Rahm Emanuel: In his own words

BY ANDREW DAVIES

For Rahm Emanuel, this is the best and worst of times.
Thanks to a variety of factors—not the least of which is name recognition, thanks to his years in the Clinton and Obama administrations—Emanuel is seen as the prohibitive favorite in the 2011 Chicago mayoral race, with various polls placing him squarely in the lead.

However, as practically everyone knows, Emanuel is also in the political fight of his life right now, as well over a dozen people have challenged his residency. If the electoral board votes against him, he will be out of the race.

In addition, the LGBT community is split about Emanuel, with some people linking him to the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy that originated under Clinton.

On Dec. 10, Emanuel sat in the Center on Halsted for an exclusive interview with Windy City Times. He talked about the fight regarding his residency, DADT and his connection to the very building in which the interview was conducted.

Windy City Times: I remember hearing you talk about how if Mayor [Richard] Daley ever stepped down, you’d like to succeed him. What is it about the position that you find so attractive?
Rahm Emanuel: A couple things. One thing is that it’s a great city. It’s been my home; I was born here. My grandfather came to the city in 1917; he immigrated here from Russia and Romania. My uncle’s a police officer and my father immigrated in 1959 to Chicago, to practice medicine, with my mother. My entire family has been here.

The mayor can get things done, put in place a set of policies. Sometimes I feel like, when I was...
Howard Brown: Moving forward

A few weeks ago, in an editorial, Windy City Times called for sweeping changes at How- and Brown Health Center (HBHC), in order for the agency to more clearly move forward and move past the financial problems documented in numerous news articles over the past several months.

HBHC had already ousted most of its staff leadership, but many of the board members who were in place during the problem years are still serving. Last week, HBHC announced that by the middle of 2011, all board members who were in place prior to this year will be gone.

This is a huge step in the right direction for this important Chicago LGBT agency.

Couples planning and the new civil-union act

The Religious Freedom and Civil Union Act is a critical step toward equality in Illinois. The ramifications for same-sex couples cannot be understated, especially in the areas of health-care, disability, and death. After the governor signs the bill and the law is enacted next month, the state of Illinois will offer the opportunity for legal recognition to same-sex couples to the same extent as heterosexual couples entering into marriage.

Under the act, a civil union “means, and shall be included in, any definition or use of the terms ‘spouse,’ ‘family,’ ‘immediate family,’ ‘dependent,’ ‘next of kin’ and other terms that denote the spousal relationship, as those terms are used throughout the law.” This single sentence will allow civilly united same-sex couples to enjoy hundreds of default rights under Illinois law, which married couples currently enjoy. The civil-union act will allow civilly united same-sex couples to enjoy numerous rights under Illinois law, which married couples currently enjoy.

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ADDRESS: Atria, Allan, John, Rowe, Sue and Victor

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“Windy City Media Group generated enormous interest among their readers in its Pride Week survey. Out of approximately 100 print and online media partners who participated in the survey, Windy City took the top spot as the best-performing regional media in the U.S. Only survey partners with a nationwide footprint were able to participate. Each partner will receive a number of responses.” —David Marshall, Research Director, Community Marketing, Inc.
Angela James: Canadian lesbian—and hockey legend

BY ROSS FORMAN

Angela James is, to some, just the senior sports coordinator at Seneca College in Toronto. In fact, some of those who just know James as the Seneca employee approached her in mid-November and asked about her hockey background. They asked, “How come you didn’t tell me that you played hockey for so long and were such a star?”

“It was modesty, you see. However, James certainly was the real deal on the ice.”

James was, starting in the late 1970s, a goal-scoring machine in Canadian women’s hockey, though she didn’t truly gain national fame until the inaugural Women’s World Championship in 1990, held in Ottawa, Ontario.

James ultimately led Canada to four world titles.

James, 45, also played forward in the Central Ontario Women’s Hockey League (now known as the National Women’s Hockey League).

James scored 34 points (22 goals, 12 assists) in 20 games over four women’s world championships, including 11 goals in five games in the inaugural World Women’s Championships in 1990.

In 2008, James, along with Chicago-area native Cammi Granato and Canadian Geraldine Heaney, became the first women inducted into the International Ice Hockey Federation Hockey Hall of Fame.

And, on Nov. 8, James and Granato were inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto, the first women ever inducted.

James is the daughter of a Black father and white mother; she is the only African-Canadian to captain a national hockey team—and she is an open lesbian, whose partner of 16 years is Angela McDonald.

And James saluted and thanked McDonald during her November speech at the Hall of Fame in Toronto.

“The actual induction into the Hall of Fame was out of this world, a lot of fun,” said James, who has been receiving congratulatory calls and e-mails from literally around the world. “To be on the Wall of Fame with the greats of all time, I had the feeling of, ‘Is this really happening?’ It’s hard to absorb and understand.”

James and Granato were joined in the Hall of Fame’s Class of 2010 by 600-goal scorer Dino Ciccarelli and builders Jim Devellano and Doc Seaman, yet the two women certainly made this year’s class historic.

James was a trailblazer, period.

“Cammi and I pushed to elevate the women’s game on the national level,” James said. “My thing always was hockey, be it playing for my club teams, or my providences, or my country. It’s so remarkable to be inducted into the Hall of Fame, so everyone now knows what I did, what I achieved.

“Being a trailblazer is remarkable. And hopefully I can help the hopes and dreams of other young girls in the game.

“I think this [honors] comes with a responsibility that you send the right message, and continue to help people develop—through the sport or in the classroom. That has always been the case for me, but elevated since [the induction].”

James said that by thanking her partner in her Hall of Fame speech, it attracted the eyes and ears of many within the LGBT community, though that was not her intention.

“If someone wants something to do with the game, I’m there more for than one specific group or cause; I’m not close-minded to any [cause],” she said. “Anyone who knew one thing about me knew that I had a partner and children for the last 12 years.

“I feel sorry for athletes who feel that they cannot be themselves and express who they are, and express any open feelings toward their partner. I’d love to see people just be who they are, whether an athlete, politician, doctor, or anyone who is in the public-eye.”

James and McDonald have been together for 16 years—and James has three children: Christian, 11; Toni, 5; and Michael, 5.

“I enjoy myself in and around the [LGBT] community, but I’m not an activist who’s going out there, screaming and shouting for [LGBT] rights. I do it, but from the inside, not the outside,” James said.

James was born in Toronto and attended Seneca College, where she won numerous titles in ice hockey and softball and had her jersey (No. 8) retired.

In 2008, the Angela James Bowl was created in her honor, awarded annually to the top scorer in the Canadian Women’s Hockey League.

PHILLY from page 20

til work. The artists told me that Philly’s arts community and queer communities are incredibly active, especially in West Philly.

The evening was spent at the restaurant Meritage (500 S. 13th; 215-545-1893; http://www.meritagephiladelphia.com), where we enjoyed a quiet meal outside, under trees lit by twinkle lights. While the grilled herb crust lamb chops ($24) were excellent, portions all around were so small that most of our table expressed disappointment.

I had been told that Woody’s Bar (261 S. 13th; 215-545-1893; http://www.woodysbar.com) is the “Cheers” of Philly, so I decided to spend my last night in Philadelphia among “friends.” Indeed, the mostly male crowd was welcoming and talkative. Another writer and I easily befriended two guys who invited us to Philly’s oldest gay bar, Tavern on Camac (243 S. Camac; 215-545-0900; http://www.tavernoncamac.com).

Tavern is nestled in one of the Gayborhood’s many cobblestone alleys, with brick buildings as old as the city itself. Given its location, I expected to find a dark musty bar, with large mugs of beer and sticky wooden tables. On the contrary, Tavern has all the makings of a modern gay club: a spacious dance floor upstairs, and a white shiny bar downstairs. Still, Tavern stays true to Philly history—the whole downstairs is a piano bar.

In conclusion...

Before heading home to Chicago, I had the chance to visit Outfest, Philadelphia’s celebration of National Coming Out Day (NCOD). With 40,000 people roaming through the Gayborhood, Outfest is the world’s largest NCOD celebration. The festival takes over the entire Gayborhood, and vendors and community organizations take part.

Of course, I couldn’t leave Philadelphia without checking out our nation’s oldest LGBT bookstore, so I walked over to 12th and Pine to check out Giovanni’s Room (345 S. 13th; 215-923-2960; http://www.giovannisroom.com). This old-fashioned book shop is a great place to lose an afternoon, with every LGBT title you could want, and a sizeable stack of discounted books, for your plane ride home. But on my own flight back I could do only thing—finally, sleep.