

The Stars are Ours...Make Them Yours
Oleens 1991

The Legend Lives On...

APRIL

Drink Specials
Sun Mon Tues Wed
\$1.50 House Drinks
Mon Tues Wed
25¢ Draft
Thurs
\$4.00 Draft
"All You Can Drink"

Fri., 5th The Virgin Goddess, Miss Gypsy Starr
along with the new talents of Brittany Michaels
and the Bold and Beautiful Tiffany Storm

Sat., 6th Oleen's Own Legends, Boom Boom LaTour,
Brittany Gwynne and Veronica Leigh

Fri., 12th The New Wave Sensation Martina Desiree
with the Dancing Toes of Ashley Jordan
and Miss Oleen's Veronica Leigh

Sat., 13th Our Special Guest Martina Desiree
returns with Soul Sister Kasey King and
The Human Hurricane Tiffany Storm

Fri., 19th How about a Little Salt and Pepper to Spice
Things Up?
Our Own Brittany Gwynne and Kasey King
with Our March Talent Winner

Sat., 20th The Legend with Class, Miss Toni Lenoir
with Sex Goddess Gypsy Starr and
Trash-ly Ashley Jordan

Fri., 26th If you've got star quality come star with us
TALENT SHOW
\$100 plus Booking to Winner
Hosted by the Lovely Veronica Leigh

Sat., 27th Funny Lady Boom Boom LaTour
with the Sensational Vanessa Richards along
with the Hunk Greg Richardson and
Tommy Lee

COMING SATURDAY MAY 4,
MR. CHARLOTTE LEATHER
and don't forget Kasey King's Sunday
Night Bargain Basement.

OLEEN'S

1831 South Boulevard, Charlotte, N.C.
(704) 373-9604

Community Center

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should do what they need to do, and at the same time respect what another person/group needs to do."

Ruth Derrow used similar language. "We have to promote a real respect and mutual appreciation," she said. "We're all trying to improve the quality of life — we have to be united." Derrow went on to state that it was always a handful of individuals doing the work and setting the tone, and that we needed to be supportive of each other.

"More communication" is what Kimberly Melton, chair of WOW and owner of Lambda Connections, felt was the key to creating a better community. "In the past we just wanted a community, but didn't think through what that meant," Melton said it was positive that all these Gay and Lesbian organizations now exist in Charlotte, but that more individuals still needed to get involved.

"I challenge members of our community to volunteer even just one time this year," she said. "If everyone would do this, we would create an incredible feeling and *community*."

Back to the beginning

In the course of talking with these leaders, Q-Notes received a more detailed account of what the Community Center committee plan entailed than has ever been made public.

The Community Center committee began as an outgrowth of MCSP thinking about its own space needs. Ruth Derrow asked *that* board to fund a study about starting a Center, and then went about asking a wide variety of community members to serve on the committee.

The committee met regularly for more than a year, doing surveys of individuals, schools and organizations, and they also talked to several other Centers around the country. Two community meetings were held. At the first meeting in the Spring of 1990, organization leaders were invited to share their thoughts and possible space needs with the committee. At the second meeting in November 1990, organizations were given a statement and asked to take it back and endorse it so that the Center committee could begin fundraising for the project.

In a conversation with former Center committee members Zay Kittredge, David Parsons and John Fryday, I learned that the project was poised to move forward very quickly upon the endorsement of the established community organizations. The Center committee had concluded that there were two options: 1) if they could get the building donated, they would need to raise \$250,000 to cover outfitting costs, provide a salary for one staff member, provide annual operating expenses, and create an endowment to ward off future financial difficulties; or 2) raise a total of \$750,000 to buy a building and provide everything else as noted in option 1.

The Center committee had a tentative commitment for a donated building, pledges for \$85,000 of the \$250,000 goal, and prospect lists for another \$140,000. That would leave \$25,000 to come from grassroots fundraising from the community. A special escrow account had already been set up, so contributions coming in would be protected in case the Center never came about (the monies would then be returned to each donor). The committee maintained that while they would operate as a separate entity, the backing of MCSP gave the project a credibility that donors wanted to see.

The Community Center Study, a report prepared by the committee in February 1990, was based on 174 completed surveys. The surveys were received from 50 people who attended the MCSP coffeehouse, 21 community leaders/Coalition members, 45 bar patrons and 58 persons from the MCSP mailing list.

In addition, Centers in Dallas, Los Angeles, New York City, Tampa and Washington were contacted for advice. The surveys showed 3 to 1 in favor of that there was a high need for a Center.

In ranking facility needs, the survey showed meeting space first, followed by a bookstore, office space, an auditorium/library, and possibly a coffeehouse and fitness center.

Eighty-three preferred to have the Center located in the Uptown area, with 16 suggesting a suburban location. A majority (number not available) felt the Center should be owned so that no one could throw us out for catering to the Gay/Lesbian community.

Ninety-three wanted the Center open to the public, 87 wanted a moderate profile, and 16 wanted the Center to be highly visible. The main consideration listed was that the Center had to be a safe place to go. The study eventually recommended that the words Gay and Lesbian should not appear on the signage out front.

In discussions with other Centers nationally, recommendations included: 1) start small and evolve; 2) try to have expansion capability as once a tenant group becomes successful, they may need more space; 3) locating near gay bars helped to make people feel safe at night.

Some Centers had trouble with visibility and vandalism; 4) using paid staff early in the project helps to ensure better management; 5) have anchor tenants, such as a bookstore, but be careful about building around an existing health organization. Either they become too big and have to move out, or the Center becomes too identified with health-related issues; and 6) the main responsibility of the Center Board is to provide fundraising programs.

In deciding not to go forward with the project, the Center committee suggested to MCSP that there was too much dissension among community leaders over who would "control" the Center. Derrow felt that the moderate people/organizations made up their minds too late, or that they weren't aware of the seriousness of the dissension being caused by a few vocal people.

Robert Waymack, past president and now community liaison of MCSP, said there was no animosity toward anyone about the decision made. He felt that MCSP needed to do some work on their image in the community, so that more people would know about the valuable services they provide.

When asked, he said that MCSP "would take any offer to join (a new Center) seriously. It was actually a valuable undertaking for MCSP, and we stand ready to help if asked."

Starting from Zero

"We all have a tremendous yearning for a Center — the same goal," stated Tonda Taylor. "We have some serious differences on the way we get there." As a feasibility study on renting space was not a formal part of the final Community Center Study, the Leadership Coalition is starting from ground zero with information on this possibility.

Several people feel this is a way to involve the community as a whole at the beginning of the project. Dick Woodhouse and Keith Bernard, both Board members of First Tuesday, stated that it was a good idea to begin with some rental space, as it would help define what a Center would become. First Tuesday has already budgeted monies to install a phone line for themselves in whatever space is found.

Others talked about the commitment it will take from individuals to volunteer their time — to any organization — that will truly start building a community which in turn could lead to a healthy Center.

The Leadership Coalition will be discussing all these issues at upcoming meetings. Their options range from renting to rethinking MCSP's plan to new ideas not yet conceived. If they rent, they will have to get by the fact that they don't have a track record to go to a bank or negotiate with a landlord, and that a renter might change his/her tune once they find out who the Coalition represents.

Whatever the outcome, Taylor described the process as "no lack of dreams," and Waymack stated "the dream still lives on." The true outcome may depend not on the established leadership, but on hundreds of individuals finding a way to voice their interest, concerns and dreams so that the building of a *community* can begin before the bricks and mortar are in place.

MetroLink BBS

Charlotte's Gay/Lesbian computer bulletin board, member of GayCom, a network of Gay/Lesbian BBS' throughout the U.S. and Canada. Large message base, Magazine section, files and travel information. 300/1200/2400 bauds supported. 24 hours. 704-568-6124.