

The Front Page

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N.C. Human Rights Fund Receives Grant

The North Carolina Human Rights Fund (NCHRF) has been awarded a \$7,000 grant by the Chicago Resource Center, a private grantmaking foundation. The money, which the organization plans to match (or exceed) with locally contributed funds, is to be used to further research and education projects.

Founded in 1979, NCHRF originally concerned itself with the unfair treatment of gays by the police and the courts. Since then, the organization has diversified into education of gays and non-gays and support of projects aimed at the needs of individual lesbians and gay men.

Educational efforts currently include: documentation of discrimination and harassment; informing legislators about the negative effects of archaic sexual laws; and helping gather and disseminate information on the health needs of the gay community. Support efforts include: helping individuals find a sympathetic, competent lawyer; providing a dispute settlement service for gay people; and intervention in cases of discrimination or harassment.

In January of 1983, the Chicago Resource Center (CRC) announced that it was interested in funding gay and lesbian organizations and projects nationwide. The Center said that it was interested in a wide range of programs, including (but not limited to) those that focus on: civil and legal rights of lesbians and gay men; services for the gay community's special needs; coalition building; outreach to educational and community institutions. Although its funding in this area is just beginning, CRC's grants in other areas have varied from \$500 to \$50,000, with the majority in the \$5,000-\$15,000 range. All grants are for one year's funding only.

Many of the current projects sponsored by NCHRF, which endeavors to function as a state-wide organization, met the criteria for a CRC grant. With the grant as a beginning, the Fund is committed to expanding these activities.

Principal among the organization's proposed activities is the creation of a statewide Hotline. Currently, the Fund lacks a quick and confidential mechanism for individuals to reach the organization when they need information, advice, etc. The Hotline will alleviate this problem and, once established, the organization plans to publicize it widely. NCHRF hopes that its proposed hotline will complement, rather than conflict with, existing switchboards and crisis lines already in existence in North Carolina.

The NCHRF Hotline might also: facilitate communication between gay organizations in the state; make the Fund's Dispute Settlement Service more readily available; serve as a basic research tool. The Hotline would principally be staffed by volunteers, but one person would have to be hired to coordinate the project. This same person might also conduct some of the Fund's research activities.

NCHRF also hopes to establish a series of workshops aimed at educating professionals who may come in contact with gay people but who are ill-prepared to deal with their special needs. These workshops would be offered to attorneys, law enforcement officials, high school guidance counselors, ministers, social workers, health care providers, news media representatives, etc. In addition to soliciting and training volunteers to facilitate these workshops, the Fund would provide a basic video tape presentation which the volunteer could use to "break the ice" on the issue.

In order to develop materials appropriate for the workshops, the Fund feels a need to research a variety of issues and conduct opinion polls which would then be turned into position papers. Topics might include

homosexuality and public health, employment and housing rights of gays, rights of gays in the military, etc. These activities would supplement the Fund's already ongoing effort to document cases of discrimination and incidents of harassment in the state.

Other projects discussed by the Fund include: the production of public service television and radio announcements; the development of a resource center for materials relating to all aspects of gay life; establishment of a statewide speakers bureau of individuals available to address a variety of interested groups.

In-kind contributions of office space, graphics production, public relations work and computerized research analysis have been forthcoming. *The Front Page* has also agreed to contribute space for ads publicizing the organization's statewide efforts.

NCHRF may also apply to other foundations for additional grant money.

The Fund plans an intensive direct mail drive, not only to raise funds, but to find volunteers interested in and capable of implementing its staggering list of projected activities. The organization would like to hear

from all interested parties, especially women and minorities.

In summation, the Fund's major priorities for 1984 are:

- * Match or exceed the \$7,000 grant from CRC with locally-raised funds.
- * Establish a state-wide Hotline.
- * Continue to offer arbitration and mediation services through its Dispute Settlement Service and publicize the availability of those services.
- * Continue its ongoing discrimination documentation project.
- * Monitor and respond to attacks on the human and civil rights of lesbians and gay men in North Carolina, especially those which result from the AIDS scare.
- * Encourage efforts to repeal the state's "crime against nature" laws.

"All of these are interrelated," says a Fund spokesperson, "and our potential accomplishments could have positive impact of the lives of lesbians and gay men in North Carolina for years to come."

For more information on the North Carolina Human Rights Fund, to join or to make a contribution, write: NCHRF, PO Box 10782, Raleigh, N.C. 27605.

Greensboro Rest Area Arrests Continue

GREENSBORO—The intermittent arrests and undercover operations at the rest areas east of Greensboro on I-85 are apparently continuing, although they are not yielding the expected results.

One of the unanticipated developments has been the social status of many of the men arrested so far — few of them from Greensboro, few of them self-identified as gay, many of them considered "pillars of the community." Several businessmen, an award-winning schoolteacher, a Jaycee leader and a minister are among those arrested, according to a report in the *Greensboro Daily News*.

Guilford County vice squad officers began investigations and undercover surveillance at the rest areas in late February of this year. Sgt. Roy Dodez, who heads the vice squad, told the *Daily News* that the investigation began after his office received more than a dozen complaints from travelers in the course of several weeks.

"We'd like it if publicity about the arrests we're making out there scared them all away," Dodez said. "But I don't think that's going to happen."

The Sheriff's Department has received complaints about the problem for many years,

he said, and arrests have been made previously from time to time by deputies who spotted illegal sexual acts.

In 1981, a brief undercover probe led to charges of "crime against nature" being brought against 10 men, he said.

After that operation, enforcement action at the rest areas nearly ceased. There were personnel changes in the vice squad in late 1982 and, until this year, the unit lacked the sufficient personnel to investigate the complaints.

Several arrests were made in March and April of this year, and then several more in October.

The "clean-up" effort clearly isn't working yet, Guilford County District Attorney Lamar Dowda told the *Daily News*.

The first three men arrested were given deferred prosecution — meaning they could escape without a conviction if they got counseling and stayed away from the rest stops.

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THE NEWS

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