

## Charlotte Business Guild

Meeting Date:  
Saturday, July 18, 2009

Program:  
Annual Pool Party  
Lake Norman  
(home of a CBG member)  
(Sponsored by Armin's Catering)

Cost:  
FREE CBG members, \$10 non-members  
(BYOB, Food Provided)

To get directions, call 704-565-5075  
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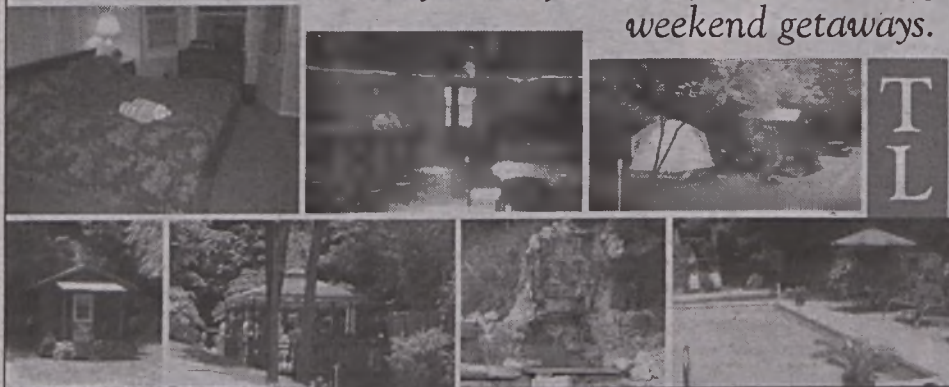
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## International News Notes

compiled by Q-Notes staff

### Age of consent bill defeated

GIBRALTAR — The parliament of this small British territory on June 18 voted down a member's bill to equalize the age of consent for gay men, which is currently 18. The age of consent for heterosexuals and lesbians is 16.

The decision by the parliament is in direct defiance of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Union.

Gibraltar is a self-governing overseas territory of the United Kingdom. Chief Minister Peter Caruana has been under pressure from London to comply on equalizing the age of consent, in addition to other human rights issues affecting the gay and lesbian community.

The bill, tabled by Daniel Seetham and defeated 8-4, was put on the parliamentary agenda at the very last minute.

Following the decision, Equality Rights Group GGR Chairman Felix Alvarez described the bill's defeat as "not surprising."

Alvarez said the reality of the situation is "quite different" from what has been painted. Alvarez said that a "clear majority" of the parliament's members are actually in favor of the equalization. "The public must not be confused by the complicated manoeuvres which have fudged the realities," he said.

In London, internationally-renowned activist Peter Tatchell lashed out at the decision.

"The opposition's vote against the bill gives a bad impression and contradicts its previous support for gay equality," Tatchell said.

— Andy Harley . UKGayNews.org.uk

### Lesbian couple sues

MOSCOW — Two lesbians refused the right to marry at a Moscow registry office in May have filed an official complaint and are suing for their right to marry.

The couple, Irina Fedotova-Fet and Irina Shepitko, say they will take their complaint to the City Court and then to the European Court of Human Rights. Russia is a member of the European Union.

"We intend to take the case to the highest level," Fedotova-Fet told *The Moscow Times*.

Leading Russian gay activist Nikolai Alexeyev is backing the couple's challenge.

While their case is winding its way through Russia's judicial system, the couple will travel to Canada and plan to wed there. A "loophole" in Russian family law might allow their foreign marriage to be recognized.

"An article in the Family Code says that foreign-registered marriages between Russians must be recognized. It lists four exceptions including bigamy and incest but not same gender," *The Times* reported.

"It's sort of a loophole in the law that really allows us to fight for this," Alexeyev said.

The activist admits he doesn't expect the couple to win. Other gay activists have questioned the couple's and activist's priorities.

"It's not the most high-priority talks, because the level of homophobia in society is too high," said activist Igor Petrov, chairman of the Russian LGBT Network.

— Matt Comer . Q-Notes staff

### Ambassador blasted for Pride support

LONDON — The British ambassador to Bulgaria has been slammed by a Bulgarian

conservative for his statement of support to a Pride festival in the nation.

Ambassador Steve Williams

(pictured) sent his statement of support to the organizers of the Rainbow Friendship Rally in Sofia in mid-June. The same festival last year ended in bloody riots as participants clashed with police and far-right nationalists.

"Celebrating diversity is not about promoting a lifestyle," Williams wrote. "It is about promoting respect for fundamental human rights. It is about the very essence of our European democratic values."

The leader of the Gaurdia Bulgarian National Alliance, a far-right, conservative party, has condemned Williams' interference.

"He should mind his own business and his country's business," said Bojan Rasate. "He has no right to tell Bulgarians how to live in Bulgaria. Europe has been ruled by homosexuals for a long time. We do not care how they live, but we do not want them to impose their pervert values on us."

Britain's ambassador to Poland, Ric Todd, created a similar controversy when he publicly backed a rally there.

The British government is backing their ambassadors and regard the messages of support as key to its human rights policies.

"We have had the policy for some time," a foreign ministry official said. "What's new is the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender [LGBT] Toolkit, which has raised the profile of such activities a bit."

Amnesty International's United Kingdom affiliate is putting pressure on the foreign office to continue pushing for LGBT equality in other nations.

— M.C.

### Gay men still at risk

SYDNEY, Australia — An Australian health group is warning that men who have sex with men (MSM) continue to be most at risk of contracting HIV, the virus which causes AIDS.

According to *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 64 percent of HIV cases between 2003 and 2007 were the result of male-to-male sexual contact. Transmission of the virus through heterosexual intercourse stood at 21 percent.

Officials with the Australian Federation of AIDS Organizations said that of the heterosexuals infected with HIV, 60 percent of them contracted the virus after sexual contact with partners from high-prevalence countries, such as those in southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

"Over the last few years, Western Australia and Queensland have detected concerning trends among Australians travelling and working in South East Asia and Papua New Guinea and becoming infected there — chiefly through unprotected sex between heterosexuals," federation president Graham Brown told the *Herald*.

Approximately 16,000 people are living with HIV in Australia. ■

— M.C.