

Gay youth groups

Continued from page 17

groups attempt to educate teachers, counselors, clergy, human service professionals and parents to recognize and to appreciate the gay, lesbian and bisexual youth they encounter every day. One such vehicle OutRight! uses to educate students and professionals is the distribution of its newsletter, *Voices*, three times a year to high schools in the Triangle, as well as to health professionals, key legislators and supporters of the group.

Although the gay, lesbian and bisexual populations would be expected to rally behind this new and dynamic force in the gay rights movement, many communities have not been readily accepting of these groups. Although Durham's OutRight! has found acceptance and support by the gay, lesbian and bisexual communities, Charlotte's Time Out has not been as easily assimilated. Taylor relates that the gay, lesbian and bisexual community in Charlotte has taken a more "wait and see" attitude. "The community has been waiting to see if the youth group will fail or solidify before it actively commits its support." One of the reasons Taylor feels that community support has not been very prevalent results from the misconception held by many gays, lesbians and bisexuals that youth today have it easier than they did when they were trying to deal with their sexuality. Taylor states that the opposite is more often true, that today's youth have a much tougher time with the "coming out" process. According to Taylor, "Harassment in schools today is consistent for all supposed gay, lesbian and bisexual youth. This group of youth is the only minority group today that is seen as an acceptable target of harassment

form its peers. Students see the treatment that gays, lesbians and bisexuals receive in society as a whole, and they copy this supposedly 'acceptable' treatment of other human beings."

Despite facing criticism from both the heterosexual and homosexual communities, these gay youth groups are definitely having an impact on society. OutRight! has chosen to influence through education in the Triangle area, as well as educational presentations to local, state and national organizations. Time Out has selected a stronger political stance, actively participating in the 1993 March on Washington, the upcoming NC Pride March and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Conference recently held in Durham. In whatever capacity, these groups have broken vast amounts of new ground toward the education of society and the fight for gay rights.

The greater impact, however, may not be on society, but on the individuals themselves in accepting and dealing with their sexual orientation. As Taylor states, "It is encouraging to see that the youth are determined not to live lives in a state of fear or in the closet as in other generations." If the youth groups are able to help their participants accept and flourish within their sexual orientation, then the groups have truly lived up to their purpose.

Currently, there are six gay youth groups in North Carolina, located in Asheville, Charlotte, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro and Raleigh. For more information or to provide financial assistance or volunteer resources to any of these groups, contact your local gay information line or contact Durham's OutRight! at (919) 286-2396 or Charlotte's Time Out at (704) 377-3399.

Q Tip

Q-Notes offers free calendar listings as a service to the community. Send your event information to: Calendar Editor, P.O. Box 28676, Raleigh, NC 27611-8676.



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