

# Q-Notes

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Compromise**

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come in a size 12?"**

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Photo by Dean Gaskey

## White Rabbit destroyed in blaze Authorities unsure if bias was a factor

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—In the early morning of April 3, someone set fire to the building that housed White Rabbit Books and Things, Charlotte's largest gay and lesbian bookstore. But even though White Rabbit and another gay-owned business, Charles Josef Designs, were located in the property, most are reluctant to use the term "hate-crime" in connection with the incident.

At approximately 2:45am, firefighters received the call for the two-alarm blaze. By the time they arrived at the Rensselaer Avenue address, the Victorian-style building was already heavily damaged — and by the time they had extinguished the fire, White Rabbit was lost.

"Most everything was destroyed," said John Neal, 43, owner of the store. "The actual fire destroyed one room and the water, smoke and heat destroyed all the rest. Out of the entire store, maybe ten books, which were wrapped in plastic, were salvagable for their full value."

Although there were no witnesses, officials are treating the fire as arson. Fire Investigator Tim Jonas, who is assigned to the case, noted, "We are treating this as an 'incendiary fire' which means that it was intentionally

set." He refused to comment on the widely-reported claim that an accelerant was used to further the fire.

Because the blaze started between two buildings — rather than in direct contact with White Rabbit — and the store experienced relatively little harassment in its two and a half years at the Dilworth location, the idea that this was an anti-gay hate crime was being downplayed.

In *Creative Loafing*, an alternative newsweekly, three gay community leaders expressed caution about jumping to any conclusions. And Neal isn't sure what to think either. "I don't know. We were the lead tenant in the building. If someone burned [it] down due to one of the tenants, we would be the most likely target."

If fire officials believe that the bookstore was a target, they won't admit it. Jonas only concedes that leads are being tracked. "Some information has come in and we are investigating those leads." But he would not reveal any specifics nor discuss any possible suspects.

As for the future of White Rabbit in Charlotte, Neal says that plans are already underway to bring the store back quickly. "We're working as hard as we can to reopen as fast as we can. We're looking at all available areas."

## New school curriculum keeps gays in the classroom closet

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Concerns are being raised about the absence of homosexuality information in Mecklenburg County's new proposed health education curriculum and the message this will send to gay and lesbian youth in the school system.

Recent studies have shown that up to 30 percent of all teen suicide attempts pertain to issues regarding sexual orientation. These incidents are often triggered by the feelings of confusion, inadequacy and isolation gay and lesbian youth experience.

Gwen Ferguson, mother of a gay son and board member of Time Out Youth, a support organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender youth, thinks that the omission of homosexuality from the school curriculum just reinforces the idea that homosexuality is an unspeakable evil. "The message this sends is that there is no problem to be addressed. The silence speaks loudly to the gay population that we aren't worthy to even be discussed."

According to a consultant on the new curriculum, Father Joe Mulligan, the only reason homosexuality was not included in the guidelines was because it was divisive. "We wanted to build consensus. We didn't want to jeopardize the entire curriculum over one issue. At this time we felt like there were certain issues to encourage being handled in other places in the community rather than in the curriculum."

Fr. Mulligan chairs an assembly of multi-faith clergy representatives, called the Interfaith Advisory Council, which is one of three groups making recommendations on the new curriculum to school superintendent Dr. John Murphy.

The Interfaith Advisory Council has between "fifteen and eighteen" members, and one of them is especially troubling to gay and lesbian youth advocates. "Rev. Joe Chambers should not be on the panel," said Ferguson. "I don't think it's appropriate at all. The panel should at least contain neutral participants. But if people like Chambers are going to be included, then there should be some gay-

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## Anti-gay education, HIV assault law among NC AIDS bills

by David Jones  
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—AIDS finally surfaced in the new conservative-dominated North Carolina General Assembly just as the deadline for filing bills expired. Legislation introduced by conservative Republicans includes a bill to require that public schools teach sexual abstinence until marriage in all health and sexually-transmitted disease (STD) courses, and a bill that would make it a felony for a person with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, to have intimate physical contact with another person. Both bills were immediately opposed by AIDS activists. Two other bills were greeted more warmly — an effort to appropriate \$2

million for AIDS case management and a bill to limit some discrimination in health insurance based on pre-existing medical conditions.

### Sexual abstinence proposed as school standard

Republican Robin Hayes, a House member from Concord, introduced House Bill 834 "Schools Teach Sexual Abstinence," to add new requirements for the health education curricula for public schools. The bill would require schools to teach that sexual abstinence is the only certain way of avoiding STDs, including AIDS, or unwanted preg-

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## SC Pride kicks off march season

by John Scruggs  
Special to Q-Notes

COLUMBIA—Billed as the nation's "first Pride event in 1995," South Carolina's annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Weekend was greeted with springtime weather and cheering crowds. As the April 8 marchers' chants echoed the theme of "Pride Begins at Home," they also celebrated a community that is growing, maturing and coming out to a whole new existence.

The 1995 celebration marked the second year that the festivities have been held in April. The march was moved last year to avoid conflicts with Stonewall 25. After the success of that march, the South Carolina Gay and Lesbian Pride Movement (GLPM) permanently moved the event to April to avoid the heat of the Carolina summer and conflicts with marches in neighboring states.

By 11:00am on April 8, thousands were beginning to gather for the Pride march which didn't begin until 1:00pm. By step-off time, the crowd estimates had grown to 3,000 as the throng trekked down Main Street toward the

State House. South Carolina's Pride events have a uniquely political flavor to them — and this essence was reinforced as marchers "stormed the State House steps" as they traditionally do each year.

The Gay and Lesbian Pride Rally was emceed by Mandy Carter of the Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum. During the Rally, Kevin Blaesing talked of continuing gay and lesbian witch hunts in the armed forces. Blaesing, who repeatedly received honors and promotions while in the Marines, was discharged for being gay, though he was never asked and, until the Pride Rally, had never publicly stated that he was gay.

Don Davis, of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, held a brick from South Carolina's Gay and Lesbian Community Center that he was taking back to Virginia with him to use as a cornerstone for a new center he hoped would be built there. Rev. Patricia Voelker, of Columbia's Metropolitan Community Church, spoke about the shame and hatred heaped upon gays and lesbians and

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## Deadline approaching for annual Q-Notes awards

CHARLOTTE—Nominations are currently being accepted for this year's Q-Notes OUT!Bound Award and Mark Drum Memorial Award, to be presented by Q-Notes during the Pride 1995 rally. This year will be the fourth time the annual awards have been presented.

The Mark Drum Memorial Award is given to recognize an individual who has done outstanding and exceptional work in the HIV/AIDS-affected community.

Mark Drum was a Q-Notes staff writer who chronicled his battle with the disease until his passing in May of 1991. We are honored to pay tribute to Mark and feel this award is our appreciation in action.

The Q-Notes OUT!Bound Award is presented to someone who has made a significant impact on the lesbian and gay community in North and/or South Carolina. This person will have made a viable change through activism, lobbying, and community service.

If you or your community service organization know a person who should be considered for either prize, please write to us. Include in your letter a brief personal profile of the individual; a description of their work and performance; and the reasons why their contribution has been exceptional.

We are aware that hundreds of people in the gay and lesbian community are committed every day to extinguishing disease; suffering; bigotry; bashing; and discrimination, so choosing these recipients will be a difficult process.

The deadline for your submission is Monday, May 15.

All applications will be given serious consideration by a nominating committee; finalists will be voted on by the entire staff.

Please make sure that you include your contact information, as we will be making further inquiry regarding finalists.

Send your submissions to Q-Notes, P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222.