

# The FRONT PAGE

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## It's okay to be gay.

TimeOutYouth.org

### Charlotte Firm Rejects Gay Youth Billboards

CHARLOTTE (AP) – The city's largest outdoor advertising firm has rejected a request from a gay youth support group to rent five billboards with the slogan "It's OK to be gay."

Time Out Youth this summer wants to spend \$6,200 in grant and gift money to rent the billboards in Charlotte that also include the group's web address.

Adams Outdoor Advertising rented the group five billboards around the city for a month in 2001. The billboards featured four teens and the slogan "We are your gay youth," followed by a web address.

Reaction to the 2001 campaign was "overwhelmingly good," Time Out Youth Director Tonda Taylor said.

The original billboard campaign was Time Out's response to a lack of local support from schools, houses of worship and the medical community for gay teens, she added.

"The only reason we decided to use that much money for one project was

out of a sense of frustration and urgency," Taylor told The Front Page.

"There's so much 'reparative therapy' going on in this community — aimed directly at gay teens — that we really need to get the message out there that

it's okay, that there are resources, that Time Out is here, there's a website, people you can talk to who will accept you. We choose the billboard option because it reaches so widely."

Adams officials said the slogan this year was too direct.

"We had an hour long meeting with two representatives from Adams, one of them new to us — the new district manager who just moved here from Charleston two months ago. He said they wouldn't run 'It's okay to be gay.'

"We suggested two alternatives — 'If you're gay, you're OK' and 'Gay youth, you're fabulous' — but they rejected them both. We asked them if they'd allow a billboard that said 'It's okay to be left-handed,' or 'It's okay to be black,' and their response was to say to us 'You just don't understand.'

"The last word we had from them, in

*"We really need to get the message out there that it's okay, that there are resources, people you can talk to who will accept you"*

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### 2003 HIV Prevention Conference Ends on Discordant Notes

By Bob Roehr  
Contributing Writer

Boos and hisses during parts of Claude Allen's closing remarks at the 2003 HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta on July 30 clearly demonstrated the tension that exists between much of the HIV prevention community and the Bush administration. The Deputy Secretary for Health and Human Services appeared to be caught off guard by the reaction.

Allen tried to allay fears that recent prevention initiatives by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) would result in defunding community-based prevention efforts. Those initiatives, such as increased testing and a focus on prevention for positives, were developed solely within CDC and without consultation with the affected communities.

"The Secretary and I recognize that CBOs [community-based organizations] are integral players and will continue to play a very central role in implementing this new initiative. This will include an expanded role for CBOs in terms of HIV testing, outreach, and prevention counseling," he said. But the catch is, the CBO must be capable of adapting to the new initiatives.

Allen touted the Uganda ABC model of HIV prevention where "A is abstinence in young people. B is being faithful within a relationship. And C is condom use in high-risk populations, with the knowledge that condoms are not as effective in preventing all sexually transmitted diseases as they are in terms of preventing HIV."

"Encouraging young adults and youth to abstain is the only appropriate initial strategy to making



Claude Allen

informed decisions," ordered Allen. This evoked boos from the audience of 3,000 HIV prevention researchers and outreach workers. They intensified as Allen continued, "Whether youth identifies him or herself as heterosexual, gay, or questioning, delay of sexual debut must be the first message that they receive."

"For young adults, however, who choose not to honor delayed sexual debut, we must reinforce the importance of entering into relationships committed to monogamy." A ripple of laughter surged through the audience.

"Lastly, for these individuals [who do not abide by abstinence or monogamy] we must encourage the adoption of safer sex practices and the consistent use of condoms, with the knowledge, again, that they are not always 100% effective."

At one point during Allen's speech, activists walked the aisles

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The 2003/2004 G/L Consumer Online Census is available to the worldwide LGBT community through August 18th, 2003 at

## www.glcensus.org