

Helms Reverses Position on HIV, AIDS Research

By EMMA BURGIN
Staff Writer

After 30 years in office, U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., appears to have reversed his stance on battling the AIDS virus. The Associated Press reported Thursday that Helms told hundreds of people at the "Prescription for Hope" conference, held by Samaritan's Purse, in Washington, D.C. this week that he regrets not exerting more effort against the worldwide epidemic.

"I have been too lax too long in doing something really significant about AIDS," Helms said, according to the AP. "I'm not going to lay it aside on my agenda for the remaining months I have (in office)." Helms, who is nearing the end of his fifth term in office, is notorious for his opposition to gay rights and AIDS and HIV research. Helms said he turned to Franklin Graham, chief executive officer of Samaritan's Purse, for guidance on how to deal with the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

Several AIDS activists said they are pleased that Helms intends to do more to fight the deadly disease. Patsy Clarke, who lost her son, Mark, to AIDS, wrote a plea to Helms in 1994, trying to convince him to cease his opposition to AIDS research. After receiving a reply from Helms stating that he was unwilling to change his stance on homosexuality and AIDS, Clarke co-founded Mothers Against Jesse in Congress. Clarke said she was not angry at

Helms for his response, but found Helms' stand on AIDS unsettling. "I was disturbed that such a view could exist in someone so powerful," she said. But after Helms' speech, Clarke said she is pleased with his change in attitude. "I'm very glad he's more amenable to AIDS research," she said. "It seems he has a more accepting view." Although Clarke said she thinks Helms has taken the first step in halting his indifference toward AIDS research, she does not think Helms' views on

homosexuality have changed. "I didn't see any change in his view of gay people," she said. "I see a change in his willingness to treat the disease of AIDS. That's definitely a good step." Jeremy Blume, public relations account executive for The DeMoss Group Inc. - the public relations firm representing Samaritan's Purse - said people like Helms who were late responding to AIDS and HIV often thought the virus would not be as widespread a problem as it has become. "A lot of people thought there

would be a pill to cure AIDS by now," he said. "Now, there's 40 million people living with AIDS in Africa. Something must be done." Clarke said she is thankful for Helms' ability to admit he was wrong in opposing AIDS research. "It takes a strong person to admit they are ashamed," she said. "I am grateful at (Helms') ability to admit he has shame." *The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.*

UNC, Penn State Raise Money With Marathons

UM-College Park, UVA, and Duke will join Penn State and UNC in hosting campus dance marathons this year.

By AMANDA ILER
Staff Writer

Students at UNC and Pennsylvania State University are planning to spend this weekend dancing for a good cause. Both schools will host dance marathons to raise money for charity. Money collected at UNC will support the N.C. Children's Hospital, while money at Penn State will benefit the Four Diamonds Fund, an organization devoted to funding research on childhood cancer. Started in 1998, the dance marathon is still relatively new to UNC students, but students at Penn State have been dancing for charity since 1973. Last year, they raised more than \$3 million, according to the organization's Web site. Christa Cavaluchi, entertainment chairwoman of the Penn State dance marathon, said it originally started as a 24-hour competition but has turned into a 48-hour marathon sponsored by the school's Interfraternity and Panhellenic councils. Cavaluchi said she doesn't know the exact reason for the change. "I think the reason is because it is the longest," she said. "It's not documented why they decided to change from a competition." Like UNC students, Cavaluchi said Penn State students raise money for the marathon by holding a 5K run and soliciting businesses. She added that more than 250 campus organizations, including Greek organizations and the campus newspaper, also raise money. She said planners hope that dancers can stay on their feet for the entire 48

hours. UNC and Penn State are not the only two universities sponsoring dance marathons this year. Duke University is holding a dance marathon March 2 to raise money for Caring House, a residence for cancer patients who are 18 or older. Duke held its first dance marathon in 2000 but did not hold one in 2001. Students involved with the Duke dance marathon said they are hoping it will be more successful this year. "We really want to get it off the ground and get people there this year," said Kristen Kneier, chairman of Duke Marathon. The marathon is being held as part of Duke's Krzyzewski-ville weekend that culminates March 3 with the UNC-Duke basketball game at Duke. Kneier said dancers are required to raise \$25 each, enough to fund a one-night stay at Caring House. She said the goal of the marathon committee is to raise enough money for 1,001 nights. Kneier said the marathon will last nine hours and participants will dance in four- and five-hour shifts. She said the committee has planned several activities for the dancers - including dance lessons and kickboxing. "They're pretty booked the whole time," she said. "They're getting a lot of dance lessons, which is really cool."

The University of Virginia and the University of Maryland-College Park also hold annual dance marathons that benefit children in hospitals. According to the UVA Web site, the 2002 dance marathon raised \$111,879.43 for the Newborn Intensive Care Unit in the UVA Hospital. Money from the UM-College Park fund-raiser supports the Children's Hospital of Washington, D.C. *The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.*

Price Discusses Poverty, Job Training at Conference

By MICHAEL MCKNIGHT
Staff Writer

DURHAM - Area commerce and civic leaders asked U.S. Rep. David Price, D-N.C., for more federal aid to assist the Triangle's unemployed population at a summit Thursday morning. The round-table discussion focused on the impact President Bush's proposed budget might have on unemployment benefits and job-training programs. Several of the conference attendees expressed concerns that the budget proposal might force cuts to such programs. "We sort of downplay job training, and we forget the importance of it," said Ted Abernathy, executive vice president

of the Research Triangle Regional Partnership. "The idea that it's not an issue is completely wrong." Employment analysts at the conference attributed the growth of Triangle area layoffs to recent national economic trends. "I think what we've seen in the last few years is a lot of the manufacturing going away," said Mike Ahern, a senior policy analyst at the N.C. Department of Commerce. According to data from the N.C. Employment Security Commission, the statewide unemployment rate is 6.1 percent, compared with 4.2 percent in Wake County and 4.3 percent in Durham County. Orange County has the lowest unemployment rate in the state at 2.4 percent.

"(Orange County) always has one of the lowest rates because the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill never has any layoffs," said Wayne Beverly, the Raleigh-Durham regional manager for the N.C. Employment Security Commission. Price, who sat quietly and listened to attendees' comments for much of the meeting, said it is likely the U.S. Congress will pass an extension of unemployment benefits. Bush supported this idea last month in his State of the Union address. But Price added that additional funding for job training might meet resistance in Congress. "I think the heat is on on the first issue we discussed, the extension of unemployment benefits," Price said. "This

job training program is a little different - it's a little off everybody's radar screen. "I think the focus on job training and the things we were talking about this morning were not the first things on the news, but that doesn't mean they are not important." Price said he will take information from the conference back to Washington, D.C. He added that he will work to allocate more money for unemployment benefits and job training programs in the national budget, before it is passed by Congress. He said, "We've somehow got to figure out how to shore up that budget." *The State & National Editor can be reached at stntdesk@unc.edu.*

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