

Lesbian Workshop
Sat, Sept. 14
1:00-5:00

Workshop for
Gay Men
Sunday,
Sept. 15
1:00-
5:00

LAMBDA CONNECTIONS

presents two special workshops:

Self-Defense for Lesbians & Gays

Violence against Lesbians and Gays is a reality.

What would you do when confronting violent situations?

The workshop will cover:

- Awareness and prevention
- Assessing violent situations
- Defensive fighting skills
- Creating safety for yourself and others.

The workshop is being conducted by Safeskills Associates SELF-PROTECTION PROGRAMS.

The fee is \$35.00. Workshops will be held at Wyndham Garden Hotel, Tyvola Road near the Coliseum.

There is a limited number of spaces available each day.

For more information, call: 704•535•8435.

Please make checks payable to: Lambda Connections

Send to:

Lambda Connections, P.O. Box 12072, Charlotte, NC 28220

Letters to the Editor

Please end Charlotte's "bar wars"

This letter is in regard to the so called "Bar Wars" here in Charlotte.

I'm a female impersonator of 14 years and have entertained all over the U.S. Though I've never held a major title I feel I'm a talented entertainer, but with all the bar wars here not only is it hard to get started at a club, it is also ridiculous that if you perform at one club you are barred from working at another.

There are so many talented entertainers in Charlotte, both new and old, who aren't permitted to entertain where they want to.

If only all the bar owners and managers could get together and work out a deal of some kind, then I think all the bars could become more profitable on the whole deal.

All I ask is please stop the bar wars and let's work together instead of against each other to become the "top club."

— Tommy Jay

Many thanks to the bars

As chairman of the fundraising committee of the Charlotte Chapter/PFLAG, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to the gay bars that did benefits for the chapter this year. They are: Attitude, Brass Rail, Hideaway, Illusions, Manfreds, Oleens, Scorpio and the Tradesmen. The proceeds from these benefits have been used to buy books and do a mailing of pamphlets to those who request information about PFLAG, and also a mailing of our monthly newsletter.

Again, many thanks to these nice people.

— Stokely Bailey

Letters to the Editor are welcome on any subject. Letters will be printed on a space-available basis and should be type-written (double-spaced) and concise. All letters should be signed and must include the writer's name, address and phone number for verification. The names of letter writers will be withheld upon request. Q-Notes reserves the right to edit letters for style, grammar, clarity and length.

To be or not to be: closeted or not?

by Stephen B. Finnan
Special to Q-Notes

Very recently, I watched a PBS program entitled *Out in America*. Of all the various comments offered by nationally known gay activists regarding the difficulties of being gay in our culture, the only perspective that really made a lasting impression on me was that of Larry Kramer. His intense anger and frustration was focused on closeted gays — our majority — who, in an important sense "deny their validity."

Several years ago, I produced and directed, under the administrative protest of a small, central Alabama university, Kramer's play *The Normal Heart*. Experiencing his latest remarks reminded me of one of his play's central themes: all gay people must become visible; only when the invisible majority — the millions who do not reflect the negative stereotypes — allow themselves to be known, can there be any success in combating the cultural stigma. I agree with Kramer.

To be in the closet is to essentially deny who we are and, thus, embrace the shame that much of our culture would mount upon us. Denying who we are reflects, to one degree or another, self-hatred and results in dysfunctional acting out that guarantees unhappiness.

Yes, I know the issue is "complicated." "What of my job? How can I live if my family disowns me?" Just what are you losing if your family finds you impossible to love knowing you are gay? If they are "loving" you outside of that awareness, they are not loving the real you anyway, only an act. And, if millions were out of the closet, there would be enforceable federal and state laws to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Having gone through much difficulty relaxing into my present "comfort" as an openly gay man, I am hardly unaware of problems involved with processing out of self-hatred. We are consistently reminded of our culture's homophobia. And, whether we like to admit

it or not, most of us were conditioned into this homophobic perspective. Thus, upon the discovery that we were gay, began to experience internalized homophobia—we were one of "those" kind: despicable, perverted, etc. In addition, many of us were raised within a dysfunctional family — a system that taught us that we were unlovable innately, that firmly implanted low self esteem where we were helpless, vulnerable children.

This issue of ending closetedness is very difficult, is overwhelming to most of us. However, we are not stuck — we require appropriate support: attending gay affirmation groups, working with a specialized therapist who relates to gay issues, doing purposeful reading, seeking out ACOA groups if we were raised in dysfunction, etc., etc. It's all about self-loving. By committing to and processing through appropriate behavior modification techniques, self-love is within our reach.

I do know that, as I have become at ease with myself, loving myself, the people around me (family, straight friends, colleagues and even neighbors) are, with rare exception, also at ease. Because of the truthful security that I project, I simply give them no other choice. If they should elect to be tense, it's their trip and I would refuse to participate. All of us are truly responsible for our own choices, for our lives. If we choose to deny the core of who we are, why are we living? Money? Power? Community respect? If you are not peaceful within yourself, you are only going through the motions of being alive and no amount of anything external will rid you of your emptiness.

Stephen B. Finnan resides in Wilmington. He teaches acting privately and occasionally produces and directs theatre geared for special interest groups. He is involved in gay community service work—facilitating ACOA groups, doing public speaking, volunteer counseling and various committee work.

Are you HIV+ (HIV antibody positive)?

A Research Study is being conducted at UNC-Chapel Hill to examine the role of stress on the immune system for people at risk for getting AIDS.

Who Qualifies?

- Gay or Bisexual Men
- HIV+ or HIV-
- No symptoms related to HIV*
- Not on any antivirals (e.g., AZT)*
- 18 - 50 years old

Benefits:

- \$175.00 for 2 day/night visit
- Free medical exams
- Free blood tests (including T-4 cell)
- Access to all medical and lab results
- Referrals to resources

*upon entry into the study

All information kept strictly confidential. If you meet all of the criteria listed, you may be eligible for this research study. Call (919) 966-6001 or (919) 966-5478 collect for more information.

You can help make a difference in the fight against AIDS.