

***Reports on NC PRIDEFEST 2001:
Helping Gay Veterans Form Community
By Chris McGinnis***

NC Pridefest 2001 is working diligently to enrich and unite the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities by sponsoring the formation of clubs that unite GLBT individuals in areas of interest or common backgrounds. One such group, which is a top priority of Pride Committee of NC (www.ncpride.org), is focusing on military veterans.

The United States Military, unfortunately, has a long history of discrimination against GLBT individuals. This culture of fear has resulted in many veterans and enlisted individuals leading lives of solitude and secrecy. In the 1990s policies of the Clinton Administration began to relieve GLBT tensions with the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy. Even though this controversial compromise was not ideal, it did contribute to easing some concerns of GLBT individuals working within the armed forces.

As a result of these executive actions, several Gay Veterans groups focusing on the needs of GLBT individuals have emerged. These organizations exist across the United States including New Mexico, Illinois, Colorado, California, Washington D.C. and Texas. Even more encouraging, the Pentagon has formally recognized these organizations, finally giving GLBT people the recognition and respect they deserve. Because they are no longer enlisted in the military, GLBT veterans are somewhat safe from potential discrimination by the US military. Not only do these organizations offer social outlets, they help break down stereotypes in society.

Because of North Carolina’s relatively large military population, the Pride Committee of NC feels that a similar veteran organization would greatly contribute to the quality of life for GLBT individuals in the state. The formation of this group would have two purposes. The primary purpose would be the creation of a social network for gay and lesbian veterans who could share their experiences, problems and perspectives. A secondary goal would be to gather a group of veterans who could participate in NC PRIDE activities, most notably the 16th Annual NC PRIDE Parade which will be held on September 29th in Durham, North Carolina.

If you, or someone you know would be interested in joining a GLBT veteran organization, please consult NC PRIDE’s web page at www.ncpride.org or email info@ncpride.org for further details.

Pride Committee of NC: Working to enrich our community.

July23,2001

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