

# Horse Play

## Nitro Promotes HIV Prevention Through Fun Activities

By Ian Drew

Fifty gay men gathered at Tradewinds Park in Coconut Creek on Saturday, December 15 to experience Back in the Saddle, a free day of horseback riding through trails and fields sponsored by Nitro.

Nitro, an HIV-prevention project of the Gay and Lesbian Community Center of South Florida funded by the Florida Department of Health, is constantly seeking out new ways to get the message out to young, gay men that safe sex is the only way to have sex.

"These free events are a great way to bring guys in the community out together for a relaxing, good time," says Jay McLaughlin, Nitro's Community Health Coordinator. "We have already done bowling, roller skating and a night of dance classes. They are a great alternative to the bar scene."

The group-sponsored events features a casual HIV-prevention discussion and materials, in addition to outreach efforts in local bars and nightclubs. The group also sponsors free anonymous and confidential HIV testing at the GLCC, located at 1717 North Andrews Avenue in Fort Lauderdale, every other Friday.

Nitro offers two discussion groups that

are growing in popularity within the community. One open forum is held every Monday evening 7-9pm at Nova Southeastern University's Main Campus Library.

Another group centering on relationship issues is held at Fort Lauderdale's ArtServe, located at 1350 East Sunrise Boulevard, every Thursday evening from 7:30 pm to 8:30 pm.

Nitro focuses on young gay men between the ages of 19 and 30 years old. "Statistics show the rate of HIV-infection is growing with young people right now. We are trying to really get young people to be aware of what the risk factors are and they are more receptive when they are comfortable," says Erick Rivera, a Nitro outreach worker.

Dr. Stephen Fallon started the group after launching a similar group at the AIDS service organization Center One in 1998. "The idea for the group came from the Center for Disease Control's research into what makes gay men more or less likely to protect themselves," he says. "The report shows that the single most important factor was what they perceived their peers to be doing. By bringing these guys together, we can open discussions so that they can learn about safety and make sure



The Nitro Team: (from L to R) Dr. Stephen Fallon, Juan Carlos Bohorquez, Jay McLaughlin, Erick Rivera, Eric Torez, Rafael Narbaev

they are conscious of it."

Fallon recruited the Nitro team, made up of outreach workers McLaughlin, Rivera, Rafael Narbaev, Juan Carlos Bohorquez and Eric Torez, after personally approaching them in local clubs and nightspots. "I looked for the people who seemed really comfortable and who were also not high or drunk," Fallon says. "I tried to get people who are in the mix and aware of risk behaviors, as well as people who were in the right age range. It also helps that most of them are Hispanic to add diversity to the program."

The group's next event will be a New Year Scavenger Hunt on Saturday, January 19 from 12 to 3:00 pm. The event will start off at the GLCC and will allow participants to follow clues to prizes as they explore gay offerings in and around Fort Lauderdale.

Fallon also says that a movie night, a canoe trip, a rescheduled rock-climbing event and another dance lesson night will all be scheduled as events for next year.

For more information on Nitro and their coming events, call 954.463.9005, ext. 235.

# Scouts' Gay Ban Nets \$200,000 Gift

## Donation Offsets Half Million Loss in Operating Funds this Year

By Michael James

In a show of support for the Boy Scouts of America banning homosexuals from the organization, a South Florida couple has donated \$200,000 to the South Florida Council Scouts.

Along with the donation to the South Florida Council they challenged others in the community to help match their gift. The donation was made quietly and anonymously in September.

The South Florida Council website [www.sfcbsa.org](http://www.sfcbsa.org) contains a written statement that says the couple were "deeply disappointed at the treatment the Boy Scouts received from county and municipal governments, local school districts, the United Way of Broward County, and from some corporate contributors following the United States Supreme Court ruling last June."

Scores of institutions across the country cut or reduced ties to the Scouts as a gesture against discrimination following the June 2000 Supreme Court decision allowing the Boy Scouts to exclude homosexuals.

But in March, a federal judge ruled the Broward County School District couldn't ban the Boy Scouts.

Superintendent Frank Till then proposed charging the Boy Scouts and other groups rent. Non-profits are only required to pay for electricity, a cost of \$10 a meeting, capped at \$100 a year. Because troops and packs meet dozens of times a year, the actual cost per meeting results to just a few dollars.

In July, the South Florida Council of the Boy Scouts of America announced it wouldn't seek public funding and would train its workers to be sensitive to gays as part of an agreement with the United Way of Miami-Dade and gay rights group Safeguarding American Values for Everyone (SAVE) Dade.

The reduction in funding resulted from the Scout's refusal to allow "avowed homosexuals" as members or leaders.

The Broward County United Way excluded them from this year's fundraising campaign because the United Way now requires its member agencies to sign agreements to refrain from discrimination based

on sexual orientation.

In the past, local Scout organizations received between \$128,000 and \$175,000 in aid from the United Way.

The Scout's statement went on to say, "These donors also are appreciative that Scouting in South Florida Council has not backed down on its commitment to the BSA's membership standards and that the council leadership has acted 'strong and Scout-like' in dealing with Scouting's detractors."

The gift is the single largest donation designated for operating expenses in the history of the council, Scout Executive Jeffrie Herrmann told the *Sun-Sentinel*.

So far, an additional \$100,000 has been raised in matching funds.



Herrmann went on to say that the Scouts, like most other non-profits, have found it difficult to raise funds after the September 11 attacks. It is estimated that the organization has lost about a half million dollars in operating revenue this year.

# The Write Thing

## Stonewall Offers Writing Workshops

By Mary Damiano

Okay, so you know all about sex. But do you know how to write about sex? Stonewall Library is here to help.

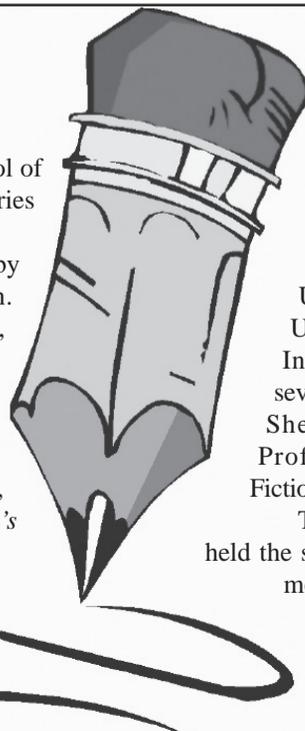
Writing about sex is just one of the topics that will be explored in a series of free writing workshops, called The Next Generation, presented by the Stonewall Library and Archives,

The free workshops are designed to help gay and lesbian writers of all skill levels create new work and are designed so that writers may take one or all of them. Novel writing, short story writing, nonfiction and poetry will be explored. A different topic will be featured each month, including creating characters, setting the scene, and one that's sure to be a favorite, writing about sex.. The

goal is to create and maintain a pool of gay and lesbian writers, and the series will run indefinitely.

The workshops will be taught by local writer, Karen Dale Wolman. Wolman is the author of two novels, *Rites of First Blood* and *The Ancestor*, which is due out this spring. Her short stories and articles have appeared in many publications, including *Girlfriends*, *The Advocate* and *The Women's Review of Books*.

Wolman also teaches fiction writing workshops classes for lesbians and



gays and in the Broward County Arts in Education program. She has taught writing at Florida Atlantic University, Nova Southeastern, UCLA, USC, Arizona State University, California Institute of the Arts and several community colleges. She has a Master of Professional Writing in Fiction from USC.

The workshops will be held the second Saturday of each month, 1-3pm. On January 12, the topic will be, Creating Characters: Real Life and Imagination. On

February 9, Getting Started: Getting Your Novel Out of Your Head and Onto Paper. And on March 9, Heat: Writing about Sex.

In addition to The Next Generation workshops, open writing workshops will also be available on January 8 and 22, from 4:30 to 6pm.

Other upcoming literary events at Stonewall include an appearance by local author John C. Graves, who will read from and sign his book, *Many Roads Traveled*, on January 25, 7pm. Frances Milstead, mother of the popular star Divine, will read from and sign her new book, *My Son Divine*, on February 8, 2002 at 7pm.

The Stonewall Library and Archives is located at 1717 N. Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale. People planning to attend the workshops are asked to pre-register by calling 954.763.8565. Hurry, space is limited.