

# THE TRIANGLE

The Monthly Newspaper from Gay & Lesbian Community Services of Central Florida, Inc.  
Serving Orlando's Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Community

## At CENTAUR, Love And Caring Is Still # 1

by Steve Meunier

Walk with me by the colorful area known as Paul's garden, where a lion's head fountain trickles water amid beautiful flowering plants. Enter a remarkable, artfully appointed 1920's curiosity-piece structure. Make an herbal tea in the kitchen, then wander through rooms filled with days-gone-by detail, wood trim, a fireplace and smiling faces. This isn't just any building. This is CENTAUR, a home-away-from-home haven for those afflicted or affected by the ravages of HIV/AIDS infection.

The atmosphere has been fostered and nurtured by many, but none more so than Executive Director Debbie Tucci. Debbie is more than the operative head of CENTAUR, she's a friend to anyone who needs help. "If I could, there would be no reception desk, or anything resembling an office on the first floor," remarks Debbie. She doesn't even want CENTAUR to bear a parallelism to being a business. "The heart of CENTAUR is caring. We're family," states Debbie.

CENTAUR, (Central Fl. AIDS United Resources, Inc.) was founded in 1985. At that time, HIV/AIDS was unknown and misunderstood, obscured by Washington bureaucrats who were diligent in preventing information on AIDS from reaching the public. These same elected leaders were more worried about

words like "condom" and "intercourse" than the threat of the epidemic spreading to mainstream society.

Debbie Tucci began her affiliation with CENTAUR the way many do, coming in for help, information, and, eventually, volunteering personal time and energy to help others. CENTAUR has evolved from its inception as support groups held at WE CARE, to become a \$300,000 a year well-staffed operation.

At the time when CENTAUR was incorporated - 1986, it was all volunteer. "We worked out of the Unitarian Church on Robinson St.," says Greg Haun, their volunteer coordinator. Greg is another CENTAUR "lifer". He originally stepped through the doors for info on HIV, and started volunteering in 1986. "I didn't know anyone else who had it, I wanted to learn more."

CENTAUR moved to several locations, including a duplex-half on W. Colonial. "It was then [1988] that Jim Stuckey and I procured United Way funding, a grant for the Hotline," remembers Debbie. At that time, all their counselors were volunteers. None were licensed. But there wasn't anywhere else to go if you were in-

fectured, or trying to help someone who was. "When we needed office supplies, yard sales were our budget," adds Debbie. "Actually, we had our own yard sales, too. Those

sales paid the rent a lot of the time!"

Debbie considers a state grant formulated by Representative Alzo Reddick as a turning point in CENTAUR'S formation as a complete resource center. It was a \$25,000 administrative grant, that survives today, and permitted a Director and Secretaries' salaries. Today, their funding comes from: United Way -21%, government contracts -23%, special events -20%, and a whopping 36% from individual contributions. This clearly shows that not only does CENTAUR care, but so does the community at large.

"We've always had help from the area bars," Debbie fondly admits. "Places like the old Silver Hammer helped keep our doors open."

Today, the CENTAUR building at 741 W. Colonial Dr. has in-house services including: a food bank which distributed 2388 food boxes in the past year. Their clothing bank has exploded, and will assist a lot of needy people this winter. The hotline received almost 2000 calls in the past 12 months, all professionally and discreetly handled. Also, in just one month they held 174 counseling sessions, individual and group. These sessions have brought in 2000 people in the past year. The loved ones of the afflicted are victims too. Denial runs rampant, finding the right person to talk with is essential, yet a difficult process for some.

Getting the right counseling at CENTAUR is as easy as picking up the phone and calling Nicky, who makes appointments for all 9 counselors. An intake will assess the clients' individual needs. John Walsh, a licensed mental health counselor, heads this department with expertise and a good listening ear. He knows that there are many

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Greg Haun, Michael Prazniak and Debbie Tucci (Seated)

## 1995 Spectrum Awards To Shine On Downtown

### Grandeur and Pageantry Will Reign On Church Street

Special to The Triangle

Gay and Lesbian Community Services of Central Florida, Inc. is pleased to announce that the 1995 Spectrum Awards will be held on Sunday, February 26, 1995 in the Presidential Ballroom at Church Street Station. The new and expanded facilities will allow an even bigger audience from last year's sell-out event. The Church Street address will "offer our community a little extra leg room so we can strut our stuff" said Lyle Miller, co-chair for the event.

This year's event is expected to be more grand and elegant than last year's, with butlered service during the hors d'oeuvres reception and a spectacular multi-media opening and finale featuring the faces and places of Central Florida. The "Dress to Impress" evening will be followed by a mass entrance into all of the clubs at Church Street Station (which is included in your ticket price) immediately following the finale.

This year's event also includes an expansion of categories, including the addition of awards specifically for women and men in each of five specific categories. Nominations for the Spectrum Awards will remain open until



The Grand Foyer at Church Street Station

5:00 PM on December 15, 1994 (forms are available at The G.L.C.S. Center, Out & About Books and inside this edition of The Triangle). "Don't miss your chance to nominate.. this is your chance to honor those who so richly deserve it" said David Bain.

Advertising and Corporate Sponsorships are also available, and there is something to fit every business budget.

Tickets will be available the first part of January for \$35.00 each which include the reception, seating (tables of 10 this year), and admission to Church Street Station after the event. There will also be a limited number of \$20.00 tickets available which permits the bearer to viewing of the show only.

For more information about the show, tickets, advertising or sponsorships, contact: Lyle C. Miller (407) 425-4527. Co-Executive Producers for this year's event are David Bain and Lyle Miller.

*The Spectrum Awards are a registered copy-right of G.L.C.S. of Central Florida, Inc., and are presented annually by G.L.C.S.. All members of the Central Florida community, regardless of age, race, creed, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic standing, health status or differently abledness are eligible.*