

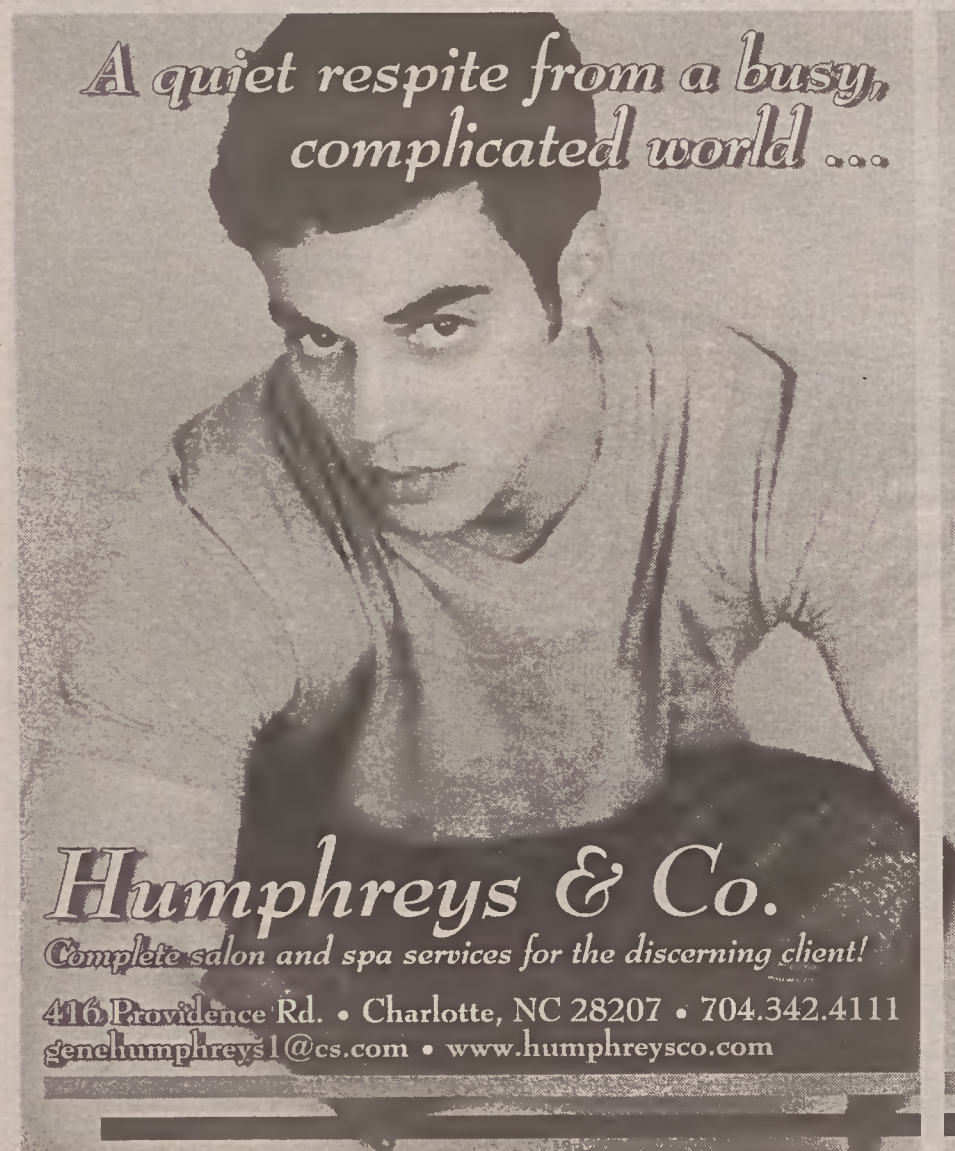
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Mr. Gay USA crowned

HICKORY — Ryan Davis was named Mr. Gay USA on July 25 following a weekend of competition. The event was held at Club Cabaret. Both the contest and the venue are



Club Cabaret owner Jeff Reeves (left) with Mr. Gay USA 2004 Ryan Davis.

owned by Jeff Reeves (himself a former Miss USofA at Large, Nancy Newton).

Twenty contestants competed for the title which was being relinquished by Raphael Matthews after a successful reign. (Coincidentally, Matthews' partner is the current Mr. Continental and will give up his own title Labor Day weekend in Chicago.)

The first runner-up to Davis was Mr. NC USA Monte St. James followed by Todd White, Mr. Charlotte USA, and Savion Armani Black. Rounding out the top eight were William Benion, Sebastian Armonite, Eriq and Michael Armani. Best Non-finalist finisher was Cody Domino.

Straight athlete sues gay-themed website

WAKE COUNTY — Gay-themed sports site Outsports.com has been pulled into a legal battle with a straight Wake County man whose picture appeared on the site. Chris Harbinson is seeking over \$10,000 in damages from the organization, as well as punitive damages and legal fees, claiming he has suffered "extreme embarrassment, public humiliation, mental agony, and damage to his name and reputation."

The photo in question was one of over 150 featured on the site that covered the Los Angeles Marathon and was posted without a caption. Harbinson was a participant in the marathon, and the photo of him shows him stretching and smiling for the camera.

Atlanta-based attorney Cynthia Counts is representing the site. She described the case as frivolous and totally without merit. The photographer who took the picture was a credentialed member of the media and Harbinson was participating in a public event. Outsports.com removed the photo after receiving a cease and desist order in April.

N.C. wants sex talkers

RALEIGH — State health officials are poised to take HIV peer counseling to the next level by recruiting teams of African-American "popular opinion leaders" to spread the word about safe sex in gay dance clubs and on college campuses throughout the Triad, Triangle and Charlotte metro region.

Program leaders say they will meet with bar employees and school officials to identify men and a few women in each community with the looks, reputations and social skills to impact others' sexual behaviors.

"People have heard these messages about preventing infection and getting tested from public health workers for 20 years now," Phyllis Gray, a project manager at the HIV/STD Prevention and Care Branch of the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services, told *The Associated Press*. "But they are still taking chances and engaging in risky behavior."

It is hoped that the safe sex message will resonate more strongly among African-American men who have sex with men if it comes from an influential peer. According to state HIV figures, black men are nine times more likely to be infected with HIV than white men.

The innovative program is funded by a \$1.4 million grant from the national Centers for Disease Control. State health officials hope to have the effort up and running by Dec. 1.

MAP seeking gay men's staffer

CHARLOTTE — Metrolina AIDS Project is searching for a Gay Men's Health



Connie J. Vetter
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