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October 11
National Coming
Out Day



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THE TRIANGLE

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

AIDS Walk Orlando Breaks New Ground

Special to the Triangle

You'd almost think that Orlando has hit the big times this year as Hope & Help of Central Florida unveiled its plans for this year's AIDS Walk on Sunday October 29. Already, over 6,000 pledge forms have been distributed, nearly double the anticipated amount. And this year's walk location, through the tourist corridor of International Drive will make this one of the most visible events ever. At an information session and kick-off at Blazing Pianos over 60 team leaders gathered for information, food, and fun.

The team leaders showed the true diversity and support of the community. They came from AT&T, Planet Hollywood, Orlando Regional Healthcare, Orlando Fitness Center, Walt Disney World Dolphin, Sheraton World, Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, State Farm Insurance, TGI Fridays, Winter Park Jaycees and a multitude of High Schools and Medical Firms.

"The list of team leaders is growing everyday" says Michael Slaymaker, executive director of Hope and Help, an AIDS service organization that sponsors the event. "The entire community is embracing the event" he added excitedly.

This year's walk will include a number of firsts, including Orlando Mayor Glenda Hood, who will participate in the event and the inclusion of the Walt Disney World Company as a corporate sponsor. This is the first time the east coast Disney subsidiary has become involved actively in the fight against HIV and AIDS, although Disneyland and the Walt Disney Studios based in Southern California

have been actively involved with the AIDS communities for several years. Radio personality "Hildi" from radio station 106.7 will be on hand as this year's celebrity host.

The 3 mile walk will begin at the Mercado Shopping Center, then proceed down Republic drive, then onto International Drive in a figure 8, allowing a place for walkers to stop and rest, should the need arise. The walk will begin promptly at 1:00 P.M., with registration beginning at Noon on the Republic Drive side of the center. At

the conclusion of the event, walkers will be able to mingle with Disney characters and participate in a drawing for prizes. All walkers with pledges of \$50 or more will receive an AIDS Walk T-shirt, and those with \$150 or more in pledges will receive an AIDS Walk jacket. Their will be an individual, as well as team competition for pledging. "Any pledge amount will be accepted" said Slaymaker, "No matter how small."

This year's list of high hitting corporate sponsors includes the Walt Disney Company, Bellsouth Mobility, Blazing Pianos, Barnes & Noble, WKCF Channel 18, WONQ Radio, and the Mercado Shopping Village along with Dr. Michael E. Dunn, Foley & Lardner, and the Triangle newspaper. All have either given substantial donations of either cash or in-kind services for the event. All which were necessary to offset the costs of police, street closings, printing, and advertising.

For information on AIDS WALK Orlando, See the pledge form on page 18 or call Hope & Help at (407)645-2577



Team leaders gathered at Blazing Pianos for an information session and kickoff party.

Gay Writer Seeks Real-Life Coming Out Stories

Scott Seomin, a gay writer who lives in Los Angeles, is currently collecting real life stories of coming out for an upcoming book *Mixed Emotions: Stories of Coming Out*. Since mid-1994, Seomin has received over 400 letters from gays and lesbians — each detailing the individual's first time that he or she revealed that they were a homosexual. The publishing date is Fall 1996.

"Coming out has different meanings to different people," Seomin says. "The letters that I've received so far include stories of coming out to parents, best friends, ministers, teachers, rabbis and even a great-grandmother. Some letters detail individuals' coming out to themselves by accepting their own homosexuality, and a few stories reveal how a gay or lesbian parent came out to their children. While some of these real-life stories are sad or even frightening, many are loving and humorous anecdotes about revealing one's true self to another human being for the very first time."

But why compile a book that consists of firsthand accounts of coming out of the closet in the first place? "Although gay men and lesbians come out of the closet every day — to themselves, to a friend, or to a family member — the process is never easy," Seomin said. "While I don't see *Mixed Emotions* as being a step-by-step handbook to coming out, I do hope that it will help closeted homosexuals in taking the first step to coming out of the closet. If such a book had been published when I came out as a teen, I'm certain that the process would have been easier for me."

Seomin is accepting first hand, real-life accounts from gays and lesbians revealing their own coming out, and would like to hear from gay men and lesbians from all over the U.S. If you would like your own coming out story included in the book, please send a letter (suggested length: 1000 words, although more or less is acceptable) to *Mixed Emotions*, 7985 Santa Monica Boulevard, Suite 66, West Hollywood, California 90046.

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