

# Area AIDS agencies get ready to party hearty

by Gene Potat  
Q-Notes Staff

What's your favorite kind of party? Are you best at a brunch; prefer popcorn and a video in a cozy den; like to bask in the backyard at a traditional Southern barbeque; savor the sweetness of an ice cream social; long to truck out the tux for a catered, black tie affair; or perhaps you would prefer lingering over a cup of coffee with friends at a pancake breakfast? Whatever your party passion, you can satisfy it when the Triangle AIDS Collaborative (TAC) hosts "An Evening with Friends," a week-long fundraiser which, according to Gab Smith, one of the affair's coordinators, is expected to encompass 350 separate events with guest lists of over 7,000. With a goal of generating \$200,000, it is, says Deborah Young, Executive Director of the AIDS Service Agency of Orange County, "One of the biggest fundraisers in the state. Period."

"An Evening with Friends" is the brainchild of TA, which functions as a coordinating body for AIDS service providers in the triangle area (Durham and Wake counties) of North Carolina. Created in the fall of 1993, TAC was formed, according to Smith, "... to ensure maximum service for minimum dollars at a time when funding resources may seem to be drying up." It is composed of the Executive Director and one board member from each of its six member organizations — AIDS Service Agency of Orange County, AIDS Community Residence Association of Durham, AIDS Service Agency of NC, Inc., AIDS Service Project of the Lesbian-Gay Health Project, and two care team providers, Triangle AIDS Interfaith Network and Durham Interfaith AIDS Ministry.

Raleigh's AIDS Service Agency has been hosting its own "An Evening with Friends" for the past five years. About two years ago, according to Michael Armentrout, head of TAC's steering committee which is responsible for this first time effort, "We [at the Agency] began to revamp the event looking for ways to raise more money and generate even greater awareness of the fight against AIDS in our community." Eying Raleigh's success, other area agencies became interested in holding their own "Evening" where

volunteers sponsor individual parties of their own choosing, charging admission or asking for donations at each party, with the proceeds going to the particular sponsoring AIDS organization. Because individual hosts bear the costs for their parties and the benefiting agency solicits corporate and private funding to cover their overhead, actual party proceeds go to provide services at each of the six participating organizations. "By joining together, we [TAC members] avoid duplicating services and use resources more wisely," notes Armentrout, adding "The [event's] structure is the same for 9 parties or 350 parties."

In some ways this is an almost perfect type of fundraiser; hosts and guests participate as they wish; overhead costs are covered; and awareness of HIV and AIDS is increased in a way that crosses social boundaries. "It is overwhelming to see the outpouring of volunteers," observes Smith, adding, "It gives people a way to participate in the way they want to, at any level, attracting people of different backgrounds and social circles." Although TAC's \$30,000 budget for the event's advertising, programs, coordination, etc. is mostly provided by large sponsors such as Glaxo and the Crepe Myrtle Festival, much of the funding is provided by small, individual donations. "It [the event's funding structure] disperses giving over a vast number of people...without draining the community's resources," notes Armentrout.

Ron Huffman, Assistant Director of Client Services at AIDS Service Agency, says that the HIV/STD control section of North Carolina's Department of Environment, Health and Natural Resources has recorded a cumulative (1981 - present) total of 975 cases of AIDS in the triangle area, but, Huffman cautions "...this total only includes the number of people actually diagnosed here...there are a lot more people infected than the number reflects." Armentrout says events such as "Evening" "...raise the consciousness of

people relatively new to the devastation of the epidemic...and reach people beyond our core group of supporters. I think it is really exciting to have an opportunity to raise their awareness."

The festivities culminate Saturday, April 29 with a dessert party at the North Carolina Museum of Art. The 9pm event includes door prizes and a cash bar. "It's kind of an 'after party'," says Gab Smith. For information on any aspect of "An Evening with Friends," call Ms. Smith at (919) 834-2437.

The triangle area is not the only place to party this Spring. "It's a good excuse to have a party," says Greg Allinson, Executive Director of Pitt County AIDS

Service Organization (PICASO), of their version of "Evening" called "At Home with Friends," which takes place May 12-14. Although still in the planning stages, Allinson says the annual fundraiser should involve a dozen or more parties with a guest roster in the vicinity of 4,800.

"It's a fun way to get the message across without hitting people over the head," he says. To find out more about "Friends," call Allinson at (919) 830-1660.

"It's exciting to have people calling in to say 'I want to host a party,'" says Victoria Hastie, Special Events Coordinator of Metrolina AIDS Project's (MAP's) upcoming "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner." The May 20 fundraiser, now in its fifth year, has been very successful, last year raising over \$75,000. "This year we hope to have 90 parties," notes Hastie, adding, "Last year, for the first time, we had a silent auction of Rosenthal dinner plates decorated by local artists that will be repeated at this year's closing party." That party will be held in the Atrium of uptown Charlotte's First Union National Bank. Information on "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" can be obtained by calling MAP at (704) 333-1435.



## White released

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a gay man in prison." But he admitted to "a kind of hollow sense that the energy is not up to what it used to be." Still, he is ready to return should there be a need. "If we don't face oppression every time it raises its head, oppression will win."

## Crusade continues in Florida

And it didn't take White long to see another need. He traveled to Florida to confront Dr. D. James Kennedy at the second annual "Reclaiming America for Christ" conference in Ft. Lauderdale. He laid down his \$145 registration fee and simply walked in as a delegate on March 16. Conferees greeted his "really large badge reading 'Gay Christian Clergy,'" with startled questions.

A few hours later, White was ushered into a meeting room with Kennedy and a planned five minute encounter stretched to nearly 30. "We had a much more strident discussion than I had thought we would have," White said. Later at the conference, Kennedy reportedly told delegates he was opposed to violence against lesbians and gays, and everybody else.

White was in the lobby of the convention center as Ralph Reed, head of the political organization the Christian Coalition, arrived after delivering a speech inside. He recounted how Reed bounded over and said, "I know you vicariously and I wanted to meet you. I've been working behind the scenes with Pat [Robertson] to get you out of jail."

On Saturday, March 18, nearly 1000 gays, lesbians, and their supporters prayerfully gathered outside the convention center under the banner of Christians Against Violence and Hate. Police protection was heavy because of rumored threats of appearances by anti-gay skinheads and the KKK. The hate mongers never showed, said White gratefully.

"We stood up to the religious right when they came to town," he said. "It does much for us in terms of our own sense of worth."

### Correction

We failed to credit Rick Gerharter for last month's photo depicting the Lesbian Avengers' action at Exodus International headquarters. We regret this error.



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