

editor's note

by matt comer
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Transparency key to social trust

Shocked. Seriously, I was. What I thought was a simple, straightforward news story turned into one of our most controversial. As the comment count continued its upward trend, I thought to myself: "Why don't we ever get this kind of reaction on more important, impactful news pieces and features?"

The story — on allegations of fundraising fraud against Charlotte company Wooftase and event group Club Cub — racked up a total of 84 comments online (as of press time, the comment count was still rising). That's the most comments we've ever received on any story, ever. (To read that story, visit goqnotes.com/8247/.)

Then I realized: Our short, online article on Wooftase and Club Cub is one of those "more important, impactful stories" and hits on an issue that strikes at the very heart of our community.

At any given time there are various non-profit groups raising money, holding events or otherwise soliciting support. Sometimes, businesses also join in on the action and promise to give a portion of the money they receive to an area community group.

For the better part of our movement's history, non-profit and local, community-

based groups have been at the forefront of progress. By far, these organizations have pushed our agenda, offered us support, operated resource hotlines, websites and community centers and provided various social welfare programs and services. Without these groups and their hardworking volunteers, our community would look far different and we certainly wouldn't be where we are today.

In the case involving Wooftase and Club Cub, I take no stance or opinion. Speaking generally, however, our community must be on guard against groups or businesses who show up on the scene with less-than-pure intentions to solicit funds under fraudulent or not-so-transparent purposes. It's rare, but it does happen. And, when it happens a sort of social trust can break down.

There's only one way to battle against fraudulent "non-profit" groups, and it requires legitimate non-profits to operate with a sense of transparency and public accountability. Most often, although not always, real non-profits with legitimate purposes are more than willing to be open with their meeting minutes, financial data and budgets and other information, going far beyond the few annually-filed items that are legally required to be open for public inspection. These are the types of organizations that build trust

with their donors, stake holders and larger public and, at face value, can usually be trusted with your money.

In tight economic times it becomes that much more important to spend and donate your money wisely. Before contributing to a group that merely claims to be non-profit, be sure to check them out. Ask for their IRS tax-exempt determination letter or annual tax return filings and other information (much of which is also publicly available via guidestar.org, irs.gov and sosnc.com). If the group offers no resistance, you can generally be assured the organization is doing the right thing now and will likely continue to do the right thing once it receives your money.

CMPD forum: Let's make it a success

In our last print edition, on Sept. 18, I took the time to give due credit to Charlotte-

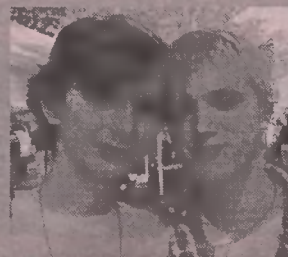
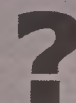
Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) officials and community members who pulled together to organize Chief of Police Rodney Monroe's community forum on Oct. 12 (see page 7 for more).

Come Oct. 12, my hope is to walk into the Community Center and see a standing-room-only crowd. We owe it to the people who made this possible and we owe it to our community. Want to help get people to the forum? Be sure to tell all of your friends, post about it on your Facebook or Twitter profiles, announce it in your church or faith group's service or newsletter or even offer to give folks a ride. The forum is our community's chance to be heard on issues related to CMPD. It is an all-too-rare opportunity in this city we can't pass up. For more information and directions to the Lesbian & Gay Community Center of Charlotte, visit gaycharlotte.com. :

qpoll

Why did you come or why are you going to NC Pride, Pride Charlotte and Blue Ridge Pride?

See the options and vote: goqnotes.com/to/qpoll



It's a way to show how free we are now, and we've got this and we will get more later. I think it's fun to come and see and it would help other people who might be questioning.

— Chase Wall, Booneville, N.C.
I haven't been to a parade before. They are important. Our parades will show we deserve our freedoms.



This is my very first time at NC Pride. It is very exciting.

— Doreen Donavan, Sanford, N.C.

I came to bring my girlfriend. I wanted her to experience being out and proud.

— Jeannine Hogan, Wilmington, N.C.

I always come to Pride. It's the only place to be with the community in the state and see very different parts of the community. It's also nice to be out in droves when 50 years ago we couldn't do this.

— Samantha Korb, Mebane, N.C.

I've been coming every year. I can't break the tradition.

— Lee Sartain, Raleigh, N.C.



I wanted to come with my girlfriend and we brought our children. They wanted to come and it's the first time they've been to anything like this.

— Wendy Perez, Sanford, N.C.

This is my second time coming. I wanted to bring [my family] and we are having a ball.

— Lisa Nelson, Sanford, N.C.



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