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*Rev. Wanda Floyd*

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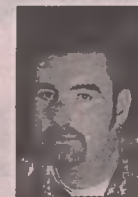
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## Editor's Note

by David Moore . Q-Notes staff

### Mecklenburg County's syphilis epidemic?



No matter if it's with a long-term partner or someone you just met five minutes ago — sex can be a lot of fun. The fact of the matter is, though, you don't know very much about that someone you just met five minutes ago.

Whether you met at a bar, on a street corner, in the grocery store or in an internet chat room, there's no denying the fact you don't really know what (or who) they've been doing before you met.

They could have picked up anything and might just be walking around infected with an STD that they could unintentionally transfer to you via a casual sexual encounter.

Everybody says oral sex is pretty safe — even without a condom the likelihood of being infected with HIV is minimal. To date, there have been no confirmed cases of HIV transmitted through oral sex.

But a lot of other nasty things can be transmitted through unprotected oral sex.

Herpes, syphilis, gonorrhea, intestinal parasites and hepatitis are examples of STDs that can be transmitted during oral sex with an infected partner.

Currently in Mecklenburg County transmission of syphilis among gay men has reached previously uncharted levels.

"Certainly we are overrepresented," says John Glorioso, a syphilis elimination coordinator for Mecklenburg County. "In 2005 gay men accounted for 35 percent of all cases. During the first quarter of this year we're seeing a 27 percent increase already."

According to Glorioso, Charlotte is on the leading edge of an overall increase in syphilis across North Carolina.

"It looks like this problem may be with us

for a while," he continues.

"Fifty-one out of 150 patients were gay men. We're seeing this with HIV positive and negative men."

All too often individuals aren't aware they're infected because they don't notice or recognize the symptoms. During the first stage a chancre or lesion may appear on the penis, inside the rectum or mouth, on the tip of the tongue or a finger.

Secondary symptoms include mucous patches in the mouth, skin rashes on the body and particularly itchy moist, warty patches on the genitalia or skin folds called condylomata lata.

During secondary syphilis, additional symptoms such as fever, malaise, loss of appetite and swollen lymph nodes may also be noted. This stage is the most contagious stage of syphilis. While it usually resolves within weeks, in some cases it may last up to a year.

"It's easier to treat primary and secondary stages," explains Glorioso. "If a person has had it more than a year they're going to face some challenges."

Not surprisingly, the increase of STD transmission can be directly linked to internet chat room hook-ups.

"A lot of people are hooking up these days for casual sex encounters over the internet," says Glorioso. "That's why I do internet outreach through chat rooms."

The Metrolina AIDS Project and Glorioso are providing syphilis testing and rapid HIV tests every Wednesday at Charlotte's Gay and Lesbian Community Center. For more details, call 704 432-TEST. ▀

## Vote for equality Nov. 7!

*Equality NC PAC is proud to support these Democratic candidates in the Nov. election*

### In the North Carolina House:

District 21: Rep. Larry Bell  
 District 29: Rep. Larry Hall  
 District 30: Rep. Paul Luebke  
 District 31: Rep. Mickey Michaux  
 District 33: Rep. Bernard Allen  
 District 34: Rep. Grier Martin  
 District 35: Rep. Jennifer Weiss  
 District 36: Greer Beaty  
 District 37: Ed Ridpath  
 District 38: Rep. Deborah Ross  
 District 41: Ty Harrell  
 District 42: Rep. Marvin Lucas  
 District 45: Rep. Rick Glazier  
 District 54: Rep. Joe Hackney  
 District 56: Rep. Verla Insko  
 District 57: Rep. Pricey Harrison  
 District 58: Rep. Alma Adams  
 District 59: Rep. Maggie Jeffus  
 District 66: Rep. Melanie Wade Goodwin  
 District 71: Rep. Larry Womble  
 District 100: Rep. Jim Black  
 District 102: Rep. Becky Carney  
 District 106: Rep. Martha Alexander  
 District 107: Rep. Pete Cunningham

District 114: District Rep. Susan Fisher  
**In the North Carolina Senate:**

District 1: Sen. Marc Basnight  
 District 7: Sen. Doug Berger  
 District 9: Sen. Julia Boseman  
 District 10: Sen. Charlie Albertson  
 District 14: Sen. Vernon Malone  
 District 16: Sen. Janet Cowell  
 District 18: Sen. Bob Atwater  
 District 19: Sen. Tony Rand  
 District 20: Sen. Jeanne Lucas  
 District 21: Sen. Larry Shaw  
 District 23: Sen. Ellie Kinnaird  
 District 27: Sen. Kay Hagan  
 District 28: Sen. Katie Dorsett  
 District 32: Sen. Linda Garrou  
 District 37: Sen. Dan Clodfelter  
 District 38: Sen. Charlie Dannelly  
 District 49: Sen. Martin Nesbitt

### Significant Local Races:

Orange County Commissioner: Mike Nelson  
 Wake County Clerk of Court: Lorrin Freeman

**In Mecklenburg County, MeckPac has endorsed for County Commission:**

Parks Helms, Wilhemenia Rembert, Dumont Clarke and Jennifer Roberts.

**In South Carolina:**

Vote no on Amendment 1.