OUT ON CAMPUS PART II



BY SUSAN McDONALD

Support and Social Groups Help Ease The Transition to Academic Life For Gay Students at Texas Universities

One of the positives of campus life for gay and lesbian students attending many Texas universities has been the development of support and social groups with their interests in mind. In the second installment of our series on such organizations, ***THIS WEEK IN TEXAS*** *looks at the University of North Texas, Texas A&M and Texas Tech.*

Scot Maitland is secretary of **Courage**, a gay, lesbian and bisexual group at the University of North Texas in Denton, a city located about 40 miles north of Dallas. The name is not an acronym, he explains, but rather a state of mind.

"It's basically the idea of having the courage to be who you are and believing in yourself," he says. "That's what our group is all about." Courage began about eight years ago.

According to Maitland, a major shakeup at Courage's last meeting has led to some exciting changes. "The group had basically become a social organization, and we kind of lost sight of our past. One of the former presidents of the group came to the last meeting and basically informed us where we were before, and where we're going. Everyone got riled up and excited, and now Courage is moving forward by going back to where it started, with four principles: support, community service, social and education. Everyone was ready for the change; they were just waiting for someone to lead them to it."

Maitland is a 22-year-old junior majoring in business, and will be running for president soon.

Towards the end of last semester at UNT, about 25 to 30 people showed up at the Courage meetings. At the first meeting this semester, 53 people attended. "The attendance made everything we do worthwhile," says Maitland. He attributes the increase to the liberal atmosphere at UNT, and the fact that they have their own community in Denton, despite the close proximity to Dallas.

Lesbian attendance has also gone up, and a video on lesbian fashion was shown recently. Efforts are being made to encourage more women to join.

"It's so easy to get caught up in yourself, and not the rest of our family," says Maitland. "That's why we try to keep all offices at least 50 percent lesbian if we can." Maitland admits that it would be fair to call Courage a feminist organization.

"There are differences between us [men and women]; we'd be lying to say there aren't, and if you don't have someone telling you what it is, you're going to overlook it without thinking about it."

Meetings are Wednesdays at 8 p.m. in Room 223 of the Art building.

Some student organizations have proven harder to get off the ground than others.