

# THE TRIANGLE

The Monthly Newspaper from Gay & Lesbian Community Services of Central Florida, Inc.  
Serving Orlando's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Community

## Local Activist Wins National Award

By Laura J. Harding

Orlando's own Carol Bartsch was presented with the David J. Miller Action Award by the Human Rights Campaign on August 16, 1996. The awards ceremony was held on the first day of OutVote '96, The HRC Political Convention in Chicago, Illinois.

The David J. Miller Action Award is given annually to an Action Coordinator who demonstrates outstanding leadership in mobilizing his/her community to political action at the grassroots level. It was first presented in 1994 by Lou and Mary Patierno in honor of their brother David Miller whose gift helped create HRCF's Federal Advocacy Network, now the Action Network. The winner is chosen from a list of nominees by the staff of the Political Department's Field team.

Bartsch, who has been involved with the Action Network for over three years, is the Florida Action Coordinator. She has performed above and beyond her role in this position consistently and was instrumental in getting Senators Mack and Graham to cosponsor the repeal of the bill discharging HIV+ service members. It was for this reason, and many others, that HRC presented Bartsch with this award.

Learning of the award four days prior to leaving for the convention, Bartsch says, "I was overwhelmed!" She had received a phone call from an HRC staff member who wanted to be sure that she planned on attending the awards ceremony. During the conversation, the staffer laughed as he explained that they had wanted to keep it

secret, but they were a little concerned that, "you might not be there!" Bartsch says, "I had to laugh about the idea that they thought it might be a surprise because they had asked me to send a photograph." She also said that, "Obviously, when I got there and received my packet, I think I might have noticed when I opened the program!" The program included a full-page photo of Bartsch as the award recipient.

"In the last two years at the leadership conference, I've seen other Action Coordinators receive the award so obviously I'm familiar with the award and what it stands for and why people receive it. Certainly I always hoped that I would be considered for that, but that's not the entire motivation for all that I do, even though it's lovely to be thanked." Bartsch continued, "Needless to say, I was flabbergasted. I was very overwhelmed because it's a tremendous honor, it's a national award and it shows that they...noticed some of what I've been doing over the last couple of years. I was very flattered for being recognized for what I've been doing. It made me feel very special."

The evening of the awards ceremony, Bartsch admits that she was nervous, especially when she was told that hers would be given first. "In a way I was relieved," she said, "because the longer you sit there, the more nervous you get." As she waited, the Emcee for the evening, actor/playwright Harvey Fierstein, explained the award and the recipient's qualifications ending with announcing Bartsch as the winner. As she walked onto the stage, the award was presented to her by Fierstein and HRC's Executive Director Elizabeth Birch.



Carol Bartsch (center) accepts award from Elizabeth Birch and Harvey Fierstein

There had been two previous recipients of this award. One was a man from Virginia who played a key role in the campaign to defeat Oliver North. The other was instrumental in keeping the Olympics out of Cobb County, Georgia because of their anti-gay ordinance. Obviously our local heroine, Carol Bartsch, has been working very hard on behalf of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered community for equal rights to have received this recognition.

Other award recipients that evening received the first Annual Equality Awards. This award recognizes significant lifetime contributions to the cause of winning full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people. The winners of these awards were presented to three inspiring individuals.

Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer, PhD, RN, the highest ranking officer ever discharged from the military because, during an interview for a top secret security clearance she said she is a lesbian. Because of her honesty, she was discharged from the Army reserves in 1992. She fought her discharge and in June, 1994 was reinstated to the National Guard where she continues to serve while that decision is under appeal.

The Reverend Troy D. Perry, the founder of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Since the first MCC opened its doors in Los Angeles in 1968, the fellowship has grown to more than 370 study groups, missions and churches in 19 countries. Perry was invited to the White House in 1977 with 14 gay and civil rights leaders and again in 1995 for President Clinton's historic conference in HIV/AIDS.

The third winner of the award was ac-

ress Judith Light. Through her portrayal of Ryan White's mother in the 1989 TV movie about White's life, Light found a cause that has made her one of Hollywood's most active figures in the fight against HIV and AIDS. She was honored as one of those rare individuals who is not gay but who supports gay and lesbian rights with all her heart and is fighting to end the scourge of AIDS.

Also attending OutVote '96 from Orlando with Bartsch was her partner of 12 years, Kim Newton, and local activists Lisa Talmadge and Michael Hodges. Aside from having a wonderful time at the convention, there were several political workshops and many interesting and informative speakers.

Workshop topics included: how to raise money to win; creating a winning message for your campaign (working with the media); things you should know as a future candidate; how to make our issues winning issues; building winning & lasting coalitions; tips on how to get people to the polls; and how you can help re-elect the President. Moderators and presenters for the workshops included many types of professionals, HRC personnel and politicians. The workshop on how to help re-elect the President was moderated by Richard Socarides, the White House Liaison to the Gay & Lesbian Community.

In conjunction with the convention, HRC held its first Youth College for Campaign Training. The training hosted 26 activists between the ages of 18-24 who had been chosen from over 100 applicants to learn political skills that they will take to political campaigns around the country. These young people spent 15 hours a day for six

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Carol Bartsch, Colonel Margarethe Cammermeyer and Kim Newton (l-r)