

# Lesbian bringing drive to human rights panel

By JALEH HAGIGH

Perl Jude is the newest member of the Rockville Human Rights Commission and as the first gay activist on the body, she says she will bring a sensitivity to gay rights to the group.

Jude, 25, was unanimously elected to the commission Monday night by the Rockville mayor and City Council.

She said she was worried that some commission members believed that because she is

openly gay, she would be a single-issue candidate.

"I was really excited about (the) unanimous vote. That's always nice," Jude said.

The 5-0 tally assured her that commission

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Perl Jude  
Not a single-issue person



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members are more interested in her skills and energy than her sexual orientation, she said.

Commission Chairman Lloyd Welter agreed and said he does not think any members had reservations about Jude because she is gay.

"We didn't discuss her sexual orientation," Welter said. "The commission should express a cross-section of the population of the city, and her nomination is in that tradition."

Welter, who has been on the commission for 1 1/2 years, said there was no pressure on the mayor or City Council to appoint her.

"She will bring with her a perspective on gay issues and a capability or knowledge of gay issues," he said.

Rockville's Human Rights Commission is a separate entity from the county commission. The commission is an advisory board to the mayor and City Council. It hears discrimination complaints on subjects such as housing or employment.

The position is voluntary and members are appointed by the mayor and City Council. Jude begins her four-year stint immediately.

Rockville Mayor Steven Van Grack said Jude is "exceptionally qualified."

"I feel really good about this appointment," Van Grack said. He said Jude's sexual orientation is a "factor you can't be blind to," but that it was not the reason for her appointment.

Jude is not a single-issue person, Van Grack said. "If that were the case, I wouldn't have appointed her. She's well-versed in other issues," he said, noting her work in minority rights issues.

Council member Jim Coyle, a former commission member, agreed. "We were impressed with her commitment," he said. Jude "showed she was sensitive to basic human rights issues. She's not a single-issue candidate," Coyle said.

"She's certainly given a great deal of thought to human rights, and she's been a good spokesperson for minority groups," said Sue Shoenberg, member of the county Human Relations Commission.

Jude said she has three things she wants to do for the commission. The first is to inform members about the AIDS issue and the possibilities of discrimination because of it.

She also said she wants to work with women's groups in the county.

A communications major in college, Jude has had experience in radio and hopes to remedy the group's publicity problem by putting the commission on cable television.

Jude was an All-America in the shotput and discus at the University of Pittsburgh and said the long days spent in solitude practicing gave her a lot of drive, something she said some members have not had in the past.

"You learn to do things when you don't feel like doing them," Jude said. "You have to be motivated."