

MTN-GLO Going Underground

by Jess W. Driskell, Co-Chair

During the past year MTN-GLO (Mountain Gay/Lesbian Organization), a support group for gay men and lesbians, has sought to broaden its horizons and to expand its scope here in Western North Carolina. It has tried to make itself more easily available to those gays and lesbians of the area who might have needed support, or who might have had support to give. In this spirit, MTN-GLO requested and received the support of two Asheville organizations: SALGA and WNCAP.

At the regular meeting of MNT-GLO on December 10, Teri Gibbs, Charlotte Goedsche, and Cynthia Janes presented information about SALGA's ongoing efforts, helping us better understand the organization and how we might relate to it. Cynthia also spoke about the NC

Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Equality. Ginger Kowski and David Beebe attended the January 28 meeting of WNCAP as representatives of WNCAP. They gave us information about the buddy system and shared with us some of the more personal aspects of the experience of being a buddy to a person with AIDS. They also told us about Our House and its offer of shelter to PWA's.

To the five representatives of these two groups we extend our thanks; we recognize the commitment required to drive forty-five miles one way after dark into a mostly, if not completely, unfamiliar area of western North Carolina. We also appreciate the work of these organizations, themselves; they are working very hard to improve the quality of life for all gay people in WNC. Their humanitarian works aside, the very existence of these organizations (and of others, as well) in southern Appalachia attests to the depth of conviction the members of such groups must feel, both to themselves and to the community at large. Unfortunately, they are all too often taken for granted by the gay community, and despised by the breeder

community, the latter selectively forgetting, or spitefully regretting, that improvement for one part equals improvement for the whole.

The success of the homophilic organizations in Asheville cannot be considered a barometric indicator of the prevailing conditions in the outlands, however. The response to a gay and lesbian support group here in Jackson County (and in the surrounding counties) has been very limited. In this area, as in almost any rural area, young gays and lesbians tend to migrate to metropolitan areas as soon as is reasonably possible. Those who remain behind, as well as those who settle in the area, tend to remain mostly closeted, except to a small circle of friends, and rarely venture outside that microcosm. Glib as that may be, I, personally, prefer that explanation to one of apathy, complacency and egocentricity. In counterpoint, there are a few who are interested in the welfare of the gay community, and who are willing to do what they can to protect it, if not promote it.

Because MTN-GLO has not attracted new members and has lost some of its members to the job markets of other areas, it faces certain difficulties, not the least of which are financial. For this reason, we have decided to abandon our efforts to reach new members, and to enter into an "underground" phase after our last scheduled meeting of the year (May 13). Those who have been regular in their attendance, or at least faithful in their commitment, will remain the hard core of MTN-GLO. We shall continue to meet, though we will change our locale to various homes in the area; we shall still be available to those who need us in some way; we shall maintain contact with those gays and lesbians of the area by way of our newsletter, while finances allow and news exists; we shall maintain our ideals of gay and lesbian community. In a sense, we are staging a disappearing act. Unpleasant as it will be, it is our concession to reality; such are the terms of growth.

Rather than feeling defeated, we share a hope that which is to come will be even greater than that to which we had aspired. Though our attempts to expand and to be recognized met with failure, the faith and kindness of those who have helped us this year, and in past years, is greatly appreciated. Where those of us who shall continue as MTN-GLO may help any of you, please, don't hesitate to ask; although we'll not continue to call ourselves a support group, we'll still do whatever we can. ▼



SALGA MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

by Charlotte Goedsche, Secretary

The February meeting of the Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance (SALGA) was held February 3 at All Souls Church, Biltmore. The first item on the agenda was the annual election of officers (see article on page 11).

Martha Copeland reported on the Documentation Project (see article on page 7). Lee R. is making posters for the bars to inform people about the about the Documentation Project.

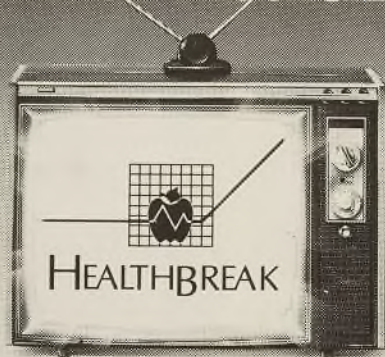
In the Adopt-A-Highway controversy, SALGA's lawyers said that the State of NC is preparing to make SALGA a formal offer allowing SALGA to put "SALGA" on our Adopt-A-Highway sign. The members present decided out of hand to reject such an offer. Should there be legitimate space limitations which apply to all Adopt-A-Highway organizations, SALGA would accept an abbreviation retaining the words "Lesbian" and "Gay."

The Speakers' Bureau has developed a new application form asking for additional personal data, to allow for a closer match between speakers and speaking engagements. Everyone who has spoken for the Bureau in the past, or who is interested in becoming a speaker, is asked to fill out a new form. Potential speakers must read a chapter of the Boston Gay and Lesbian Speakers' Bureau Manual, attend a training workshop, and observe at least one speaking engagement. The next training workshop will be held March 3 from 3:00 to 4:30 PM before SALGA's regular monthly meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Both old and new speakers are asked to attend. Please contact Charlotte at 252-4037 for information.

The SALGA retreat will be held from noon Saturday to noon Sunday, April 13-14, at The Inn in Hot Springs. The total cost is \$36 per person. A \$10 deposit is required to reserve a space. Some scholarships are available on a limited basis. Call Teri at 658-0362 for information and reservations.

The next SALGA meeting will be held Sunday, March 3. It will begin promptly at 4:30 PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church (lower level), 1 Edwin Place, corner of Charlotte Street, Asheville, NC. (Note change of time and place!) We will have potluck, so please bring a covered dish to share, and drinks for yourself. To help our environment we ask that you bring your own plates and eating utensils. ▼

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