Democrats of Mecklenburg County are excited to announce the results of their 2025 scorecard.

This year they received a record 53 responses from 56 Democratic candidates running for office across Mecklenburg County.

After a thorough review the organization has identified 24 candidates running for office in every city and town in Mecklenburg County.

What makes the candidate viable? Knowing they will be allies and advocates for our community if elected and that they will stand up to Republican attacks against our community.

Here's a list of candidates deemed as excellent for the 2025 scorecard. Keep in mind early voting for the Charlotte primary starts Aug. 21; and the primary election is held Sept. 9. Early voting for the general election starts Oct. 16, with the general election to be held Nov. 4.

CHARLOTTE MAYOR

Vi Lyles

CITY COUNCIL AT LARGE CANDIDATES

Dimple Ajmera
James Mitchell
Lawana Mayfield
Namrata Yadav

CITY COUNCIL CANDIDATES BY DISTRICT

Danté Anderson, District 1
Joi Mayo, District 3
Will Russell, District 4
Juan Diego "JD" Mazuera Arias, District 5
Marjorie Molina, District 5
Kimberly Owens, District 6

SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES BY DISTRICT

Melissa Easley, District 1
Dee Rankin, District 3
Stephanie Sneed, District 4
Cynthia Stone, District 5
Anna London, District 6



ADDITIONAL MECKLENBURG COUNTY TOWN ELECTIONS

Offices of Mayor

Kenny Campbell, Cornelius
Rusty Knox, Davidson
Christy Clark, Huntersville
Amelia Stinson-Wesley, Pineville

Offices of Commissioner

Autumn Rierson Michael, Davidson
Scott Coronet, Huntersville
Brian Hacker, Matthews
Patrick O'Brien, Mint Hill

If you'd like to socialize and network with

fellow LGBTQ+ Democrats and candidates, don't miss out on the following social events coming up around Mecklenburg County.

UPCOMING SCORECARD SOCIAL EVENTS

Board of Education Scorecard Social: Sept. 4, 6-8 p.m. at LGBTQ+ Chamber, 2838 Queen City Drive in Charlotte.

North Meck Scorecard Social: Sept. 17, 7-9 p.m. at Brooklyn South at 19400 Jetton Road, # 201 in Cornelius.

South Meck Scorecard Social: Oct. 1, 7-9 p.m. at Empire Pizza at 7024 Brighton Park Drive, in Charlotte. ::

— Qnotes Staff

Atrium cuts healthcare for trans youth, ENC calls for action

As reported by the Charlotte based Corporation for Public Broadcasting-funded radio station WFAE in early July, Atrium Healthcare told parents of patients they would no longer provide gender-affirming health services for minors. The story initially came to light when the parents of a transgender child in Huntersville told reporters an Atrium physician reached out directly to inform them gender care for youth would cease by the end of the month.



The decision is not entirely unexpected, although it was not known the Healthcare system would end services all together.

North Carolina banned gender transitioning medical treatment for non-adult patients in 2023, but did allow those who began treatment before the law was passed to continue with their care.

According to the WFAE report, the parents of a teen transgender boy who was receiving hormone blockers and testosterone received a call directly from a physician who made it clear the healthcare would be coming to an end.

"I got the call ... from our doctor, who made a personal call to several of her patients to warn them and say, '... by the end of July, I'm not going to be able to treat your kid,' Amanda Dumas told writer and reporter Julian Berger.

At that time Josh and Amanda Dumas found another doctor to treat their child, but Atrium remained tight-lipped.

Since then, Atrium's parent company Advocate Health announced the decision to cease healthcare options for transgender individuals under the age of 19. In a press statement, the company said the following: "... this new policy allows our hospitals,

clinics and pharmacies to continue caring for all patients' health needs in the changing federal environment."

EqualityNC (ENC) announced a Call-Out Day against Atrium Health for the policy, which became effective Aug. 4.

From their announcement: "[This] new policy will stop all gender affirming medical care for [transgender] youth under 19. This is not a clinical decision. This policy change is to comply with Trump's illegal executive order and protect Atrium's financial interests."

In an interview with WCCB, Dr. Holly Savoy with Charlotte Trans Health says patients are concerned about their future and well being. "Gender affirming care technically includes a lot of things. It can include hormone replacement for a cisgender woman. It can include testosterone placement. It can include hair transplants..."

Concerned parties joined in on the organizing video conference on Aug. 19 at 6 p.m. to help create call scripts and discuss various strategies. ::

— David Aaron Moore

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Mecklenburg County municipal elections

LGBTQ+ Democrats Chair Jeremy Golden talks about candidates, the importance of the election and more



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

Jeremy Golden is the LGBTQ+ Democrats of Mecklenburg County Chair. He's also currently serving as Chair of Precinct 74 and as the Treasurer of the Young Democrats of Mecklenburg County.

A native of Mecklenburg County, he actively supports Democratic causes at all times and is emphatic about the importance of Charlotte's upcoming municipal elections.



LGBTQ+ Democrats of Mecklenburg County Chair Jeremy Golden.
CREDIT: Facebook

Voters across Mecklenburg County will fill mayoral and city/town council seats for each of its municipalities. The general election is scheduled for Nov. 4, 2025, and some municipalities, including Charlotte, have scheduled primary elections for Sept. 9, 2025.

Charlotte's election is on a partisan basis, with a primary on Sept. 9 and the general election on Nov. 4.

Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews and Mint Hill town offices are nonpartisan and will be on the ballot for the Nov. 4 general election. They include offices for mayor, board of commissioner and town council.

We've all done it at some point or another in our lifetime: we've skipped out on mid-term elections and our local municipal elections, paying attention to the presidential elections. It's an easy mistake to make and even understandable in many ways. Especially when you're looking at something like a presidential election, which has massive financing from national and international sources. City, county and town candidates simply don't have the resources to put their plans in your face with every break in programming on television, radio or social media.

For those of us residing in the aforementioned city and towns, it doesn't mean the elections are any less important. Especially in our community and other minority communities.

"So many of the protections that we

have in Mecklenburg County, for LGBTQ folks, do come from the municipal government," Golden explains. "The NDO that was signed by Mayor Lyles and supported by the city council just a few years ago. Obviously they've not come from the federal government, and really came once the state took their foot off our throat with regard to NDOs (non discrimination ordinances) and that wouldn't have happened if we didn't have municipal leaders who were willing to take that step.

"So many of the rights we have in general and some of the services we have in general as queer people come from municipal elections and come from municipal leaders, so it's imperative that we always keep our eye on who gets elected locally."

It's easy to dismiss local elections with the old adage "what difference will my one vote matter?" It does matter. Take that and multiply it several times over with other apathetic voters and you'll see just how much all of our votes matter.

David Aaron Moore: What are some of the races voters in our community really need to pay attention to?

Jeremy Golden: "I've got my eye on so many different races going on this year. I mean, if we don't keep our eye on the ball, and we don't show up, we could lose a school board seat to a rag-

ing homophobe in **North Meck**, named **Bill Fountain**. The incumbent running is **Melissa Easley**, and it's quite the juxtaposition, given that Melissa is one of our excellent Board of Ed candidates, and is also, you know, for full disclosure on our board, and I am also managing her campaign, for which is why neither one of us were involved in her vote. So you've got someone like Melissa, who's always been a staunch supporter of the LGBTQ+ community and a member of it. And then you've got Bill Fountain, who goes to town board meetings and says that all gay people are mentally ill. North Meck has a real choice there, and I hope that queer people show up and we can keep [candidates like Fountain] out of the Board of Ed.



DAM: What about some of the Metro area towns?

JG: We've got a race for town commission in **Matthews**, where you have a terrific ally running for town commission named **Brian Hacker**, who never misses an opportunity to let the queer community know he supports us and that he wants to see a welcoming and inclusive Matthews. Also in Matthews itself, you've got **Mayor John Higdon**, who is a pragmatic, good mayor, running

against another raging homophobe in **Leon Threatt**.

DAM: And in Charlotte, which is a pretty strong supporter for Democratic ideals, tell us your thoughts.

JG: We've got a city council at large race for **LaWana Mayfield**, running for re-election. She was the first out [elected] member of the city council, and she spearheads a lot of movement on social rights when it comes to the city of Charlotte. She's always been out there, supporting the community, and it's critical that we send her back, so that we can continue to have that kind of support. Luckily, in the city of Charlotte, there aren't a lot of opportunities for government power to change hands, because Republicans do not have a lot of power in the city of Charlotte.

DAM: Why is the LGBTQ+ Democratic Scorecard important?

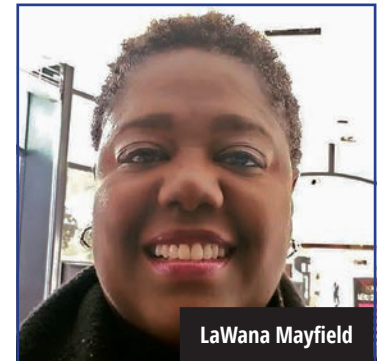
JG: I think that what we do with our scorecard is remind people that not all Democrats are alike when it comes to LGBTQ rights, and that's why we highlight the ones that we feel are genuinely the strongest advocates. And so across the board, in every municipality, we have an opportunity to elect those advocates and elect them at a time when the LGBTQ community is seen as "on the chopping block" as part of the Democratic coalition, and this [is] an amazing opportunity to prove that we're not; and that we can elect leaders who don't support that view.

DAM: Can you share a few thoughts about specific candidates from our community?

JG: Of course. There's **LaWana Mayfield** running. We've got **Scott Cornet** running to be on the Huntersville town commission. He's an openly gay man. He's running to be one of the new members, and he's a terrific candidate. I've gotten the opportunity to spend time with him, and he's been a supporter of the NDO in Huntersville. Hopefully, if he's elected, that may help us with our chances of getting a non discrimination ordinance passed in the next term. **Patrick O'Brien** is an LGBTQ candidate running down in **Mint Hill**, and he has been involved in the community here for a long time as part of the Charlotte Gay Men's Chorus [and] the Democratic Party as well. And he's very concerned with the attacks on marginalized communities throughout the country. He wants to represent the people in Mint Hill who need to have a voice." So he's a terrific candidate running in Mint Hill. Our scorecard highlighted **JD Mazuera Arias** who - would be the first Hispanic member of the Charlotte City Council, if elected. He's a member of the LGBTQ community and would be a great advocate. So would **Marjorie Molina** - she's an exceptional ally. ::

Author's Note: Molina prevented an attempt to overturn Charlotte's non-discrimination ordinance (NDO).

Check out the LGBTQ+ Mecklenburg County Democrats Scorecard here: <https://qnotesCarolinas.com/lgbtq-democrats-mecklenburg-2025-election-scorecard/>



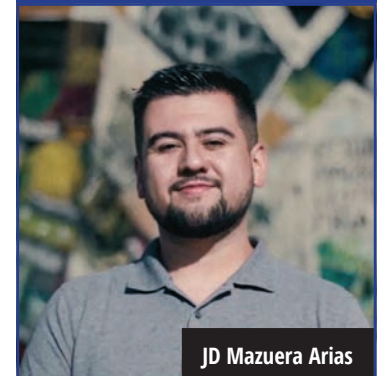
LaWana Mayfield



Scott Cornet



Patrick O'Brien



JD Mazuera Arias



Marjorie Molina

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Social, health and help resources for seniors in our community

Many offer LGBTQ+ specific resources, while others provide assistance for all seniors



by David Aaron Moore
Qnotes Staff Writer

LGBTQ+ senior services are vital throughout our state and country. Elder individuals in our communities face higher risks of social isolation, discrimination and lack of culturally competent care in their later years, often due to a lifetime of societal stigma. These services provide safe, inclusive environments, affirm their identities, help build crucial support networks, address unique health and social needs, ensure dignity and well-being.

While this list is extensive, we'd appreciate any other organizations offering services for LGBTQ+ seniors not included here. It does include information for services such as health, housing, and social groups.

Living a life that spans decades is a gift. If we're lucky, we'll all live a long and rich life and hopefully be able to take advantage of services like these and included in our list below, and more.

NATIONAL

AARP LGBTQ+ Resources

News, resources, information
<https://www.aarp.org/voices/lgbtq/>

SAGE - Services and Advocacy for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Elders
<https://www.sageusa.org/>

REGIONAL

LGBT Center of Raleigh
Established to advocate for and reach out to members of the LGBTQ+ community. Programming available to assist with a variety of issues, including health care, legal problems, housing and inter-generational relationships. The center also provides social activities.
<https://www.lgbtcenterofraleigh.com/>

Prime Timers
Social, educational and recreational activities for mature men ages 21 and up. The organization, a chapter of Prime Timers World Wide, acts on issues concerning the LGBT population of all ages. Their schedules regularly include monthly meetings and social activities.

Charlotte Raleigh, Durham and Chapel Hill Asheville
<https://theprimetimerswww.com/>
<https://theprimetimerswww.org/RDUCH/>
<https://chapters.theprimetimerswww.com/asheville/>

CHARLOTTE METRO AREA RESOURCES

Anson County Senior Services
<https://www.co.anson.nc.us/170/Senior-Services>

Cabarrus County Active Living
<https://www.cabarruscounty.us/Government/Departments/Active-Living-and-Parks/Active-Living-Facilities>

Charlotte-Mecklenburg/Centralina Agency on Aging
<https://centralinaaging.org>

Cleveland County Department of Social Services
<https://www.clevelandcounty.com/main/>

Gaston County Department of Social Services
<https://www.clevelandcounty.com/main/>

Iredell County Council on Aging
<https://www.iredellcoa.org/>

Lancaster County Council on Aging
<https://www.lancastercoa.org/senior-centers-group-dining>

Lincoln County Senior Services Department
<https://www.lincolncountync.gov/134/Senior-Services>

Rowan County Senior Center and Services
<https://www.rowancountync.gov/249/Senior-Services>

Stanly County Senior Services
<https://www.stanlycountync.gov/271/Services>

Union County Council on Aging
<https://coaunion.org/>

York County SC Council on Aging
<https://www.yccoa.com/>

WELCOMING & AFFIRMING HOUSING IN NORTH CAROLINA

Carol Woods Retirement Community, Chapel Hill
<https://www.carolwoods.org/>

Aldersgate Charlotte
<https://aldersgateliving.org/>

Village Hearth, Durham
<https://www.villagehearthcohousing.com/>

Grace Ridge Retirement Community
<https://www.graceridge.org/>

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Charlotte Trans Health
<https://charlottetranshealth.org/>

Rosedale Health & Wellness
<https://myrosedalehealth.com/>

Thriveworks
<https://thriveworks.com/>

This list is dedicated to the memory of Dan Van Mourik, 1948-2022. Read about his life and accomplishments on our website here:
<https://qnotescarolinas.com/remembering-dan-van-morik-1948-2022/>

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Charlotte leaders recognized at 2025 Gold Tie Gayla

Delta Phi Upsilon will honor community champions advancing global health, Black heritage, LGBTQ+ allyship and education



by Liz Schob
Qnotes Staff Writer

The Delta Phi Upsilon Fraternity will present its 2025 Gold Tie Gayla on Friday, Aug. 29, at 7:30 p.m. at the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture in Charlotte. Known as one of the fraternity's premier events in Charlotte, the Gold Tie Gayla combines elegance with purpose, bringing together leaders, advocates and supporters for an evening of recognition and celebration. This year's program will spotlight Charlotte Champions whose contributions exemplify the fraternity's values of service, advocacy, and excellence. Honorees will be recognized for work spanning LGBTQ+ advocacy, Black cultural heritage, global health, education and allyship.

Bishop Tonyia Rawls will receive the Political Empowerment Award for her pioneering work in social justice and inclusive faith leadership. She founded the Freedom Center for Social Justice in 2009, building an organization that advances equity through programs supporting trans individuals, young people, communities of color and sexual minorities. Rawls also established Unity Fellowship Church Charlotte and later Sacred Souls United Church of Christ. Both have become vital spiritual homes for LGBTQ+ people of faith seeking affirmation and belonging. Through her vision, she has combined ministry with activism, demonstrating how advocacy, pastoral care, and community organizing can position faith communities at the heart of justice movements and empower marginalized groups toward lasting social transformation.

J. Donte Prayer will be honored with the Global Awareness Award for his leadership in health equity. A native of Greenville, N.C. now based in Charlotte, he directs national HIV strategies as Program Manager at The Center for Black Health & Equity. He also founded R.O.L.E. Models, which blends culture, fashion and public



Tonyia Rawls



J. Donte Prayer



health to mentor youth. His national work includes collaborations with the CDC, the White House Office of National AIDS Policy and the HIV Prevention Trials Network. His honors include the Charlotte Pride Harvey Milk Award, the Community Catalyst Speak Up for Better Health Award and the Freedom Center Iconic Award.

Jermaine Nakia Lee will be recognized with the History & Heritage Award for his contributions to arts and culture. A playwright, songwriter, and educator, his musicals "For the Love of Harlem" and "A Walk in My Shoes" earned national tours and critical acclaim. As Education & Outreach Director at Brand New Sheriff Productions, Charlotte's only Black repertory theatre, he shapes future artists and audiences.

A Kennedy Center Master Teaching Artist, Lee is also a co-founder of Charlotte Black Pride, SC Black Pride and Triangle Black Pride, while leading initiatives such as POOR NO MORE and KUUMBA Academy.



Jermaine Nakia Lee



Johnnathan Wilson

His achievements include the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Medallion Award, recognition as Person of the Year by Qnotes, and the inaugural Arts & Science Council Founder's Grant.

Johnnathan Wilson will be honored with the Health Awareness Award for his dedication to public health and community wellness. A Charlotte native, he is a leader in HIV advocacy through his role as Health Program Supervisor at Mecklenburg County and as former Director of Outreach at RAIN, a local HIV service organization. In both positions, Wilson has combined problem-solving with hands-on engagement, advancing awareness and access to resources for those most impacted by HIV.

Earl C. Martin Jr., MSW, LCSW, will receive the Education Award for his dedication to healing and empowerment. A licensed therapist and a podcaster, Martin owns Innate Virtue Counseling, PLLC, where his trauma-informed care addresses anxiety, intimate partner violence and boundary setting. He is also the creator of 26 Affirmations for Boys of Color, a tool for building confidence and resilience. A graduate of Winthrop University, his work

highlights the intersections of LGBTQ+ identity, racial stress and trauma, offering pathways to healthier lives.

Cameron Pruette will be recognized with the Ally Award for his commitment to solidarity and justice. As Executive Director of the Freedom Center for Social Justice, he champions racial equity and LGBTQ+ liberation, ensuring that Black and Brown communities remain central in advocacy efforts. His leadership emphasizes accountability and action. Pruette and his husband, Xzaviar Boston-Pruette, live in Charlotte, where they continue to strengthen community ties and amplify marginalized voices.

Charlotte Black Pride will receive the Organization Award for its commitment to uplifting LGBTQ+ people of color. Established as a volunteer-driven nonprofit, its mission centers on fostering pride in the Black LGBTQ+ community, while embracing spirituality, social awareness and diversity in the broader LGBTQ+ spectrum. The organization works to strengthen hearts, minds and spirits, pairing community celebration with advocacy and a drive for lasting change.

The Delta Phi Upsilon Fraternity Gold Tie Gayla will be more than an evening of recognition. It will celebrate resilience, creativity and leadership that affirms the fraternity's mission to honor community builders and inspire future generations. :

Tickets are available now at <https://bit.ly/45thIUz>



Cameron Pruette



Earl C. Martin Jr

Finding trusted home improvement help in the Charlotte area

The Queen City and surrounding metro area offer LGBTQ+ and allied professionals ready to help



by Wendy Lyons
Qnotes Staff Writer

Have you ever needed a good, reliable handyman and couldn't find one? Charlotte and its surrounding communities from Gastonia to Concord, Monroe and others are buzzing with construction and home improvement energy. Whether you're upgrading your kitchen, refreshing your lawn, expanding your patio deck, organizing your closet or finally tackling that bathroom remodel, finding the right contractor can make all the difference. But for LGBTQ+ homeowners, the search isn't just about skill, it's about safety, respect, and inclusion.

"I can Google and ask ChatGPT for ten painters in five minutes, but how do I know which one will treat me with dignity?" That's a valid point of contention for an individual in the LGBTQ+ community.

"When my spouse and I searched for a plumber, we wanted more than a fair price. We wanted someone who wouldn't judge us when we opened the door together." Yet another apprehension voiced by a married gay male couple.

Both concerns highlight a challenge many queer homeowners know well. It's a challenge finding not just good work, but good people.

Fortunately, resources like Everywhere Is Queer, Angi (formerly Angie's List), and the Carolinas LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce Member Directory are helping queer residents connect with affirming professionals who bring both expertise and empathy to the job. The Carolinas LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce is a powerful ally for queer homeowners. Their Member Center Directory features vetted businesses committed to diversity, equity and inclusion.

These businesses are not just skilled, they are part of a movement to make home improvement more inclusive, one project at a time. "I found my landscaper through the Chamber's directory," says a homeowner in Gastonia. "They were professional, kind and even asked about pronouns during our first meeting. It made me feel seen." Stories like Jordan's are becoming more common as awareness grows and directories expand. Whether you're hiring a plumber or planning a full remodel, you don't have to settle for anything less than respect.



TIPS FOR FINDING TRUSTWORTHY CONTRACTORS

Before diving into the list of affirming professionals, here are some smart strategies to make sure your next hire is the right one:



Check out our list below for help with plumbing, electrical and more.

Ask about inclusivity – don't be shy! Ask if the contractor has worked with LGBTQ+ clients before or if they're listed in queer-friendly directories. Their response will tell you a lot.

Check Verified Reviews – Sites like Angi and Yelp offer detailed customer feedback. Look for mentions of professionalism, communication and respect.

Use LGBTQ+ Directories – Platforms like the Carolinas LGBTQ+ Chamber Member Center, *GayPages.com* and the Everywhere Is Queer app are goldmines for affirming businesses.

Get Multiple Quotes – Compare pricing, timelines and attitudes. A respectful consultation is just as important as a fair price.

Trust Your Gut – If something feels off in the language, tone or behavior, don't ignore it. You deserve to feel safe and respected.

AFFIRMING HOME IMPROVEMENT SERVICES IN CHARLOTTE

Here's our curated list of affirming professionals across popular categories, sourced from trusted directories and community recommendations:

1. Electrical

Sheridan Mechanical Contracting Company
Mecklenburg County, (704) 641-4173
<http://www.sheridanmechanical.com/>
Electrical repairs, air duct cleaning and instant hot water heater installation.

2. Home Renovations

Boomtown Renovations
Charlotte, N.C., (704) 770-7930
<https://www.instagram.com/boomtownrenovations>
Home renovations, tile work, trim, crown molding, interior painting, general handyman, carpentry, and more.

A&R General Handyman aka AHR Handymen

Charlotte, N.C. (704) 232-2151
<https://argeneralhandyman.com/>
Handyman services, carpentry, custom wood creations, home improvements and renovations.

Two Chicks Homes
Davidson, N.C., (704) 860-9806
<https://www.twochickshomes.com>
Specializes in additions, kitchens, bathrooms, full home renovations and much more.

3. HVAC

McClintock Heating and Cooling
Mecklenburg County, (704) 321-5207

<https://www.mcclintockhvac.com>
Proudly serving the LGBTQ Communities of Matthews, N.C. and the greater Charlotte area with HVAC repair, maintenance, and installation.

4. Painting

Avid Painting & Home Remodeling
Charlotte, N.C., (704) 780-2005
<https://www.avidpaintingllc.com/>
Interior Design, Painting, Remodeling, etc.

Your home is your haven and every upgrade should reflect your values. In Charlotte and beyond, homeowners now have more tools than ever to find trusted help that honors their identity. So go ahead and paint that accent wall, plant that organic garden, gut that kitchen and bathroom. Get the right team behind you and your project or home makeover can be as vibrant, beautiful, and affirming as you are.

READY TO GET STARTED?

EXPLORE THESE AFFIRMING RESOURCES:

Everywhere Is Queer <https://www.everywhereisqueer.com/>
Carolinas LGBTQ+ Chamber Member Directory <https://www.clgbtcc.org/>
Angi's LGBTQ+ Friendly Listings <https://www.angi.com/>
GayPages.com <https://www.gaypages.com/> ::



HVAC repair during the summer months can be costly. Be sure to vet your contractors with care.

The Butterfly House opens its doors: A place for women to heal and soar

Charlotte community members open facility for women in recovery



by Wendy Lyons
Qnotes Staff Writer

Charlotte witnessed something rare and remarkable on Aug. 20: the birth and open house of a safe haven for women rebuilding their lives. The Butterfly House opened its doors not just as a residence, but as a sanctuary. A place where women in recovery can finally breathe, heal and take the first steps toward independence.

Across the United States, more than seven million affordable homes are missing from the housing market, leaving thousands of women in recovery without a stable place to land. In North Carolina, the housing crisis has reached alarming levels, with only 41 affordable homes available for every 100 families in need. Add to that the fact that 12 North Carolinians die every single day from an overdose, and the picture becomes painfully clear: Women battling substance use and trauma are too often left without the housing, counseling and support they need to heal and thrive.

Yet, within this storm of alarming statistics, The Butterfly House emerges as a lighthouse of transformation and hope. At its packed Open House celebration, this writer and community members filled the house with excitement, touring a space carefully furnished and decorated with warm colors, thoughtful wall art and the promise of new beginnings.

We talked with L'Monique King, visionary and co-founder of The Butterfly House (also a Qnotes staff writer), to explore the mission and vision that fuels this work and the future she and her partner Toii (both former foster parents for LGBT youth) are building for the women who will call this place home.

Wendy Lyons: Congratulations on your new endeavor. Who are the founders of The Butterfly House and what inspired its creation?

L'Monique King: The Butterfly House was founded by me and my partner in life and business, Toii King. Together, we lead Talking Sheets Enterprises, LLC, and this home became our housing initiative. My inspiration came from nearly a decade working in public health focusing on HIV prevention, substance use disorders and mental health. Most recently, for two years I managed programs that included rental assistance for clients in recovery. I visited many sober-living houses and saw where women were falling through the cracks. I thought, we can do better. The Butterfly House was born from that conviction.

WL: What is the mission of The Butterfly House, and how did it guide opening day?

LMK: Our mission is clear: to assist women in recovery to find their wings and soar. That guided every decision. We want-



Butterfly House Founders Toii and L'Monique King
CREDIT: Wendy Lyons

ed to create not just housing, but a home and a place where women could stabilize, find support and build long-term recovery.

WL: When did the vision begin and what led to the grand opening?

LMK: The idea had been on my heart for about two years. In March 2025, Toii and I committed to bringing it to life. We developed policies, a resident handbook and a program model based on best practices. Then we leaned on community support, donations, partnerships and a lot of sweat equity to make it real. By Aug. 20, we were ready and excited to open the doors.

WL: Where is the house located, and why there?

LMK: The Butterfly House is located at 1025 Brianna Way in Charlotte near the Clanton Road/South Boulevard area. It's a neighborhood close to services and transit, but most importantly, the house feels like a home. When women walk in, we want them to think, I can heal here.

WL: What programs and services are offered to residents?

LMK: We implemented a three-tier model of growth: Tier 1 - Women enter as "Caterpillars," then move into Tier 2 - "White Butterflies," and eventually become Tier 3 - "Purple Butterflies," gaining more independence as they progress. We offer case management, peer support, trauma-informed assessments, yoga, art therapy, nutrition workshops with chefs, and even plans for a resident garden. Employment readiness workshops and partnerships with sober-living operators were also part of the design.

WL: How does day-to-day look for residents in the house?

LMK: Each day includes check-ins,

work or job search, household responsibilities, and evening activities. We are not a "90-day in and out" program. Women can stay as long as they need to in order to stabilize. We blend in accountability with curfews and testing along with compassion and support.

WL: What is the criteria for enrollment in the program?

LMK: We serve adult women in recovery who are ready to commit to a structured environment. Residents need to have income through work, SSI, or other support to sustain their stay. We could not accommodate minors or those on medication-assisted treatment at this time, but we accept women coming out of treatment or detox, with accountability measures to help them stay on track.

WL: What support have you received thus far that has played a role in preparing The Butterfly House for opening?

LMK: It truly has been a community effort. Donations poured in; kitchenware, bedding, furniture, appliances and professionals offer their expertise. Partnerships with therapists, chefs and community organizations allow us to build a holistic support system from day one.

WL: What does success look like in the first year?

LMK: Success means women feel safe, supported and believe in themselves again. It means residents set and meet goals like securing steady work, building savings or completing their recovery milestones. But it also means seeing them laugh in the kitchen, lead house meetings and transition from Caterpillar to Purple Butterfly with confidence.

WL: Beyond opening day, what are your future goals?

LMK: We want to fill all eight beds and run the model with excellence. Long term, our goals include expanding to additional homes, building a network of Butterfly House residences, and eventually acquiring a van and/or vehicles to remove transportation barriers for our residents.



Butterfly House co-founder L'Monique King gives a tour of the new facility.
CREDIT: Wendy Lyons

WL: How could the community support The Butterfly House?

LMK: There were three ways: First, by making referrals and spreading the word; second, by volunteering in areas like gardening, art, and job readiness; and third, by donating essentials to keep the home running. Larger donations like a van, gardening and landscape equipment and supplies are part of our vision, too. We plan to keep an updated needs list on our website so people can easily see how to help.

The Butterfly House was launched during a time of unrest in our country, but with a vision rooted in dignity, healing, love, hope and transformation. LMK shared with the Open House crowd about her sheer determination to overcome obstacles to pursue her dream and her passion. She spoke in tears, "I decided I was going to make a conscious decision to not let my fear, my fear of the unknown, my fear of judgment, my fear of failure. I wasn't going to let that fear be louder than my purpose. My purpose is to serve, to empower and uplift.

L'Monique, Toii, staff, volunteers and community supporters are creating more than just a recovery house. Already, a next-door neighbor has volunteered to support The Butterfly House with keeping the grass cut.

With the efforts of a community combined, The Butterfly House is offering a place of possibility, transformation, elevation and new life. It is a home with eight beds for healing, structured programming, and a mission to help women "find their wings and soar." ::

To apply, learn more, volunteer, or donate, visit www.talkingsheets.org and click on The Butterfly House. Together, our Charlotte and surrounding communities can ensure that every woman who walks through its doors has the chance to heal, rebuild and soar to their next level.



Community members discuss plans and needs for The Butterfly House.
CREDIT: Wendy Lyons

Ethan Coen and Tricia Cooke talk about their new film 'Honey Don't!'

Filmmakers inspired by historic cinema create a queer noir classic



by Gregg Shapiro
Contributing Writer

Non-traditional married couple Ethan Coen and Tricia Cooke (check out their story on google – she identifies as queer) are on a roll with the queer noir film “Honey Don’t!” (Focus/Working Title). The second installment in co-writer/director Coen and co-writer Cooke’s lesbian trilogy, following 2024’s “Drive-Away Dolls,” “Honey Don’t” also stars Margaret Qualley (who also had a lead role in the aforementioned “Dolls”). While “Honey Don’t!” has a similar comedic tone found not only in its predecessor but also in numerous Coen brothers movies, it also takes a much darker and more unsettling turn at the end. Nevertheless, it’s worth watching for Qualley’s outstanding performance, as well as seeing Chris Evans half-dressed for most of the movie. Coen and Cooke were kind enough to make time for a Zoom interview in early August.

Gregg Shapiro: I’d like to begin by asking you both to say something about the inspiration for “Honey Don’t!”

Ethan Coen: We were inspired by all those noir movies and all the kind of hard-boiled literature that all those movies were based on: Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler. Those writers and the movies that are associated with them.

Tricia Cooke: We were inspired by all the 1950s and 1940s noir and thought there should be more queer noir.

GS: Were there any particular titles you can point to?

EC: There’s a John Houston movie called “Fat City.” It’s about the kind of hardscrabble California. Not glamorous California. It’s kind of bare-assed, depressed California; in the case of that movie, Stockton. In the case of our movie, Bakersfield. But it’s a great movie, it’s very different, generically, from our movie, but it made an impression on us.

TC: “The Long Goodbye” was (also) a huge source of inspiration for us. How Robert Altman used the score throughout the movie. That was something that we had written into our movie, (that the Carl Perkins song) “Honey Don’t” would play throughout, although it didn’t [laughs]. But there were other ways that we borrowed from “The Long Goodbye.”

GS: Margaret Qualley, with whom you both worked on “Drive-Away Dolls,” is playing the titular character in “Honey Don’t!” What is it about Margaret that makes her appealing to work with more than once?

TC: She’s a great actress. She can take, from what we’ve seen, any part and really run with it in a really interesting way. She makes interesting choices, and she’s easy. We all get on really well. She’s playful and she’s playful when she approaches a part. I think she’s easy to work with. She’s easy for other actors to work with.

EC: She just brings the stuff to life. You don’t catch her acting. It’s just like, “Oh, wow, cool.”

GS: The queerness in the movie extends beyond Honey and her various lovers, including MG, played by Aubrey Plaza. Please say something about why you also included the cuckolded Mr. Siegfried, a queer male character played by Billy Eichner.

TC: I have a lot more gay male friends than lesbian friends [laughs]. They’re familiar to me. We wanted someone to be emotional in a way that it felt like if it were a male couple, that would be interesting. You don’t see that so much in noir. We wanted to change the gender norms in noir. We thought that having him there would be interesting.

EC: Not that we said this to each other when we were writing it, but I think we just imagined a queer world. The private detective is queer; that’s not a big deal. One of the clients is queer, not a big deal. People are queer. Not universally, but the world is almost all queer.

GS: Tricia, “Honey” constantly remind the flirtatious, obnoxious Marty, played by Charlie Day, that she’s queer. Is this something you’ve dealt with in your own life?

TC: [Laughs] Sure! I mean, not over and over again. But men are constantly... I’m an elder now, but certainly back in the day, guys hit on you and you’re constantly having to say, I’m queer. No, I didn’t have someone like Marty in my life who just didn’t get it. But different men throughout history. I have an unconventional private life. Ethan’s my partner, Ethan’s my husband. So I kind of live in this world where people aren’t sure what’s what.

GS: Reverend Drew, played by Chris Evans, who, to the delight of many gay fans, has an extended scene in a jock-strap, is a drug dealer, in addition to being a preacher. Is this a play on “religion is the opiate of the masses” being taken to another extreme with the addition of actual drugs?

EC: I don’t think we were literally playing on or thinking about that expression.

TC: I like it!

EC: We were just making him sleazy.

TC: I think Jim Jones and maybe Jimmy Swaggart were two people in the back of our heads. Jim Jones and the Kool Aid and all that. Cult leaders tend to influence their flocks in so many different ways.

GS: One of my favorite relationships in the movie is that of Honey and her assistant Spider, played by Gabby Beans. Their exchanges reminded me of the noir movies from the past. Fast-talking and talking over each other. Was this your intention for those scenes?

EC and TC: Yeah!

EC: (In) those movies, frequently, the private eye has the wisecracking secretary...

TC: ...assistant who often helps solve the crimes and often is as competent, if not more competent, than the detective. That’s definitely what we wanted to do. I’m impressed that you knew Spider’s name because it’s never mentioned. Honey never refers to Spider as Spider, but we liked the name.

GS: Ethan, in the past you’ve talked about how you and Joel couldn’t have made “Drive-Away Dolls,” and likely by



Writer Tricia Cooke (left), actor Margaret Qualley and writer/director Ethan Coen on the set of their film ‘Honey Don’t,’ a Focus Features release. CREDIT: Karen Kuehn/©2025 Focus Features LLC

extension, “Honey Don’t!” because you’re both straight. And yet, Coen Brothers movies, such as “Miller’s Crossing,” which you co-wrote, and “Hail, Caesar,” which you co-wrote and co-directed had queer characters.

EC: That’s true. They weren’t central characters, and they were kind of broader characters. In our movies, the central characters are a little more grounding, in stuff we really know, and the peripheral characters less so. In our movies, Trish and mine, in these two movies the gay characters are definitely front and center. It’s kind of a different thing.

GS: Without giving too much away, it’s been a while since we’ve seen a fictional queer serial killer. At this time, when the LGBTQ community is at risk and under scrutiny from conservative forces, are you at all concerned about a backlash or the response to this character?

TC: It’s make-believe. It’s not real. Maybe when we’re writing it, we were like, “Do we want to make it about her hatred of weak women? Does that say something about lesbians?” But I don’t think it does. I think she’s just off her rocker, and anyone can be off their rocker. I think the far right or conservative Christians want to paint us as demented and not stable, but that’s just not the truth. I hope there’s no backlash.

EC: The story says her craziness is connected to her victimhood; she’s an abuse victim. It’s not related to her sexuality.

GS: Is there another Coen/Cooke collaboration in the works?

TC: We’re writing different things together. Ethan’s writing his own stuff. He writes with Joel. Hopefully, one day, something else will get made. Ethan and I wrote something with our daughter. All those things are out there, and hopefully they’ll get made soon. ::

“Honey Don’t!” is playing in theaters nationwide.

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CAROLINAS WE ARE THE CAROLINAS JOIN TODAY!

Our People: Miles Perry

Young Charlotte resident accomplished and readying for the future



by L'Monique King
Qnotes Staff Writer

Miles Perry is a vivacious young man who has his hands in many things LGBTQ+ and health and wellness related. Originally from Rochester, N.Y., Perry has been a Charlotte resident for a mere three years. In that time, he's already made a mark on our community as the youngest Charlotte Black Pride board member (27 years-old), a community public health worker (since the tender age of 16 years old).

Clearly, Perry is a mover, shaker and good troublemaker who is young enough to effect meaningful change for a long time to come. It's no wonder his dad routinely and affectionately called him "The little Malcolm X" (referring to his revolutionary nature and consistent advocacy for others). During this interview, we learned a little more about what makes him tick and his joys found as an organizer of Charlotte Black Pride events. He's also a Ted Talk enthusiast, gamer and former head laureate at the University of Rochester.

L'Monique King: Where in Charlotte do you live?

Miles Perry: On the West Side in a two-story wood house in what is becoming a very mixed neighborhood; transitioning from primarily Black and Latino to more [ethnically] diverse. Gentrification is generally bad – especially when it comes to pricing out residents and changing the innate culture of a neighborhood. It's sad that it takes white people moving into an area for a city to care about safety and accessibility. However, if you tactfully mix in affordable housing with the higher end developments, a few bike lanes, communities thrive.

LMK: What brought you to North Carolina?

MP: I moved to Chapel Hill to get my MPH [Master's in public health] from UNC-Chapel Hill. I moved to Charlotte after graduating. The job I got originally required me to stay in North Carolina. The Triangle Area/Chapel Hill was too slow for me. I needed more of a metropolitan environment and Charlotte seemed to offer that.

LMK: What are you enjoying about Charlotte since relocating here?

MP: I've enjoyed the people I've encoun-

tered so far. Especially coming from New York's queer culture. But typically, when I'm in an environment that doesn't hold space for me – I will carve out a space. Usually when I carve that space out, I find that people will want to join me in populating that space.

LMK: Since graduating, how have you made your livelihood?

MP: I've always had two or three jobs since about the age of 18. When I first came to Charlotte, I was a researcher for UNC-Chapel Hill's Behavior and Technology Lab. That was a part-time job that I maintained up until presently. There's been multiple changes in name, location and host university but the same great people are at the helm doing the same great work. So currently, I work with the only lab that works specifically with queer youth [mostly of color] in the nation.

LMK: On a familial note, do you have any siblings?

MP: I have one sister. She's 11 years older than me and we're close. She and my nephew just moved to Charlotte along with my mom this past summer.

LMK: Romantically speaking, is there anyone special? Are you partnered?

MP: <Slightly chuckling> I'm single and ready to mingle.

LMK: When you think about entering a relationship, what are you looking for?

MP: <Without hesitation> Reciprocity.

LMK: What exactly is the nature of your involvement with Charlotte Black Pride?

MP: Before I moved to Charlotte the first event I ever attended [during a visit] was a Ball produced by Charlotte Black Pride. I was doing research for the state at the time and was still in school. I had a good time, loved the vibe. At the time, one of the Ball hosts was also a cast member of a popular streaming show. There were also lots of vendors with interesting items and information. It was great, I didn't know Charlotte had that much going on. With Charlotte Black Pride, I didn't feel like I needed to "carve out a space." With CBP I just felt like I wanted to decorate a little bit. So, at my very first event, before I left – I found CBP's table and asked how I could get involved. I became a board member (the CBP Young Adult Liaison). I was and still am the youngest person on the board. After a while, it became apparent that your passion and skill set would be a better fit for [the position of] co-chair. So, I now serve as the co-chair with a mission of seeing Charlotte Black Pride

becoming a destination Black Pride in the same sense that folks go to DC or Atlanta and know when their events are every year. I want to see Charlotte become that. And I believe that's a reasonable expectation because Charlotte has consistently been listed as one of the nation's fastest growing cities with 700 people moving here each week.

We've seen Charlotte activate. Over 260,000 people come out the weekend of Charlotte Pride. So, I know for a city with such a large Black population it's reasonable to hit or surpass that number.

LMK: You're engaged in a lot of serious work. What makes you laugh?

MP: My dad. (a comedic soul, now an ancestor as of 2020) and having a good little kiki with my *gworlz*; as in a gender-neutral gathering of friends just joking around.

LMK: Aside from inequity, what makes you frown?

MP: <Chuckles> politics. Well, not that much. My undergrad degree is in political science. Seriously though, transphobia, gender/sexual orientation segregation and structural discrimination which has been making me frown a lot recently. There have been a number of local businesses that have told me that they will not rent out [space] to us because we are considered cultural or a pride related organization. It's an awful place to be in for a nonprofit.

LMK: What (if any) do you think the solution might be?

MP: I think as both queer and Black people we have always had to be resilient. We've never stopped due to a no, a non-response or a non-favorable response. So, the importance of community is being more emphasized now. I recently spoke with a straight ally and business owner who also stated how unhappy he was/is with the current administration and all the blatant discrimination and then offered us a discount. He specifically referenced the ban on trans athletes and stated "If your rights are going, mine will be next."

LMK: Wow, that's powerful. In thinking about that as an under-30-year-old queer person and advocate – what thoughts would you like to share with our youth community regarding our current state of affairs or anything else?

MP: Right now, it may feel like the road is long and almost too far to travel. But every step lays a brick for someone else, making the journey easier. All you have to do is keep on going - keep on living.



Grounded and gifted Miles Perry advocates, organizes and shines.
CREDIT: Instagram

LMK: Sounds like great advice. Sounds like a perfect day – when the time comes that such encouragement is no longer needed. What's a perfect day like for Miles?

MP: I've experienced perfect days. One of them was at a "Black on Purpose Stage" at Charlotte Pride. It was a stage run by CBP at Charlotte Pride with performances, exhibits and collaborators. We're very grateful to have such a great relationship with our sibling pride organization - and excited that they've entrusted us with our ability to cater to Charlotte's Black queer community. Last year we had a fashion show, poets, singers, a marriage proposal; and to top it all off, we had a vogue ball showcase. It was fab! And this year was equally awesome. We had a great time at Charlotte Pride this year, with a Charlotte Black Pride stage that drew massive crowds of community. We had a packed tent from 12-6 p.m. each day.

LMK: Before we let you go, let's fast forward into the future. Fifty years from now, what has Miles accomplished?

MP: Miles is an old auntie that hopefully has a little bit of cash <laughter>. A very humble pioneer who goes to the spaces that he contributed to, just to experience how they have evolved and help out with the continuation of growth. I also want to have enough money to anonymously donate to all the Black Prides that I've experienced in my lifetime. I want to have access to wealth in a way wherein I can give back substantially. ::

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