

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Asheville Gay and Lesbian
Information Line:

253-2971

A project of the Asheville Gay and Lesbian
Community Council

To report anti-gay/HIV+
discrimination/violence:

SALGA Documentation Project:

253-1656

Funded by a Resist grant

U. S. Department of Justice toll-free:

1-800-347-HATE

Asheville, NC

Serving the Southern Appalachian Gay/Lesbian Community

Vol. III, No. 7 August, 1991

SALGA WINS!

State Gives In

by Cynthia Janes

After nearly a year of legal negotiations, the State of North Carolina has said that the Southern Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance (SALGA) will be allowed to participate fully in the North Carolina Adopt-A-Highway Program, "under the same terms and conditions applicable to other participants in the program" (wording used in the settlement). SALGA will be assigned a two-mile section of I-40, one adjacent to the section they originally requested. The latter section has been adopted by another group.

The state settled out of court with SALGA, essentially giving SALGA all it had asked for in their lawsuit. Other conditions of the settlement are that the state's Department of Transportation will erect a sign denoting SALGA's participation in the Adopt-A-Highway program. The sign will read, "S. Appalachian Lesbian and Gay Alliance." The state also agreed to pay SALGA's

attorneys' fees as part of the settlement.

SALGA had filed suit last December after the state denied the group an identifying sign in the Adopt-A-Highway program, in which groups agree to clean up litter from a two-mile stretch of road. Robert Elliot, an ACLU-affiliated attorney in private practice in Winston-Salem who worked on the case, said, "Our clients were only interested in being able to do what everybody else does, and that's to pick up litter if they so choose."

Elliot told *Community Connections* that after SALGA's complaint was filed in Federal court, and after investigation of documents related to the case was complete, "it became evident to us that [the state] really had no serious defense on the law, and that our clients' First Amendment rights were violated. I think they ultimately recognized the strength of our case and agreed to settle."

Teri Gibbs, SALGA's spokesperson

See SALGA, page 7

HIV Testing Changes September 1

As of September 1, North Carolina will drastically reduce the number of Health Department sites at which a person can be tested anonymously for the HIV virus. The only Western North Carolina county health departments to continue anonymous testing will be Buncombe, Macon and Watauga. If a person gets tested for HIV at any of the remaining 19 WNC health departments, the test and the results will be *confidential*, not *anonymous*.

With anonymous testing, persons taking the test are identified by a number only. A number is assigned to them when they call for an appointment or come in for testing, and they get their results by

showing a piece of paper with the number on it. No names, not even first names, are recorded or even used verbally, unless the person wishes.

In *confidential* testing, the person to be tested must give his or her name and address before the test will be done. Theoretically, this information is kept confidential. Very few individuals are to have access to the names, and access is to be tightly controlled.

The state's new plan was adopted against the advice of the great majority of individuals who spoke at public hearings across the state last winter. AIDS activists argued that under confidential testing, many will not take the HIV test, making it more likely that the disease will spread.

As of 1994, North Carolina will have no anonymous testing, unless activists can think of another way to stop its demise.



SALGA members gather before the parade

Gays and Lesbians Parade at Bele Chere Festival

by Charlotte Goedsche

Carrying the SALGA banner, as well as a purple banner proclaiming "Litter is a Crime Against Nature," SALGA members marched in the Bele Chere Parade for the first time on July 26. The number of onlookers far exceeded those who had watched the last two Earth Day Parades, in which SALGA also marched, and represented a large cross-section of the population.

Cheryl Walkup of the NCNB Parade Committee, who was in charge of registration for parade participants, told SALGA contingent organizer Betty Sharpless that she was delighted with SALGA's participation and that she hoped SALGA would march again next year.

Spectators' responses to SALGA's participation in the parade ran the gamut from negative to positive. Although most of the onlookers did not seem to respond one way or the other, many looked at the SALGA contingent with noticeable curiosity. This may well be an indication of increased name-recognition stemming from the Adopt-A-Highway controversy.

SALGA members were gratified to see quite a few spectators acknowledge them with smiles, waves and cheers. Among those showing support were women and men of all ages, many of whom were there with children.

The most serious homophobic incident occurred as parade participants were lining up before the parade. The driver of a pick-up truck carrying characters for United Artists Cable of Asheville refused to drive directly in front of the SALGA contingent, telling several SALGA members, "I don't want that shit behind me."

In an interview with *Community Connections*, Dianna Farmer, Customer Service Manager, and Sabrina Williams, Marketing Manager, stated that Clyde, the driver, was not employed by United Artists Cable. The cable company, along with a number of other concerns, are sponsors of Clyde's race car, which was also in the parade.

"I'm very sorry that this incident occurred," said Williams. "It is very much against company policy. He did not represent our company for those remarks."

Williams also assured *Community Connections*, "We will seriously consider not sponsoring his race car next year."

The other negative response to SALGA's contingent came from a male spectator who yelled "Now I know where to dump my trash!" This seemed to substantiate the bumper-sticker slogan "People Who Litter Are Trash." ▼

Photo by Charlotte Goedsche

NEW FEATURE!

Cookie's Channel, p.22
Advice column by Cookie LaRue