

Q-NOTES

Switchboard, Charlotte 704/525-6128
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AIDS Hotline, Columbia 803/779-PALS
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United Way Proposals Must Cross Hurdles

By Don King
Special to Q-Notes

"A breath of fresh air," a Charlotte Observer editorial said.

"Sounds like it was either written by a homosexual or by a person who was a pawn in the hands of homosexuals," said Joseph Chambers, pastor of Paw Creek Church of God and founder and member of Concerned Charlotteans.

Both comments were about a subject with a long name: A Report From The Study Committee On AIDS to the Human Services Planning Board of United Way of Central Carolinas, Inc.

As of the Q-Notes deadline on March 21, the report - unanimously approved by the study committee's members, according to The Charlotte Observer - and its recommendations still had hurdles to clear before acceptance and implementation.

A year ago, Mecklenburg County's board of commissioners asked United Way to review AIDS programs in the county and study how best to focus the battle against AIDS. United Way was ideal; it had already decided to tackle issues concerning AIDS.

By accepting the task, United Way - which has no elected officials - relieved the county commissioners, who are elected and are therefore subject to special-interest pressure, of a hot political potato.

The special committee held hearings, consulted experts and read volumes of printed material, then presented its report to the Human Services Planning Board of United Way six weeks ago.

The Planning Board approved the report on Feb. 22 and passed it up two ladders. On March 7, the Health Committee of the Mecklenburg County Human Services Council accepted the report in principal. The next day the Executive Committee of the United Way

Board of Directors accepted and endorsed the report and Charlotte's news media told the public about selected parts of it.

Still ahead:

The report must go to the full Human Services Council. That is expected to take place March 29. If the council endorses the report and recommends it to the county commissioners, the commissioners will first see the report officially on April 3.

"We cannot assume that the Human Services Council will approve the report in toto," said Donna Arrington of the United Way staff. "We hope they will, but they have their process to go through and study."

The county commissioners also may accept and reject parts of the report that survive scrutiny by the Human Services Council.

The report drew favorable comment from Marion Meginnis, president of Metrolina AIDS Project, and Les Kooyman, MAP's executive director.

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BEST BETS

- Apr. 2 *Bingo at Steven's*
- Apr. 3 *Bowling, Coliseum Lanes*
- Apr. 6 *First Tuesday, CCP House, 8 pm*
- Apr. 8 *Wet T-Shirts, Hide-A-Way, Rock Hill*
- Apr. 13 *PFLAG Welcome Boom Boom Party, Charades*
- Apr. 14 *Deidre McCalla Concert, South Meck High*
- Apr. 15 *Jimmie James, Scorpio*
- Apr. 21 *G/L Forum 10:00 pm Cable Channel 33*
- Apr. 22 *MCC Charlotte Pot Luck Supper*
- Apr. 26 *Members Party, Charades*
- Apr. 29 *Talent show, Hide-A-Way, Rock Hill*

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LaTour Resigns From Scorpio Staff

Boom Boom LaTour, entertainer and stalwart member of the Scorpio staff for more than 12 years, resigned following the show Wednesday, March 26.

In a surprise statement at the end of the show, LaTour said he was leaving the Scorpio and that he would team up with Tony Lenoir at Charades, a competing bar.

Richard Wilds, spokesperson for Scorpio Lounge, told Q-Notes, "I wish her, gosh, a world of luck. She was good to me. She gave me advice, direction, and she helped me. But she told me she would discuss it with me before she left...and I feel she should have discussed that with me first."

LaTour, contacted later by Q-Notes, said he had informed Wilds of his intent to leave, saying, "I have nothing against Rick (Wilds),

I love Scorpio to death. It was time for a change after 12 years. The last time I had a good time was Christmas Eve. I should have quit on New Year's Eve, but Marion asked me to stay."

LaTour said one of the major reasons for leaving was because he found it very difficult to relate to the new, younger crowds that Scorpio is attracting under the new management.

LaTour reflected in the interview that he missed the older crowds he used to play to over the years, and felt that he had found many of the older crowd at Charades.

LaTour also acknowledged that another reason was to join back up with a favorite performer of his, Tony Lenoir, saying, "I miss working with Tony real bad."

Eradicating Second-Class Status

By Don King
Special To Q-Notes

The first step in a months-long process to start eradicating anti-gay discrimination in Charlotte-Mecklenburg takes place April 21-24.

That's when First Tuesday, Charlotte's gay/lesbian political group, will conduct Town Meetings and hearings at three - possibly four - locations.

"We'll have tape recorders at the Scorpio, Charades, Oleen's and possibly the Brass

Rail to take information about people who have suffered harassment, discrimination or violence because they're gay or lesbian," said Sandra Bailey, one of the new co-chairs of First Tuesday. The other co-chair is Matt Irvin.

First Tuesday members also plan to attend a meeting of the lesbian group Queen City Friends and the gay men's group Mature Gay Men to take testimony.

"We're so tired of gay men and lesbians being treated like second-class citizens," Bailey said. "In silence, we suffer job discrimination. We're told to leave apartments, or don't get them in the first place. Male police officers feel free to give the impression to gay men that they are willing to discuss sexual activity, then arrest the gay men they're talking to. And kids in school take all kinds of verbal abuse and sometimes get beat up."

She said that First Tuesday plans to go before Charlotte's city council and Mecklenburg County's board of commissioners to begin a process, expected to take years, to raise gay men and lesbians to full citizenship.

And First Tuesday has pledged to work with the Charlotte chapter of Parents & Friends of Lesbians and Gays to start eradicating harassment of gay and lesbian adolescents.

In a strategy session on March 19, members of First Tuesday, PFLAG and Metrolina Community Service Project decided the first step should be to gather examples of problems encountered by gay men and lesbians.

"We need examples, not names," Bailey said. "As far as we're concerned, everything can be totally anonymous. But we have to have some documentation that harassment, discrimination and violence occur."

Some of the immediate goals established in the strategy session were these:

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Want to Testify?

Tell your story of discrimination, violence, harassment in school and police entrapment to First Tuesday with total anonymity if you like. Sorry, but stories of such experiences that occurred outside of Mecklenburg County will not help at this time.

Scorpio: 8 p.m. until closing Friday, April 21

Charades: 7:30 p.m. until closing Saturday, April 22

Oleen's: 7 p.m. until closing Sunday, April 23

To Be Arranged

Brass Rail: Monday night, April 24 (call the BR, 399-8413, to confirm that testimony will be taken)

By Phone

Call the Switchboard, 525-6128, for the number of the First Tuesday Documentation Project.

Want To Help Plan?

Call Don King, 332-3834, for the date and location of the next planning session. Anyone tired of second-class citizenship is welcome.

Recommendations

- **AIDS Community Coalition.** Form a group that is responsible to the Board of County Commissioners and is funded by public and private funds to do these things: lobby for the rights of HIV-infected persons; promote general AIDS education; evaluate safer sex education programs; review grant requests; assure that HIV-infected persons know about available services; provide information through an AIDS library and learning resource center; support the rest of the recommendations.

- **AIDS House.** Encourage all sorts of care for PWAs including studying whether to establish an AIDS house such as the Shanti project in San Francisco.

- **Insurance.** Work with legislators and insurers to address the concerns of HIV-infected persons who have lost or been denied coverage.

- **Free condoms.** Review programs providing free condoms.

- **Free needles.** Review programs providing free syringes and bleach for IV drug users, and consider establishing a pilot program.

- **Discrimination.** Encourage legislators to pass laws prohibiting discrimination against HIV-positive persons.

- **Schools.** Encourage an AIDS curriculum appropriate to all grade levels beginning K-6.

- **Anonymous testing.** Encourage county commissioners to support anonymous testing.

- **Child-bearing women.** Make special efforts to teach women of child-bearing age the risks of unsafe practices to unborn children and to themselves.

Recommendations also addressed training of caregivers, expanding drug abuse services, recommending that all hospitals care for PWAs, providing direction and support to businesses, and expanding services for families and friends of PWAs.

Free Copies

For a copy of the report, go to the United Way office at 301 S. Brevard St. in downtown Charlotte, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. A limited number of copies are available. A United Way official said to phone before coming to the office: 372-7170.