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# Q Notes

Noted . Notable . Noteworthy . LGBT News & Views

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## Proudly walking the Walk for AIDS

**HIV-positive nine-year-old tops fundraising for upcoming AIDS benefit**

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

Jordan Mitzel was born in the Spring of 1998. To say that he arrived with the deck stacked against him is sort of like saying Albert Einstein was bright or that Brad Pitt is cute. It's true, but it doesn't really convey the proportion.

Jordan's birth mother was an alcoholic, crack-addicted, HIV-infected prostitute. She was apparently traveling the East Coast on a bender when she went into labor in Charlotte. Jordan was born drug addicted and suffering from Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. He needed assistance just to breathe.

According to a Johns Hopkins report, HIV infects approximately one in four babies born to HIV-positive women not receiving medical treatment. Jordan was among the misfortunate minority. However, a few days after his birth something finally went his way.

His mother abandoned him at the hospital.

At five days old Jordan was placed in the home of Beverly Mitzel and Sonja Austin. After 11 months together the couple, at the time 37 and 39 years old respectively, were ready to start a family. They had already completed the necessary steps for becoming foster parents in Mecklenburg County. All they were waiting for was a phone call.

"I got the call from our foster care agency at work," remembers Mitzel, then a UNC-Charlotte employee who now works for the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN).

"We had requested an HIV-positive child and, I think, he was one of only two born in the county that year. With the improved medications the rates were way down. They told us he was three days old and we could have him at five days, when he could be released from the NICU (newborn intensive care unit)."

Caring for Jordan was a formidable task. His viral load was in the millions so he was immediately put on two liquid medications. At

six months he was switched to a powerful multi-drug cocktail.

"Oh my god, it was awful," Mitzel says. "The liquid medicines were foul tasting. We had to hold him down to give them to him. The liquid form of Ritonovir tastes like peppermint flavored lighter fluid and the consistency is almost like Vaseline. It would coat his mouth and nothing cuts it; milk doesn't cut it.

He'd have this foam coming out of his mouth and then he'd vomit. So, we'd have to start over."

Undaunted, Mitzel and Austin accepted a second special needs child when Jordan was three. Two-year-old Joseph was born with a genetic condition that prevented his

intestines from functioning properly. A permanent colostomy was the only option to save his life.

In 2003, four-year-old Alexis and her nine-month-old half-sister Malaysia were wel-

comed in.

Today, all four children are adopted. The family's unique circumstances and rich diversity, including the fact that Mitzel, Austin and Jordan are white while Joseph, Alexis and Malaysia are black, has forged a powerful and intentional bond.

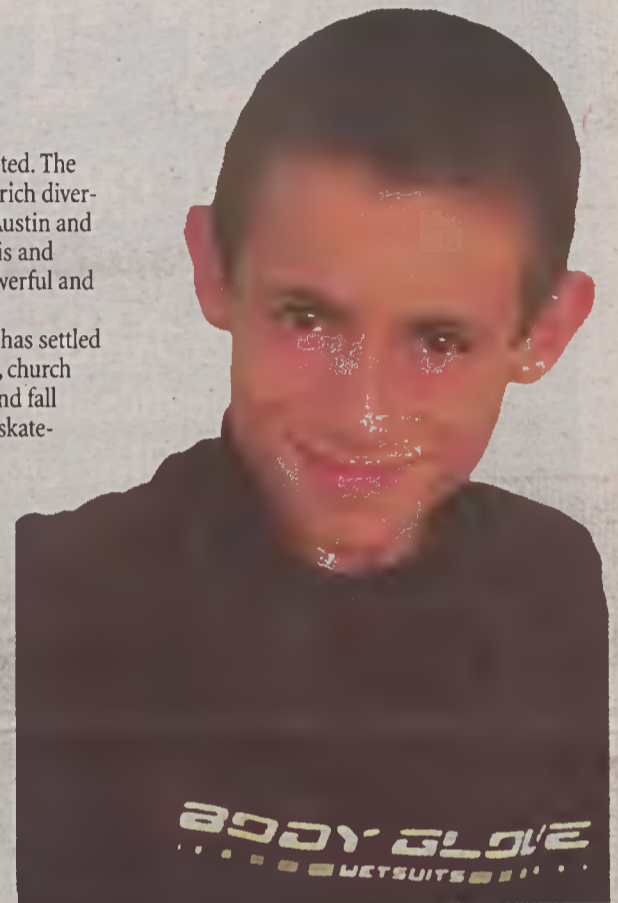
At the cusp of nine, Jordan's life has settled into a routine of elementary school, church services at MCC Charlotte, spring and fall league baseball, pets, video games, skateboarding and a twice-daily dose of seven pills and 15ccs of AZT. His viral load is undetectable and he is healthy.

"About six months ago he finally asked me if he had HIV," Mitzel says. "It was shortly after he went to the pediatric infectious disease clinic he visits every four months. They check his T-cell count, viral load, make sure we're compliant with the meds — that sort of thing. He saw the posters on the clinic walls. He just said, 'Do I have HIV or A-I-D-S?' He doesn't say 'AIDS,' he pronounces the letters."

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Jordan and his whimsical flock have raised about \$3,700 for AIDS Walk Charlotte thus far.



Jordan wants everyone to know that "sometimes people are scared of people with HIV and they don't have to be."

## Religious right tries to derail hate crimes laws

**Propaganda campaign based on lies and half-truths**

by Ralph G. Neas

WASHINGTON, D.C. — On March 15, the body of Ryan Keith Skipper, 25, was found bloodied and abandoned on a roadside in Wahneta, Fla. Police have charged two men with first-degree murder and announced that witness testimony makes clear that Skipper was killed because he was gay. The sad reality of brutal crimes motivated by hatred is the impetus for bipartisan federal hate crimes legislation recently introduced in Congress.

Currently federal legislators are considering three bills that would put an end to hate crimes, employment discrimination and "Don't



Legislation is urgently needed to stamp out hate crimes against LGBT Americans.

Ask, Don't Tell."

The American public has shown that it wants Congress to pass hate crimes laws, which are designed to prevent and punish violent acts that target individuals from a particular part of the community for intimidation and physical harm. But Religious Right groups are so eager to prevent any legal recognition or protection for gay and lesbian Americans

that they are waging an aggressive

disinformation campaign against these legal protections.

Their strategy? Create a distraction from the reality of violent crimes by claiming that such laws are really designed to criminalize Christianity.

The campaign is, of course, dishonest to the core. But it is part of a larger strategy that has been politically and financially useful to Religious Right leaders over the years. They tell millions of Americans, week after week, that gay rights advocates are out to silence conservative Christians, criminalize the reading of the Bible, and force people to choose between their faith and public service. It's not true. But it serves the radical right's political goals: it is easier to convince Americans to support discrimination — even to oppose laws designed to discourage violent hate crimes — if you have first convinced them

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N.C. introduces non-discrimination legislation

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LGBT Iraqi deaths continue to rise

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