

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

FUTURE SEARCH NAVIGATES THE DIRECTION OF HIV/AIDS SERVICES

The future of HIV/AIDS in Western North Carolina will be the topic of a conference to be held at the First Baptist Church in Asheville on March 12-14, 1999. Participants will include people living with the disease and a broad array of organizations and community groups concerned with HIV/AIDS.

We have invited a broad array of people who have a stake in the epidemic, says Bob Davis, Chair of the Planning Committee for the conference. That covers a lot of different folks and organizations, individuals with AIDS, AIDS service organizations, medical providers, educators, funding organizations, volunteers, churches and faith communities, loved ones and caretakers and on and on. AIDS has changed a lot over the last few years. We have a very

complex issue and we need as many view points and talents as we can get on how to deal with it.

Five organizations are co-sponsoring the event: the Western North Carolina HIV/AIDS Consortium, the New Hope Community Health Center, the Western North Carolina Community Health Services, the Interfaith in Action Coalition and the Western North Carolina AIDS Project.

The AIDS population has become much more diverse than in the early days of the epidemic when the majority of those infected were gay men. Today people living with AIDS include heterosexual men and women, minorities of color and age-groups from teen-agers to senior citizens. AIDS service organiza-

tions are seeing more and more families struggling with the disease, especially households headed by single-parent mothers.

There are 304 people reported to be living with HIV in Western North Carolina. In the entire region there are over 500 who have full-blown AIDS, 267 of them in Buncombe County. Many of these individuals are living longer thanks to new medications, but find themselves caught up in a system that was designed to help them die. Many of us lost everything to this disease, and in some cases the whole network of personal support we had, Davis, himself living with AIDS, points out. People are broke, still have to deal with AIDS

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TRESSA'S HOLDS EVENT TO HONOR BOBBIE HARDWICK PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

On March 25th, Tressa's Downtown Jazz Bar will host an event in memory and honor of Bobbie Hardwick, a long time friend of the GLBT Community.

The event, co-sponsored by Mountain Xpress and Tressa's will be held annually and is a fund raiser to support Helpmate in its efforts to end domestic violence in WNC.

The evenings festivities begin at 4 pm with an invitation only cocktail party featuring the music of Kat Williams and Joe DiFeo. Then, at 8pm the bar will open to the public, again featuring the music of Kat and Joe. At 10pm, Tressa's house band, Information Network, will

come on for an evening of dance and celebration. In addition, Helpmate, one of the local agencies that fights domestic violence will be on hand to accept donations and educate people about the services they provide in our community. Tressa's has set the goal for this fund raiser at \$10,000.

The event at Tressa's echoes Governor Hunt's promise to have "zero tolerance" for domestic violence in North Carolina.

In a recent press conference Hunt proposed spending millions more--perhaps \$4.6 million next year--to increase the number of shelters and other services

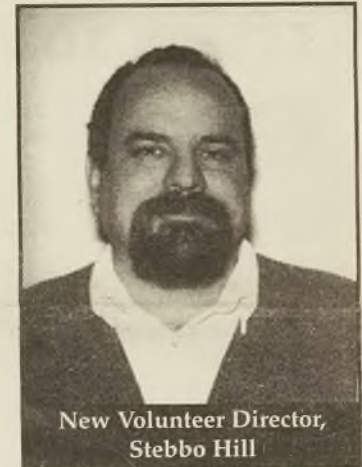
for victims. Other proposals call for stricter enforcement and for training more police and court workers.

"We're determined to ensure that North Carolina is a place where, if you are a victim of domestic violence, you can find someone to turn to," he said. "You can get away and you can have a chance to regain your life." Hunt couldn't say where the money will come from in a tight budget year.

In 1997, the most recent year for available statistics 70 of the 608 murders statewide were domestic violence cases, according to the N. C. Council for

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NEW VOLUNTEER DIRECTOR HIRED BY WNCAP



**New Volunteer Director,
Stebbo Hill**

The Western North Carolina AIDS Project (WNCAP) has begun a revitalization of its' volunteer program by hiring a new Volunteer Coordinator, Stebbo Hill. Recently, at WNCAP's open house, Stebbo outlined WNCAP's services to people living with AIDS in Western North Carolina, as well as ways to join WNCAP's "Community of Hope" by providing service through the buddy program, transportation, office administration, reception, public speaking, fundraising, committee involvement, community outreach or home repair.

Stebbo recently moved to the Asheville area from Seattle, Washington, where he served as the Director of Volunteers for the Chicken Soup Brigade, an organization providing food, home chore and transportation to over 700 people living with AIDS in the Seattle area. He

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