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HIV test limits driving totals down in risk groups State changes criteria in mid-study to indicate otherwise

by David Jones
Q-Notes Staff

RALEIGH—The first results are in on the state's decision to restrict anonymous HIV testing to only a few counties.

Total tests of gay men and IV drug users are down significantly. Where there is no anonymous testing, tests are also down for sex-partners of persons with HIV infection and those of IV drug users. Testing for all high-risk groups combined has declined.

AIDS activists, public health experts and medical experts who opposed limiting access to anonymous testing predicted just such a result. However, the state health department says that it is pleased.

Effective September 1, 1991, anonymous HIV testing was restricted to 17 counties (it had been available in all 100). A lawsuit filed by ACT-UP/Triangle resulted in a temporary

order that kept anonymous testing in Durham County while the court considered whether to restore anonymous testing in other or all counties. A decision is expected in early March, 1992.

In approving the state health department's proposal, the Health Services Commission ordered the state to conduct an analysis of the effect of the change, and report back to the commission every six months — something the state did not want to have to do.

State Health Director Dr. Ron Levine presented his first report to the commission on February 5, 1992 (covering the four months before and after the policy change). He was able to label the experiment a success so far by changing the criteria for evaluating it and using questionable data.

The state's announced objective in phasing-out anonymous testing was to get more

names so that partner notification would be more effective in reaching those at highest risk. But Levine has decided to evaluate the new policy based on total number of tests and total number of positives. Using Levine's figures, total tests are up 16.5% and positive tests are up 6.4%. He argues that the policy is working since total positive tests are up, even though the state's own analysis shows that tests for gay men are down 16.8% and IV drug users down 8%.

In addition to trying to change the objective of the policy change, the state is not using the figures that are relevant to the question of whether the lack of anonymous testing discourages testing of people at highest risk.

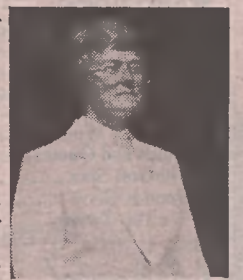
The state is analyzing all "public-sector tests." That includes testing locations like prison, prenatal clinics, and STD clinics.

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MCC pastor resigns Services to continue

by Dan Van Mourik
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—Reverend Lynn Guerra, pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Charlotte (MCCC), resigned effective February 1, 1992. Guerra declined to make any statement beyond the contents of her letter to the MCCC Board of Directors. In that letter, Guerra stated, "I know that some of you will feel betrayed, some will be angry, some will be happy, some will be relieved...I have spent over nine years here in Charlotte building a home for God. My work here is finished."



No one contacted would detail the reasons behind Guerra's resignation, all preferring to call this period a time of "healing."

MCCC will celebrate its 12th anniversary this summer, possibly without a pastor. Richard Wisner, Vice Moderator of MCCC's Board of Directors, stated that it could take from six months to a year to find a new pastor. A Search Committee has not yet been established, but Wisner said several options were available for locating a pastor interested in serving the Charlotte area.

Don Watkins, MCCC's Senior Deacon, heads a worship services team whose responsibility it is to arrange preachers and lay speakers for Sunday services. Watkins stated that Wednesday evening services have been temporarily suspended, but all other scheduled programs and services would continue without interruption.

Everyone contacted emphasized that MCC Charlotte would continue to serve the spiritual needs of the community. "God's church will go forward," Watkins said. He also wanted the community to know that the MCCC office would be staffed and all calls and letters would be handled in the appropriate manner.

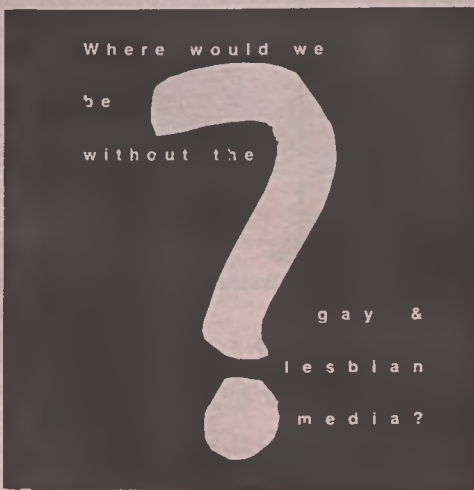
March is Gay Media Awareness Month Q-Notes reflects on serving the Carolinas

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

Unbeknownst to most, March is Gay and Lesbian Media Awareness Month, that one time of the year when community newspapers, magazines, cable access programs and radio shows get to turn the spotlight back onto themselves and say, "Job well done." Here at Q-Notes, the staff decided to mark the occasion by taking a stroll down memory lane and recalling some of our history.

The first issue of Q-Notes (the newspaper)

rolled off the press in June 1986 (it originally began as a monthly newsletter in September, 1983). Volume 1, No. 1, was eight pages long and contained seven ads, five display ads and two business cards. The lead article was a full, front-page story about the Carolina Drummer contest which was going to be held in Charlotte. The reason the Drummer contest received such excellent coverage was two-fold:



1) it was the first regional leather contest to be held in the Carolinas and 2) it was being produced by Queen City Quordinators (who just happened to own Q-Notes). QCQ was an umbrella organization comprised of community leaders assembled to assist, and raise money for, other organizations (such as paying the Switchboard's phone bill for many years). The idea to publish the newspaper sprang from the same vein of civic mindedness that prompted the group to raise money and then give it away. The Board of QCQ hired Don King as Editor-in-Chief and gave him full responsibility for its completion. This meant he had to write the copy, sell the ads, design the ads, typeset the paper, and do the manual paste-up while maintaining a full time job at *The Charlotte Observer*. King pulled off this difficult task for quite a while, but after a year and a half, he was ready to step down. The first post-King issue was October 1987 which was four pages long and featured a lead article about Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork. Also on the front page was an open letter from Jim Yarbrough, then the

current QCQ president, to the community and the advertisers assuring them of the paper's continuation. That commitment was personally met by Yarbrough, QCQ's immediate past president Dean Gaskey, and board member Joel Smith. It was a challenge for the three men, since they had little or no previous newspaper experience, but one that was taken head-on.

The next major change for Q-Notes occurred in September 1988 when QCQ closed down and gave publication rights to C.A.N. Inc. (Charlotte Advocacy Network). This move was taken so the newspaper could legally express political views and opinions. Under C.A.N., Q-Notes continued to flourish - reaching a consistent twelve pages from issue to issue and utilizing spot color. These changes were enacted under the guidance of Dean Gaskey, editor during this period. But

like Don King, maintaining editorship of the growing newspaper and holding a full-time job grew wearisome, and Gaskey decided to resign. Then, a few months later, Joel Smith was also ready to move on to other challenges so he, too, stepped down. These events left Jim Yarbrough as the lone major stockholder and led to the closing of C.A.N. Inc. At the last board meeting, November 1989, Yarbrough's bid to buy Q-Notes outright was accepted.

Since that time, the paper has been in a constant state of growth and maturation. The addition of new personnel and an influx of new ideas over the past two years has ushered in something akin to a mini "Golden Era" for the publication.

But rest assured, this newspaper HAS NOT yet reached its potential - and we certainly aren't ready to rest on our laurels. The motivation to inform, challenge, and report continues stronger than ever. In fact, we anxiously await the evolution of this newspaper during the next six years, firmly believing that the best is yet to come!

HUD releases housing money

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will free up \$50 million in AIDS housing money that has been locked in the Department since October 1991, the AIDS Action Council announced February 11. HUD's action culminates a months-long face-off with AIDS activists over the department's foot dragging in writing regulations for the AIDS Housing Opportunities Act. The action came on February 10, the same day as a meeting between high-level HUD officials and AIDS Action Council, the AIDS National Interfaith Network (ANIN), and the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts.

**"HUD officials told us,
'Stop the letters and phone
calls. You won.'"**

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Nominations sought for First Annual Q-Notes Awards

CHARLOTTE—This year at the annual Q-Notes Summer Breeze Gay and Lesbian Pride Picnic, Sunday, June 7, at Charlotte's Bryant Park, we will inaugurate a pair of very special awards for two individuals from the Carolinas.

The first, known as the Mark Drum Memorial Award, will recognize an individual who has done outstanding and exceptional work in the HIV/AIDS-affected community.

Mark Drum was a Q-Notes staff writer who chronicled his battle with the disease until his passing last July. We are honored to pay tribute to Mark and feel this award will be our appreciation in action.

The second citation is the Q-Notes OUT! Bound Award whose recipient will be someone who has made a significant impact on the lesbian and gay community in North and/or South Carolina.

This person will have made a viable change through activism, lobbying, and community service.

If you or your community service orga-

nization know a person who should be considered for either prize, please write to us. Include in your letter a brief personal profile of the individual, a description of their work and performance and the reasons why their contribution has been exceptional.

We are aware that hundreds of people in the gay and lesbian community are committed everyday to extinguishing disease, suffering, bigotry, bashing and discrimination, so choosing these recipients will be a difficult process.

The deadline for your submission is Friday, May 1.

The winners will be profiled in the issue following the presentation.

All applications will be given serious consideration by a nominating committee; award finalists will be voted on by the entire staff.

We look forward to hearing from you, and learning more about our fine community members and volunteers.

Send your submissions to Q-Notes P.O. Box 221841, Charlotte, NC 28222