

The Front Page

June 7 - June 27, 1983

Vol. 4, No. 10

Have you returned your health survey?

How many times have you called a gay health clinic in a distant city for information about a health problem? Or inquired through the great gay grapevine for the name of a lesbian or gay doctor in the Triangle? Or felt that your non-gay physician was ill-informed about the relationship between your lifestyle and your health?

The Lesbian and Gay Health Project — the people behind the survey in the last issue of *The Front Page* — is a group of lesbians and gay men who are working to improve health care for the gay and lesbian community in North Carolina. Aida Wakil, Carl Wittman, David Jolly and others from Chapel Hill and Durham have been working together since last summer on the project. "We began by sharing our experiences," says Aida Wakil, "and acknowledging the barriers we face in the medical community — overt discrimination, insensitivity to our concerns, and ignorance of our problems both for those of us seeking health care and those who have chosen careers in the health professions."

David Jolly, a doctoral student in health education at the UNC-CH School of Public Health, says "The AIDS epidemic triggered our coming together, though AIDS is not our primary focus." AIDS, or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, is a disease which causes a profound suppression of the body's immune system and leaves the body vulnerable to often fatal infections, in particular Kaposi's Sarcoma and Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia (PCP). Until recently the AIDS phenomenon was rare, but there are now more than 1,400 confirmed cases, and a hundred or so more believed to have AIDS but who don't fit the current working definition of the disease. Deaths from AIDS related diseases over the past three years number more than 500.

"Although the overwhelming majority of the cases have been gay men," says Wakil, "there have been several women, both heterosexual and bisexual, who have died. I believe we, as lesbians, will hear more of this disease not only as it spreads among the general population but especially as AIDS becomes associated with 'gayness/homosexuality' and is used by the Right-Wing Fundamentalists as evidence against our lifestyles and sexual preference."

Jolly says the group is concerned that complete diagnostic services be available to suspected AIDS patients in North Carolina. "But," he adds, "we are also concerned with

educating our own community about other health problems and in helping lesbians and gays find competent and sensitive health care providers."

One of the group's primary activities will be educational programs for the gay community and for health care providers, mainly in the Piedmont, about lesbian and gay health problems. Project organizers also envision setting up support groups for gay and lesbian health professionals and for people who have chronic health problems (e.g., AIDS, hepatitis, conditions that limit sexual life.)

The group's first concerns is assessing the present needs of lesbians and gay men, as well as their previous experiences with health care. This is being accomplished through a lengthy questionnaire, which was included in the last issue of *The Front Page*, asking for information on health history, medical care experiences, sexual practices and lifestyle. In addition to *The Front Page*, the survey will be distributed in *The Newsletter* of the Triangle Area Lesbian Feminists and to specific lesbian and gay groups, in an effort to reach gay men and women of various lifestyles, backgrounds, races and ages.

Jolly urges people to complete and return the survey so that responses and recommendations will truly reflect the experiences and needs of North Carolina's diverse gay population. *If you haven't yet completed and sent in the survey found in your previous issue of The Front Page, you are strongly encouraged to do so now.*

In a pretest of the survey in the Triangle area, many people said that they wanted a gay health clinic or at least the designation of a regular night for gay clients at a public clinic. Initial data indicated that the lesbian and gay population is underserved by the health care industry and that their problems were not being met in the way they wanted.

Jolly says that if the full survey results confirm this, the data will be used in making recommendations as to how health care providers can improve services to gay/lesbian clients. In addition to writing articles for relevant publications, organizers think that a symposium on the topic for health care providers would help inform and sensitize them to client needs.

The Project also intends, at a later date, to conduct a survey of health providers in Piedmont North Carolina to "get a sense of attitudes, experiences, and knowledge that

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CORRECTION:

Contrary to the information given in the last issue of *The Front Page*, the deadline for the health surveys is **JUNE 30, not July 30**. Please complete your survey and send it in as soon as possible. Thanks!

Send your completed health survey to:
The North Carolina Lesbian and Gay Health Project
 P.O. Box 11013, Durham, N.C. 27703

PRESS CLIPPINGS:

• Well, the *Alamance News* knows a hot topic when it sees one. This is the same paper that ran the story, reprinted in the last issue of *The Front Page*, about the husband who is suing for divorce from his wife and custody of their child on the grounds of her alleged homosexuality. The newspaper, located in Graham, ran the story under headlines of a size usually reserved for the declaration of war, and included the name and address of the woman's alleged lesbian lover. To further complicate matters, the *Alamance News* has decided to take an editorial stand on homosexuality: as you might suspect, they're against it.

"Efforts by homosexuals to be considered a minority group deserving of special funds or considerations from universities, and state and federal governments is enough to make one wonder where today's world is going," began the editorial entitled "Against Lesbians and Gays" which ran in the May 5 issue.

"Murderers, rapists or thieves are not given minority status. These groups have broken the laws of man.

"Homosexuals have broken the laws of man and of nature and eventually will pay for the misuse of their bodies. To group them as minorities would certainly make the true minorities cringe.

"March 25 in Chapel Hill the State's Gay and Lesbian Conference was held on the campus of the University of North Carolina. All sessions were held in the Frank Porter Graham Student Union.

"Speakers were to talk on the work of the National Association of Gay and Lesbian Democratic Clubs in getting state and national candidates' support in exchange for votes and on 'Survival skills in a hostile world.'

"With North Carolina having 'Crime Against Nature' laws, which is what homosexuality is, how can a conference like this take place at our state's university."

The *Alamance News* has a circulation of 6,787 copies. Letters to the Editor may be addressed to: *Alamance News*, P.O. Box 431, Graham, N.C. 27253.

• You knew it was bound to happen sometime, and it has. On April 8, in the *Ahoscie News Herald* and the *Enfield Progress*, the Rev. Marion Dick informed his readers that AIDS was God's revenge upon homosexuals.

"While politicians were accepting gay support, loose liberals were saying leave them alone, and some church officials advocated putting out the welcome mat," the article reads, "Mother Nature lowered the boom on homosexuals.

"A deadly disease known as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) destroys their immune system and leaves them easy victims to infectious diseases. They are prey to all manner of viruses and bacteria, so, death overtakes them in a short time.

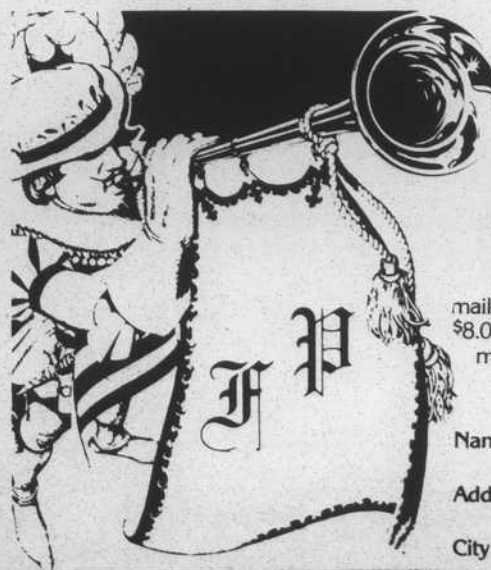
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