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Eddie Hatcher steps out all over again

by David Stout
Q-Notes Staff

HAMLET, NC—Even though Native American activist Eddie Hatcher, 38, has been out of prison since this past May, he's now coming out again—out of the closet that is—as a gay man living with AIDS. He recently explained to *Q-Notes* that he hadn't come out before because no media outlet, before this one, had ever bothered to ask him about his sexual orientation. He also spoke about the new path his social justice work is taking with the formation of his Hatcher Center for Human Rights.

Hatcher's former organizing is what led him to prison, in 1989, for his role in the day-long takeover of the *Robesonian* newspaper. He has always maintained that the move was a last-ditch effort to keep himself alive in the face of death threats from Robeson County officials whom he claimed were trafficking drugs. A federal jury accepted Hatcher's story and found him not guilty of kidnapping. North Carolina's Attorney General wasn't so sure though, and the state re-tried him. Too weary to fight, Hatcher pled guilty and was sentenced to 18 years in prison.

Television cameras statewide recorded the scene this spring when a paroled Hatcher walked from Raleigh's Central Prison as a shell of his former self. He says that prison administrators allowed pneumocystis pneumonia to overrun his body for nearly six

weeks before finally seeking medical attention for him—even though he was facing bouts with fevers of up to 106 degrees, vomiting continuously and sinking into an unshakable weakness that kept him bed-ridden. "The only thing I was able to do was get on my bunk and lie down."

The devastating effects of the illness, coupled with the despair of being abandoned by the system, left Hatcher so despondent that he only had one hope: death. "I cried out of desperation and asked God to please just let me die."

Had he gone without treatment any longer than he did, he would have died. But, his mother harangued state officials into action—eventually, he was hospitalized and the pneumonia was eradicated.

Pneumocystis was Hatcher's first encounter with an HIV-related opportunistic illness. Soon after this first incident, he was paroled. A spokesperson with the state Parole Board says that illness had nothing to do with the

decision to release Hatcher ("North Carolina has no medical parole provisions."); but, that claim notwithstanding, the fact remains that he had been denied release nearly a half-dozen times prior.



Eddie Hatcher

Immediately after leaving prison, the controversial activist did exactly what anyone who knows him would have expected: he called a press conference and issued a number of blistering charges, mostly relating to rates of HIV infection among inmates (he estimates over 40 percent are positive) and guards' tolerance of unsafe sex in prisons which is driving the numbers even higher. "Inmates would have sex

right out in the open, and the guards wouldn't say anything about it."

Among his statements was one personal declaration which seemed out of place: Hatcher told reporters that he had been infected through "promiscuous" sex in prison. This seemed like an odd choice of words, so

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Astraea funds lesbian survey

COLUMBIA—The South Carolina Women's Consortium has been awarded a grant to survey lesbian health care in South Carolina. The grant will enable researchers to collect information on the type and quality of health care provided to lesbians.

The grant was received from the Astraea National Lesbian Action Foundation which awarded \$52,000 in grants to projects focusing on issues from lesbians and gay youth and advocacy to health care and hate crimes.

Access to health care, mental health services, and other services designed to improve health is difficult for women in the state. For lesbians, this difficulty is intensified by isolation, homophobia, and lack of provider knowledge related to lesbians' specific health needs.

To gather data about health-related issues faced by South Carolina lesbians, the consortium has initiated a major statewide survey. The project is being conducted by lesbian health providers and researchers interested in improving health care access. The project is focusing on women who have women partners or who identify as lesbian or bisexual. The researchers are seeking to increase responses from older women, women of color, low-income or working class women, women with physical challenges, women without housing, and rural women.

"We are excited about the project, since it is a first-time effort to collect data statewide on an issue which is so important to all of us," says project coordinator Pamela Clarke.

The Lesbian Health Care Project is working to find women throughout the state who are interested in helping to distribute surveys in their communities. Rural women, women of color and older women are strongly encouraged to call to assist with the distribution. For more information or to receive a copy of the survey, contact Pamela Clarke at (803) 777-4499 (leave message) or the South Carolina Women's Consortium at (803) 252-9813.

Rollers bowl into 10th season with strikes to spare

by Gene Poteat
Q-Notes Staff

It is the most popular sport in this country. Last year, 79 million Americans did it, on wooden floors, in over 7,000 different places. Starting again this month, a group of homosexual men and women will be doing it, in groups of three, in Charlotte.

What are these people up to? Participating in the most popular sport in this country and the second most popular sport, behind soccer, in the world—bowling.

This fall marks the tenth season for Queen City Rollers, a mixed, handicap league of gay and lesbian bowlers which takes to the alleys of Charlotte's Coliseum Lanes at 9pm on Monday nights, beginning September 18.

"We expect to have 16 teams this year," says the league's vice-president, Billie Rose, who recently retired from a five-year stint as the group's president. Each team consists of three members. "The usual rule in a mixed league is to have men and women on each team," she explains, "but we allow any mix of players [on a team] because some men prefer to play only with men and some women prefer to play only with women."

Chuck Hart, the Rollers' incoming president, says, "I feel we have a strong slate of officers this year, and I am looking forward to a great season with lots of new faces. I am looking forward to leading the league." He declares, "We want people to get excited." Hart, who has been bowling in leagues for 23 years, started as a junior bowler at age 13, was initially attracted to the group as a way to meet new people and, he says, "...to get back into a sport I thoroughly enjoy." "It's a community thing, a group of gay people getting together," he adds. "By being a handicap league," explains Hart, "everyone basically starts out even [for the purposes of scoring]; we are not professionals."

Players range in age from 18 to 40 and up.

Although women were instrumental in the founding of the league, Rose was the only female member when she began with the league five years ago. "In the early years, we had a difficult time getting women to bowl," she states. While the number of female participants has steadily risen since she joined, she says, "I would like to put more effort into seeing that the lesbian community plays a larger part in the league."

Handicapped individuals are also encouraged to take to the alleys. "Two summers ago a deaf male began playing with us, and we have an interpreter on the league," relays Rose, adding, "We expect to have more deaf players this fall."

Queen City Rollers, whose logo is a four point crown with a pink triangle in the center, is a member of the International Gay Bowling Organization (IGBO) which has over 10,000 members scattered across most states in the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. To be recognized in league play, male members of the Rollers must be sanctioned by the American Bowling Congress (ABC), and females must be endorsed by the Women's International Bowling Congress (WIBC). "To be sanctioned," explains Rose, "means you join a local league, pay a yearly membership fee and follow the rules. We are then recognized for our accomplishments." Members also participate in local bowling associations.

ABC's Mark Müller, who supplied the statistics used at the beginning of this article, notes that there are over 100 million players world-wide. "Many people are surprised at the sport's popularity," he says. Last year, the ABC, headquartered in Greendale, WI, sanctioned some 75,000 bowlers in North Carolina; 40,000 in South Carolina; and 100,000 in Virginia. These states have 103, 56 and 91 bowling centers, respectively. League bowling is big business.

In addition to the membership fees re-

quired for sanctioning, which are, according to Hart, "around \$10 per year for men and little more or less for the women," Roller members will, he says, "probably pay \$9.00 each week to play this year." That weekly fee includes the cost of play, a prize fund and a small portion for record keeping. In addition

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Health project selects Prince as new executive director

DURHAM—The North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project (LGHP) has named Jeff Prince as its new Executive Director. Prince comes to the position from the higher education arena where he spent several years working in fundraising, community relations, and public affairs.



Jeff Prince

Prince was previously employed at Louisburg College as director of public relations. While there, he managed the college's external publication, acted as official spokesperson, directed the media relations program, and assisted the development office in the design of a variety of fundraising materials.

Prior to his appointment at Louisburg, Prince served Virginia Intermont College in Bristol, VA in a variety of capacities. He worked as assistant director for development, a fundraising position where he solicited donors and worked to secure gifts to the college's annual fund. Later, he was pro-

moted to the position of director of public relations. In that position he managed the college's publications, media relations, and community relations programs.

Prince is a 1988 graduate of Virginia Tech where he received a bachelor's degree in communication studies with a concentration in public relations. His master's degree in higher education administration with an emphasis on institutional advancement is from Vanderbilt University's Peabody College of Education.

Since coming to North Carolina in 1993, Prince has been an active member of the gay and lesbian community.

Anne Dornberg, Co-Chair of LGHP's board of directors, said it was exciting for the organization to have a new leader in place. "After a long, careful search for an executive director, we're pleased to have Jeff Prince," she said. "Many people in the community were frustrated by the length of time it took us to fill the position, but the Search Committee felt very strongly that we wanted a candidate who had a lot of knowledge and experience—we were willing to wait until we found a strong leader with fundraising and administrative

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