

Interested parties should contact Strickland at 704-825-3000.

House of Mercy opened on May 18, 1991. It was initiated by the Sisters of Mercy who were concerned with and wanted to respond to the AIDS epidemic.

info: thehouseofmercy.org

— L.M.

## Triad

### Benefit slated for Guilford

GREENSBORO — The 2013 Female Gurl Groove Artist Showcase to benefit the Guilford Green Foundation will be held on Sept. 28, 7:30 p.m., at the Blind Tiger, 1819 Spring Garden St.

This event showcases "some of North Carolina's best female singers and musicians," organizers said.

At press time, four artists had been confirmed with more to be announced. They are Carmen Sturgill, Tanya Ross, Amy Broome and Kristen Stillwell.

Sturgill is a lead singer/keyboardist who was previously with the Jill Austin Band and now fronts One Night Stand.

Ross is a singer/songwriter/musician whose music has been influenced by Gospel, Jazz and Soul. She heads up The Tanya Ross Project.

Broome is no stranger to the Carolina music scene. She was a former nominee for a plethora of awards tipping their hat to her talent as a Rock and Country musician.

Stillwell is an acoustical guitarist who melds an eclectic musical palette to create dreamy soundscapes with loops that dance in stereo. She performs with Willower.

During the evening's program, a raffle will be held with prizes donated by local businesses and companies. And, a food truck will be onsite serving up delicious fare for attendees.

Sponsors are Rowley Decorating Suppliers & More; North Carolina Candle Company, LLC; Aqua Salon & Spa; Earth Fare; and Tree of Life Counseling.

Tickets are \$10 and are available online or at the door.

info: ggnc.org.

— L.M.

### Aging summit on horizon

WINSTON-SALEM — The fifth in a series on aging issues meetings will be held on Sept. 24, 6 p.m., at Hospice & Palliative CareCenter, 101 Hospice Ln.

This professional summit is hosted by the Adam Foundation.

The focus of this gathering is to formulate an LGBT action list that will begin this month and will continue into 2014.

Those who work for a support organization for the aging population in a professional capacity are encouraged to attend.

info: jehuss@bellsouth.net.

— L.M.

## Western

### High country center on drawing board

ASHEVILLE — LGBT activists in the Asheville area have dreamed of a community center for decades, and, over the years, several attempts have been made, without success. Now, those dreams are stirring

again, and it seems, this time around, there are reasons for optimism.

"The enormous success of Blue Ridge Pride is the bellwether," said Yvonne Cook-Riley, a founding member of the International Foundation for Gender Education. Cook-Riley, who serves on the board of Blue Ridge Pride, says that attendance at Asheville's annual LGBT celebration has burgeoned. Since its inception in 2009, which saw an estimated 2,000 attendees, the number has increased every year, growing to 11,000 in 2012 and gaining national recognition. But, Blue Ridge Pride isn't the only indicator of a growing LGBT community in the mountains. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 12 percent of the Asheville-metro area are same-sex households. Moreover, Asheville regularly draws LGBT visitors from Upstate South Carolina, northern Georgia and eastern Tennessee, as well as LGBT tourists, both national and international.

Area support and social groups for the LGBT community range from potluck dinners in peoples' homes to various religious and spiritual organizations, which meet in local houses of worship. A youth support group, groups for LGBT elders, hiking and book clubs and political organizations abound, dispersed throughout the city and the surrounding countryside. But, it is precisely this dispersion that calls for a center, a facility that is not borrowed or leased, but one which the LGBT community owns. "Ownership is of primary importance," said Cook-Riley. "You can't rely on charity forever; it's time for Asheville's LGBT community to stand on its own. The interest is there; the money's there. It's time to start building."

The LGBT Service Center is in the planning stages. A community forum hosted by Blue Ridge Pride will be held on Sept. 22, 3 p.m., at the University of North Carolina-Asheville, Humanities Lecture Hall. (A campus map is available online at maps.unca.edu/campusmap for exact location.) Rebecca Chaplin, L.S., M.A., will serve as the moderator. Chaplin is the group facilitator and chair of LGBT Elder Advocates of Western North Carolina.

The objective is to have input for a needs assessment. Those who have expressed interest and representatives of LGBT support and social groups, as well as the general public, are encouraged to attend. Attendees should come ready to answer the question: Why does Western North Carolina need or not need an LGBT community service center?

According to Cook-Riley, this facility could house a library and education center, a gallery, performance spaces, meeting rooms, spaces for fellowship and socializing, daycare, counseling clinics, and especially important for sustainability, retail areas. And, those retail areas need not be confined to shops and cafés. Organizers hope that law and real estate offices catering to the LGBT population will recognize the business opportunities the center affords. Feasibility studies are still to be done and funding will ultimately determine the size and scope of the center. info/rsvp: yvonne@blueridgepride.com. 828-254-6125.

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