

Nat'l youth conference at UNC-CH NC AIDS Alliance may dissolve

by Brian M. Myer
Q-Notes Staff

CHAPEL HILL, NC—"It's all about being young, being fierce and being heard!" according to the brochure for Reaching Out in the South, a national GLBT youth conference sponsored by The National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), North Carolina Lambda Youth Network and Bisexuals, Gay Men, Lesbians and Allies for Diversity (B-GLAD), the gay student group at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Reaching Out in the South is a three-day conference, January 22-24, designed to raise awareness of the issues and needs facing GLBT youth in the Southern region of the US. It provides opportunities for youth to gather in a safe and affirming environment to share experiences, decrease feelings of isolation, encourage

advocacy and socialize with peers. The conference also arms activists, advisors, counselors and allies with information and training to develop services for the GLBT youth community.

Young people from 13 southern states and the US Virgin Islands are expected to attend the event. The host hotel is the Chapel Inn and the conference room rate is \$117.00 per room. Community housing with local adults and parents is also available on a limited first-come, first-serve basis. The registration fee for the conference is \$25 for NYAC member/youth (\$45 for NYAC member/adult) and \$35 for NYAC non-member/youth (\$65 non-member/adult.)

For more information, including low-income rates and scholarships, contact B-GLAD at (919) 962-4401. ▼

by Dan Van Mourik
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RALEIGH, NC—The NC HIV/AIDS Alliance will recommend to its voting members that it dissolve as a free-standing corporation and that its members join the NC Health Access Coalition and create an HIV caucus within that Coalition.

The decision was made at an Alliance meeting on December 8. The few hundred dollars on hand will be donated to the Duke and UNC patient emergency funds if enough voting members agree to the transition.

The Health Access Coalition is a large, well respected coalition of health advocacy groups, statewide organizations and other coalitions working to expand access to health care. It has a \$2 million budget and is a 501(c)(3) organization that both lobbies and educates legislators, administrative officials and regulatory bodies. It has a number of specialty caucuses representing interests of members and is open to hosting an HIV caucus. The Coalition also sends members e-mail, fax and printed information concerning policy and legislative issues. The Coalition's executive director has expressed

strong interest in representing a broader array of HIV-related issues.

The Alliance members at the meeting recommended the action in recognition of the fact that the community has made it clear that it does not support a full-time lobbyist nor staff. After a sustained membership drive, there are still not enough organizational and individual members to hire a lobbyist for the next session of the General Assembly. The struggle to keep

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this lobbying organization alive has gone on for 11 years in recurring cycles of enthusiasm and

disinterest. It was felt that it was time to consider new alternatives so as to assure that the HIV care and prevention community has an effective voice in legislative, administrative and regulatory policy.

Related developments also argue for HIV advocacy through existing organizations with broader and sympathetic agendas. For example, the NC chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) is planning to form an HIV project which will allow the five people who register to represent NASW on HIV issues in the legislature. NASW is another highly respected organization with a track record of both legislative effectiveness and support of the HIV community's agenda. Further, there are discussions underway about creating an information project with state funding within an existing non-profit to distribute e-mail and fax policy alerts on HIV issues.

As HIV issues and organizations become more fully integrated into mainstream health management and advocacy organizations, the ability of HIV advocates to be effective will only increase. And this transition also recognizes the reality of an evolution from street-based activism 15 years ago, out of which the Alliance grew, into more stable and professional organizations and management today. It is also a trend that is occurring nationally. ▼

NC considers change in HIV testing

DURHAM, NC—State public health officials say they will consider changing the state's policy on confidential-only HIV testing. In December, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggested states test people for HIV without taking their names. Currently, North Carolina has "confidential" testing in which a person gives his name, but only a few people have access to the results.

A spokesman for the state's Department of

Health and Human Services says North Carolina officials will study the CDC's suggestion.

North Carolina is one of 11 states that do not provide total anonymity to people seeking an HIV test. The state set up "confidential" testing after winning a long legal battle spearheaded by ACT UP/Triangle.

In confidential testing, those who test positive are asked for the names of their sexual partners so they can also be tested. ▼



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