

# Q-Notes

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## HIV/AIDS center closes due to lack of need

by Gene Poteat  
Q-Notes Staff

CHARLOTTE—"It has been very painful for all of us," says Debbie Hirsch, Chair of the Board of Directors of HomePlaces, Programs of the Brothers Foundation, of the September 29 closing of The Living Center, their adult day care/health center for people living with HIV and AIDS. "When it was founded," says Hirsch, "the notion was that there was a tremendous need; we have found that the need is not there."

The Center, which opened in August of 1994 in a 3,000 square foot facility in a well-established residential area of Charlotte, was designed to furnish participants with two snacks and a hot lunch each day and health care monitoring and assistance with medication administration from a registered nurse. One of the most unique aspects of its operation was its coordination with other local organizations providing services such as art therapy and educational programs to those using the Center. At the time of its opening, it was, according to the Foundation's winter 1994 newsletter, "one of less than 10 adult day, health care centers for people with AIDS

in the country." "From its inception, all of the professionals in the field and those in the HIV community we asked [about the need for such a facility] thought it was a good idea," explains Hirsch, who adds, "No one is more surprised than we are that the need was not actually present; we did our homework as best we could." According to information supplied earlier this year to another non-profit for a joint venture grant application, daily attendance at the Center had been averaging seven individuals. One full-time staff member and one full-time volunteer, along with other part-time volunteers, worked at the facility.

"What we discovered," states Hirsch, "is that people [infected with HIV] want to get on with their lives as best they can in the manner in which they have always lived while they are well, and that, at least in Charlotte, they turn to other care providers, such as Hospice, as their illness progresses." She offers, "There are four such 'Living Centers' in North Carolina, but, unlike our project, not all offer health care and some have had to align themselves with other non-HIV health care facilities. It appears this concept works best in rural

areas where options are few." The final determination to close The Living Center was, says Hirsch, "...not an easy decision to come to. In the last six weeks to two months we, the members of the Foundation's board, went to various AIDS service providers in an effort to 'remarket;' but what we found was that they [the service providers] were informing their clients [about the Center] — they were doing a wonderful job; there was just not a need."

The Living Center was initially funded by the Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust, Housing and Urban Development, Lutherans Concerned and the Regional HIV/AIDS Consortium, among others, but, notes Hirsch, "Those monies did not, and were not intended to pay all the bills. HomePlaces provided the remainder of the operating expenses." The September closing date was arrived at, in part, based on funding cycles. "As a responsible steward of those monies, this was the time to close," Hirsch said. "Those grants have been closed out in accordance with all the legal requirements of the funding sources."

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## Holocaust Museum reclaims gay history

by David Stout  
Q-Notes Staff

WASHINGTON, DC—The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is in the midst of a major campaign to unearth and document



The liberation of Dachau, 1945

the stories of gays who were imprisoned in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Although the museum currently contains some exhibit information about the plight of interred homosexuals, including eight prisoner biographies, the vast majority of their stories and artifacts remain undocumented.

The coordinator of the museum's Gay and Lesbian Campaign, Debbie Eliason, says that the idea for the project began with David Mixner, who is probably best known for rallying gay community support for then-candidate Clinton during the last presidential election. Mixner reportedly approached the museum with the idea of raising \$1.5 million dollars in the gay community to fund a massive documentation project. He proposed that \$1 million be used to subsidize the museum's general operating expenses with the remainder forming an endowment to fund ongoing, gay-specific exhibits and programs.

Eliason stresses the critical reason to conduct this campaign now: "There are only about 15 [homosexual] survivors left."

The US museum is one of the largest Holocaust memorial museums in the world. It features over 50,000 square feet of exhibit space and has an unparalleled collection of artifacts. These items include a railroad car like those used to transport prisoners to the death camps, a reconstructed camp barracks and thousands of pieces of personal memorabilia. Unfortunately, only a small portion of this is representative of gays.

In fact, although scholars know that gay prisoners were an identified class in the death camps, numbering as many as 15,000, it was only this past summer when they were able to link a specific artifact to an individual, homosexual captive.

In July, a prisoner armband, imprinted with a pink triangle and the prisoner number 1896, was discovered among the personal effects of concentration camp survivor Josef Kohout, a man arrested by the Nazis in 1939. Kohout anonymously told his story to Heinz Heger in the book *The Men with the Pink Triangle*, which was published in Germany in 1980 as the first eyewitness account of the persecution of homosexuals in the camps. Though historians had been able to verify that the pink triangle was used by Nazis to mark homosexual prisoners — just as the Star of David was used to mark prisoners of Jewish descent — they were unable, until that time, to match the symbol with a particular

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## Promise Keepers' message may come to Charlotte

by Brent Hartinger  
Special to Q-Notes

DENVER, CO—If the Christian men's organization Promise Keepers was a stock, it would rival Microsoft with its phenomenal growth. Like Microsoft, however, some charge that behind that growth is an agenda that's not quite as benign as organizers claim.

Founded just five years ago by former University of Colorado football coach Bill McCartney with the stated goal of encouraging men "to become godly influences," Promise Keepers has already attracted more than 400,000 enthusiastic participants to its emotional rallies in stadiums across the country. Recently, it was announced that the group had tentative plans to hold a rally at Charlotte Motor Speedway, anticipating the event to be their largest ever. At Promise Keepers' gatherings, men are encouraged to make a series of seven promises, including ones to honor Jesus, take more responsibility in their marriages, and promote racial harmony.

Incredibly, over 150,000 churches nationwide have already expressed an interest in the organization. Lately, the group has seen its annual budget mushroom from \$3 million to \$28 million, while its staff has more than doubled, from 75 to 180.

Behind that growth, critics say, is a conservative Christian political agenda of homophobia, not to mention racism and sexism.

Much of the criticism centers around a series of deeply anti-gay comments that the very outspoken McCartney made while coach at the University of Colorado. Lesbians and gays are "stark raving mad," he once said, and they should seek a "cure" for their illness.

Promise Keepers, the organization, however, toes a much softer line on the subject of homosexuality. According to a 1993 statement, "homosexuals are men who need the same support, encouragement, and healing we are offering to all men" and are "welcomed in all our events."

Still, the same statement adds that "sex is a good gift from God — to be enjoyed in the context of heterosexual marriage." Organization literature, meanwhile, calls homosexuality a violation of "God's creative design for a husband and a wife" and "a sin."

"If that's intolerant, it's intolerant," said Promise Keepers president Randy Phillips at a press conference in 1993.

Spokespersons for Promise Keepers, informed that this article was being written for a gay publication, did not respond to repeated requests for an interview.

"Knowing the movement that this comes out of, they're certainly anti-gay," says Skipp Porteous, editor of *Freedom Writer*, a newsletter about the Religious Right. "It's a Pentecostal, charismatic Christian movement basically, which is a branch of Fundamentalism."

But despite the personal religious views of those involved with the organization, overt  
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## Queer culture on display in the Queen City

by Jonathan Padget  
Q-Notes Staff

"This is how new visions begin." These are the words of Audre Lord, emblazoned across the cover of the brochure describing OutCharlotte 95, the city's first annual cultural festival celebrating the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender community.

Since early this year, the Festival Steering Committee has worked to bring its vision of an LGBT cultural festival to life, and has been guided by goals articulated in its Position Statement, including:

offering inclusive and eclectic LGBT cultural events, increasing visibility and acceptance of LGBT people, building a stronger sense of community for LGBT people and nurturing the growth and self-esteem of LGBT people

in their coming out process. The potential to meet and exceed these goals is great, as evidenced by even the briefest perusal of the festival's calendar of events planned for October 11-15.

But beyond projections, calendars and statistics, there will be individual stories to be told.

David Lari is a lifelong Charlottean who says, "I've been looking for ways to be involved in the gay community and OutCharlotte is my first time being involved in a gay event." Lari learned about the festival through an article in

*The Charlotte Observer* and has supported OutCharlotte as a volunteer on fundraising and marketing projects. "I think being involved with OutCharlotte will help me come out to more people. I like the idea of having a

festival that's not strictly political, but combines cultural aspects as well."

Ashley Carlisle is another volunteer who is excited about OutCharlotte. She is new to Charlotte's LGBT community, having just moved from Greenville, SC. "I've just come out to my family," she says, "and it's not been easy. I've volunteered with the SC Pride event, and I think an event like OutCharlotte really has a positive impact on your willingness to be out."

Regarding expectations of the festival, Carlisle states, "I'm expecting fun and the chance to meet more people — especially more couples. I'd like to see more things going on in Charlotte. It's important to get people together — people feed off one another — it's a great motivation."

Obviously, the impact and success of OutCharlotte 95 cannot be fully measured until after the festival, and the future of Charlotte's LGBT community is unclear. But one thing is certain: the vision of OutCharlotte 95 has begun, and everyone can play a role.

