Gay History Month
NT groups kick off month-long awareness
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Courage celebrates Gay History Month

By Marc Marsdale
Contributing Writer

October marks Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual History Month. NT is set to celebrate the event this year under the direction of Courage, a gay, lesbian and bisexual group on campus.



Although the monthlong event is relatively young, only 2 years old, it is gaining national recognition from community groups and elected officials.

Jessica Greenman of Project 21, a gay rights advocacy group, said the idea for the month was cultivated by Rodney Wilson, a St. Louis high school history teacher.

After reading through an 800-page history book that failed to show the history of gay Americans, Wilson organized a nationwide grass-roots network of teachers and communities.

Organizers chose October because it already contained National Coming Out Day, Oct. 11, and the anniversaries of the first two marches on Washington, D.C., conducted by gay, lesbian and bisexual activists. They marched first in 1979 and again in 1987.

Last year, volunteer groups around the nation organized rallies and asked public officials to recognize the history month. Mayors in Chicago and Boston issued proclamations to help celebrate the event. Greenman also said that governors from Massachusetts and Connecticut were involved in promoting the project.

Denton Mayor Bob Castleberry has not yet been asked to deliver a proclamation on behalf of the history month, said Richard Foster, public information officer for the mayor's office.

"The city is not in the business of endorsing or promoting events like this," Foster said. "The mayor would do so if he was approached by a group, but he wouldn't go out and do it on his own. He wouldn't do that for any cause. They would have to come to him."

That is not to say that Denton isn't celebrating the event. Courage has activities planned for the NT community, as well as for Denton residents, said the group's vice president Scot Maitland, Plano senior.

"Last year we didn't really do anything campuswide because we were still getting the group off the ground," Maitland said. "But now that we are established, we're going to offer some events to the student body to help celebrate."

Courage is celebrating the history month by posting paper "COWS" around campus. The paper cows will feature famous gay and lesbian Americans, gay pride symbols and pictures of the Stonewall Inn, which is credited as the place where the modern gay movement got its start.

"We chose COWS because it is short for 'Coming Out Week,'" Maitland said. "During the week we will set up a table and hang a banner in the (University) Union that reads 'Come out, we did.'"

Other October events that Courage has planned include a Coming Out Day trip Oct. 8 to hear Candace Gingrich, sister of Rep. Newt Gingrich, speak in Dallas and the Fall Follies drag show Oct. 21, which is a fund-raising event for Courage. The show will be held at Bedo's in Denton and the cost is $7 per ticket. Prizes will be given, including a T-shirt autographed by Ru Paul, a nationally known transvestite.

"I didn't expect Ru Paul to get back to me so soon after I wrote to her," Maitland said. "But I'm glad she's helping us out.

Maitland said he is encouraged by the straight support that Courage has received during the past month. Two fraternities sent their pledge classes to a meeting and the Student Activities Office has been helpful in planning matters, Maitland said.

He said he hopes the month will bring gay and lesbian Americans into the spotlight as real people and contributors to American society.

For information on any of the events or questions about Courage, call 565-6110. The group meets Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in Art Building 223.