

NC Pride '95 Plans Relationships Conference

For many people, Pride Weekend is an opportunity to celebrate, let off steam, or make a political statement. Increasingly, the weekend event sponsored by North Carolina Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride is also an opportunity to teach and learn, as well.

"We are perceived by most people as a social and cultural organization with a civil rights agenda," according to Jim Duley, NC Pride Executive Director. "But we also take our educational mission very seriously."

For the second year, the groups' annual event will include a major one-day conference. Held Saturday, June 10, it will include a series of workshops, town meeting, and a concurrent business and organizational fair.

"We wanted to do a separate event at Pride," said Mike Katz, co-chair of the Pride '95 educational committee. "We thought that a conference was a way into Pride for those parts of the community that are not into the politics of the rally or who were not interested in a dance party."

"There are people who can come to this event and get something out of it, without having to march or go public," agreed education committee co-chair Caren Carver. "Our workshops are designed to meet the needs of all members of the

community."

This year's theme, "Relationships" is designed to counter the isolation and lack of connectedness that many members of the LGBT community face.

"The theme came from one of the education committee members who is an adolescent," Katz said. At one meeting, the adult members of the committee turned to the young man and asked him, "What are some of the things you are struggling with and are important to you?"

"Being in a relationship, and forming relationships," was the response.

Katz said that the rest of the committee quickly realized that this was a common experience for all LGBT people. They expanded it to include not only relationships with significant others, but other kinds of connectedness as well, such as relationships to self, to friends and family, within the LGBT community, and to the broader world.

"The theme of relationships is one which speaks to the diversity of the community," Carver said.

Of special concern this year is the relationship among the four main constituent sexual orientation and gender identity groups within the LGBT community — lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people.

NC Pride has made a commitment over the last year to strive to be more aware and supportive of the uniqueness of the bisexual and transgender experience. To that end, the education committee ensured that transgender and bisexual people were active in workshop planning. Several workshops throughout the day are designed for these groups to communicate their ideas, issues and needs to the greater community.

"We have been very intentional in the types of workshops we have chosen so that all members of the community — including bisexuals and transgender people — are not only invited but will find workshops of interest," Carver said.

Other workshops cover a diverse range of topics, including youth issues, AIDS, sexuality, and self-esteem. All are designed to be accessible to people regardless of their or sexual identity. They are not designed as caucuses for subsets of the LGBT community, however.

"People need to know that groups that need something for themselves would have to get it elsewhere," Katz said.

Participants are welcome to come for part of the day, but organizers hope that most will choose to attend the entire event.

The day also includes a lunch and community meeting which will be an "open mike" forum. Participants will be allowed to speak their minds about any issue facing the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Organizers expect about 1000 North Carolinians to attend this year, several hundred more than participated in last year's conference.

"We want people to plan to stay for the whole day. The community meeting at lunch time is an especially important time for people to share their experiences and talk to one another," Katz said.

Conference Schedule

8:30 *Business/Organizational Fair Opens*

9:00-9:45 *Opening Session.*

Welcome and orientation. Finding the pride in Pride 95. Creating community.

10:00-11:15 *Concurrent Workshops*

11:30-12:45 *Concurrent Workshops*

1:00-2:15 *Lunch and Community Meeting*

An open mike discussion. This is a chance to speak to the community about anything on your mind: problems, questions, or comments. Lunches are available for purchase or you can bring your own.

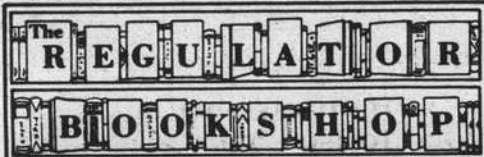
2:30 3:45 *Concurrent Workshops*

4:00 5:00 *Closing Experience*

Four participants -- a lesbian, a gay male, a bisexual, and a transgendered person -- discuss their experience fo today's conference. All of us will decide what was valuable, what was not, and what we would like to see next year at Pride '96.

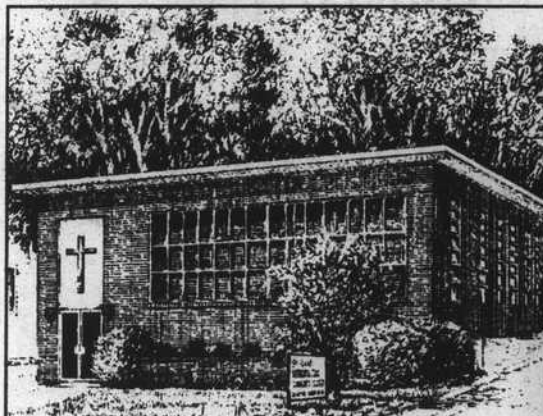
The Relationships Conference will be held June 10 at the Omni Durham Hotel and Durham Civic Center, the site for many Pride Weekend events. There is no fee or advance registration, but donations to NC Pride will be accepted at the event. A special room rate of \$65 per night (up to four people) is available. Call 1-800-THE-OMNI for reservations and specify "NC Pride" to get the discount.

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SUNDAY SCHEDULE:

11:00am WORSHIP 'Joyful Morning'
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5:30pm PM Praise Choir Practice
7:15pm WORSHIP 'PM Praise'
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For more information on these and other meetings and events at St. John's MCC, call 834-2611.

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