

## Brenda Youngblood on WNCAP



by Earl Willis

Brenda Youngblood assumed the directorship of the Western North Carolina AIDS Project (WNCAP) in March 1990.

Youngblood heads up an organization that has seen its client load triple in the last year. She said it is expected to double in the next year.

"At the present time there are 300 people in our geographic coverage area who have been diagnosed with AIDS and are being treated by a doctor," Youngblood said. This area covers Buncombe, Madison, Henderson and Haywood counties.

Youngblood is charged with the overall supervision of WNCAP: office staff, program development, grant writing and fiscal responsibilities.

This means she supervises a staff of two full-time employees and four part-time employees. The full-time staff consists of a social worker and an education coordinator. The part-time staff consists of a secretary, a social services associate, and two people paid to work in gay and minority bars as educators.

The social services associate, a new position at WNCAP, is working toward organizing the volunteer program which Youngblood said has had some problems in the past. "Because the client load has grown so rapidly in the last year, I decided to give the Buddy Program to the part-time person, and that takes the load off of the social worker, who will now have more time to spend directly on client load," Youngblood explained.

At present, the social worker's case load is 67, which is very high, according to Youngblood. "Usually a case worker's load is around 45," she said.

While there are no written instructions as to how often a client is contacted, Youngblood said that she and the social worker try to contact each client at least once every three months, especially if they have not heard from the client for a long period of time.

The new associate deals not only with the Buddy Program, but also with the entire volunteer program. "Sometimes people wonder why WNCAP needs buddies when there are so many volunteers," said Youngblood. "There are about 90 volunteers at present, but only 20 to 25

client/buddy matches. We always need buddies, and right now 10-15 clients want buddies."

Buddies are trained and then matched with a PWA. A buddy training program is coming up in June. The 16-hour program will run from June 3 through June 15. (See calendar, page 13, for exact dates.) People interested in becoming a buddy should contact Elaine Ferguson at WNCAP, 252-7489.

The Education Coordinator is responsible for all educational programs dealing with the subject of AIDS. He also supervises the two contract part-time educators in the bars, both gay and black.

At present, WNCAP has \$18,000 to spend on direct client support. "This is more than any other AIDS organization in the state has to spend," Youngblood said. "Even Charlotte has only \$6,000 to spend on direct client support. And we have this money because of the work done by O. Henry's."

While the support for WNCAP has been wonderful, Youngblood would like to have more members. "At present only have 400 members in the organization and we could use more support from membership. You know this is a membership organization. Our Board of Directors is elected by the members who pay dues," she said.

One of the major functions of WNCAP is to network with all of the resources in the community.

According to Youngblood, there is a lot of confusion in the community when one talks about HIV disease, because the field is changing so rapidly. Ten years ago it was considered an automatic death sentence, and now it is considered a long-term illness. "The community is having a hard time assimilating all of this information mainly because they don't know the difference between HIV infection and full blown AIDS."

Youngblood said that there is some misunderstanding about the amount of money each client is allotted for direct support. "Because we have a limited amount of money designated for direct support, we try to use these funds as a last resort," Youngblood said. "If there is another agency that will handle the problem, we send [the client] there."

"The policy is written that a client can get up to \$500 a year. They must validate that they have an emergency." There is not enough support money to give every client \$500 a year, Youngblood added.

One of the things that seems to surprise Youngblood is the small amount of support given by the various religious organizations in the area. The Episcopal Church is the only organization which has given much help, according to her. One Methodist church has also given some

## O. HENRY'S WNCAP AUCTION

On June 22nd O. Henry's proudly and gratefully presents the 4th annual auction to benefit the Western North Carolina AIDS Project. Last year's event raised over \$10,000.

It was through the community's support as donors, buyers, or both that this much-needed direct funding for PWA's was made available. We now implore you to support this again.

As we asked you last year, PLEASE search your home and your heart for donations. Funds for PWA's are desperately needed and your contributions will be much appreciated.

If we can join together for this event, WE WILL SUCCEED!

With love and thanks,

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*Please Note: The deadline for auction donations is June 18. For more information, call 254-1891 or 252-7489.*

"This amount was matched  
by \$40,000 in found-  
ation grants.

help, but that has been the total support given by the religious organizations in our community.

One of the things that Youngblood feels that the gay and lesbian community can be proud of is that we have been the first to fight this disease, and that what money is raised by our community goes to help everyone with AIDS, regardless of their sexual orientation.

In the most recent WNCAP newsletter, Youngblood writes, "Sometimes I think we haven't made much progress—the state has yet to spend dollars on treatment or care, the public has refused to consider it an issue.... But slowly, perhaps too slowly, the entire community is coming to grips with the seriousness of AIDS. There is still much to be done and countless individuals living with this disease to support and comfort.... [We must all] stop occasionally and thank those first few volunteers from the gay community who met five years ago "to do something about AIDS."

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