

NEWS & NOTES

Fall 2003

Mission statement of Charis Circle: *The Charis Circle, a non-profit organization, exists to foster feminist community and to create social change. Charis Circle offers educational and cultural events and programs to the Atlanta community that empower women, men and children to honor themselves and work for justice in the world. We want to create a feminist world where racism, sexism, homophobia, classism and all other oppressions do not exist.*

Get your tickets today!



Fat Chance



Deidre McCalla

Charis Circle's 3rd Annual Celebration of Women, Music & Art

Featuring:

Fat Chance and Deidre McCalla

Honorary Co-chairs:

Mayor Shirley Franklin and Emily Saliers

Sunday, November 9, 2003

5:30 - 9:00 pm

Academy of Medicine

Women's Holiday Ball!

Women are already calling to ask, "Do you have tickets for the dance yet?" Good news for all – the dance is set for December 5th at the Sheraton Buckhead, just like last year, and we will have tickets by the end of October. For the last 11 years this dance was lovingly produced by Good Friends for Good Causes to benefit women's organizations. Charis Circle, Atlanta Lesbian Cancer Initiative and Atlanta Pride Committee, with the blessing of Good Friends for Good Causes, will bring you the annual women's holiday dance. Mark your calendars now for this fabulous affair.

Happy 29th Birthday Charis Books and More

Saturday, November 1, 2003 marks 29 years of Charis Books and More – don't miss the party! Join us for our annual sale and birthday party all day on the first. On Sunday, we'll do a little something new:

SATURN RETURNS

Whole-Self-Healing Expo

This is a mind, body & spirit experience to celebrate Charis Books and More's 29 years in loving community.

Exhibitors and practitioners will be available to share information about their services and crafts. Some will offer sample sessions for a small fee.

*Sunday, November 2nd
5pm to 7pm*

*First Existentialist Congregation
470 Candler Park Dr.*

Tickets:

*\$10 in advance (available at Charis)
\$15 at the door*

massage therapy, aura soma, aromatherapy, bodywork, tai chi, energy healing, tarot reading, reflexology, life coaching, astrology & a cash vegetarian bar

CHARIS BOOKS AND MORE
Your Independent Feminist Bookstore



Feminist book store (def): fun, safe, sexy place for booklovers, feminists, lesbians, all progressive folks, and their children.

1189 Euclid Ave NE
Atlanta, GA 30307 404.524.0304
Open 7 days a week in Little Five Points
www.charisbooksandmore.com

Come visit us!

Oasis by Jane Branscomb

Where can you go to be with women, and men who are allies to women; to meet people who share your vision of feminist community; to find information, inspiration, and a nudge to keep you on your growing edge? Where in our built world is there a feeling of relative safety to be yourself?

We know that the space that is by day Charis Books and by night, Charis Circle – or more accurately, that is both hand-in-hand – is viewed as a rare sanctuary by many. We have known this for years, because you have told us so. And it has been our expressed goal, Charis Books' and Charis Circle's, to welcome, affirm and honor all who treat others with equal respect.

We are pleased to let you know that we are working to make this space, which I will simply call "Charis," more functional as Atlanta's feminist gathering place. You may have noticed some changes already; we expect to be finished with the first phase by the time of the bookstore's birthday celebration in November.

The biggest change is to create an expanded area for sitting down, alone or with friends, enjoying a cup of tea, perusing a book, checking out upcoming program happenings and other community events. This space will be up front, in the section you've known previously as the children's section. Charis Circle will have an enhanced display area here, and we'll move our community bulletin board and free literature shelves up to this area. We'll have more seating, lighting and tables, and a wider selection of tea and homemade goodies, still self-serve and by donation.

We'll make it easier to move through the aisles; and we'll reorient the rolling shelves to facilitate program set-up. At the same time, our program space will be larger and more accessible.

We hope you'll come and spend some time in our enlivened oasis! We invite you to use Charis as your community center.

From the Charis Books Women

Please join us as we celebrate 29 years as your feminist bookstore! On Saturday, November 1, 2003, we'll have our usual birthday party and sale from 10:30 AM until 8 PM. You can see what we've done with our space, get your quota of hugs, taste some good food, and breathe in this amazing community. We are so thankful to be here and to be part of your lives. Thank you for your words of encouragement when times are difficult, for sharing your joys with us, for each book you've bought for yourself, for a gift, or just because you love us and want us to thrive. You are the best. When folks wonder how we've made it this many years when other stores are closing all over the country, we have you to thank and we say so. We are surrounded by readers, activists, and folks who care about

independent voices. You know it matters where you shop. You know how fragile the balance is for small businesses and feminist businesses in this corporate, sexist world – and you make sure that you keep this one little corner of hope and justice visible and viable. Thank you.

In that heartfelt thanks, there is also a plea for spreading the word to those who are not so clear-headed about where to shop. We are in a fragile and difficult place (still!) and we need for people to know that they can order anything in print from us. We need to keep spreading the word that, yes, you can order online (www.charisbook-sandmore.com) and get your books delivered by mail when you can't make it to our doors. When people wonder why we charge full-price for books when some others don't, please remind them that they are paying for lots more than books when they keep Charis Books alive. Thank you for the "more" that you have created in and with Charis Books and More over the years – the more that is safety and healing and justice-making and community and independent voices.

We love you,

The women of Charis Books and More – Cherie, Sara, Linda, Mia, Fiona, Angela, Asmara, Edie, and Leah

Tribute from ZAMI by Linda Bryant

Each year the women of ZAMI, Atlanta's organization for lesbians of African descent, have a wonderful weekend when they award the scholarships they have been working toward all year. This year they gave fourteen \$1000.00 scholarships to a pool of out Black lesbian and gay scholars from all over the US. From the opening song of "Young, Gifted and Black," to the closing charge of, "Get that degree – and find a way to give back," the evening was full of laughter, love, and hope. We were thrilled that ZAMI named Charis Books as one of its allies. We now proudly displays a plaque that reads:

Charis Books and More

As the southeast's oldest, independent, feminist bookstore you manifest the meaning of your name – special gift – for the greater Atlanta community. Your unwavering commitment to providing a feminist space for literary, poetic, political, educational and artistic expressions is a model for us all. You have been an ally and friend of ZAMI since its inception, and continue to offer your loving support to us in numerous ways, large and small. We are honored to be co-conspirators with you, sharing the vital work of creating a just world for every race, age, class, sexual orientation, gender, ethnicity, ability, and spiritual expression that makes up the human rainbow. The women of ZAMI extend our deepest appreciation, respect, and gratitude to you for being the gift that you are to this community.

September 27, 2003

GAIA COLLECTIVE

Lots of Exciting Things Are Happening at Gaia! by Penny White

The Gaia Collective means many things to many women. For instance, after a recent Gaia program where folk artists



Fairewing taught us drumming, the Gaia Drumming Circle was formed. It is open to new members and meets the first Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Sweet Java Brown, 1994 Hosea L. Williams Drive.

These spirited Gaia women will perform again for the second "Womanchild" production on Dec. 14th. There will also be a Fine Arts Market and Bake Sale that night.

September's program, "Exploring Your Shadow Side," taught participants how to turn negative aspects of their personalities into positive thinking. An example: if you think of yourself (or if someone else thinks of you) as immature, you can turn that into the positive phrase "childlike."

Upcoming programs include Goddess and Tarot; Creating Masks (just in time for Halloween); Hanukah: Celebrating the Festival of Lights; Rejoicing Through Your Years, an unbirthday celebration, and many more exciting things to learn.

Gaia Collective meets the third Sunday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Bring a potluck dish, forge new friendships and see what you experience with Gaia Collective!

SisterGirls by Leslie Ware

The Gaia Collective Drum Circle joined us at our session on Living Out Loud! After having our regular discussion, the



Gaia drummers came by to teach us all about the role of drumming in various communities and show us how we can communicate with each other and express ourselves through music! They brought all kinds of instruments for us to use,

including several different types of drums, triangles, bells, and shakers from all over the world. A special thanks to all of the Gaia women for sharing with us and providing such a great time! SisterGirls, for girls 9-14, meets monthly.

In It For the Long Haul by Linda Bryant

Southern Voice used this title for their article about our anniversary party honoring lesbians who had been in committed relationships for more than 20 years, and it fits!

What a great night we had on August 17, 2003. Marlene Johnson and Brooke Hopkins were celebrating 25 years together and they decided that Charis was the place to



R.O. Youngblood, *Southern Voice* photographer

have a party. We extended the invitation via our monthly flyer to all other lesbian couples who had spent 20 or more years together. By the time the party rolled around, we had nine couples to honor and lots of guests to honor them. The couples' longevity ranged from 20 to 43 years! We know there are more of you out there – for some it is still not safe to be open; some others may have missed the announcement – and we missed you!

Most of the couples brought a photo from their early years and a piece of music from that time. We had flowers for each couple and a big cake, plus other food and music and time to just visit with each other. Since Marlene and Brooke were the impetus for this party, we invited their daughter to make a presentation to them and talk a little about their history. The whole event was full of warmth and good feelings. We agreed that we should do this every year, so watch for a date next fall.

Since everyone seemed to enjoy the opportunity to recognize long-term lesbian love, we've decided to also have a dance that includes a few more honorees. On February 13, 2004, we'll have a Valentine's Dance at First Existentialist that honors those couples who have been together for 10 to 20 years.

Charis Circle Board

Cynthia East • Eileen Fannon • Barbara Gibson
Mickey Gillmor • Sally Herbert • Rebeca Quintana
Laura Reagin • Stephanie Scott
Ndelea Simama • Debra Snell

Charis Circle Staff

Jane Branscomb • Cherie Lyon
Linda Bryant • Lisa Diane White

No Place Like...:

On Living in a Small Brown Place

Self, Space and Universe(city)

*"It comes as a great shock to discover that the country which is your birthplace and to which you owe your life and identity **has not**, in its whole system of reality evolved **any place for you.**"*

—James Baldwin
(boldness mine)

Home. *A small brown place.*

Who would have thought standing up would be such a complex contortion, or that walking on brick would become such a frantic dance? I often wonder if I really have the nerve to be all at once black and woman and visible and here for even one more minute. The space that I am completely free in ends at (and too often because of) the barrier of my brown skin.

Home. *A small brown place.*

And even that barrier is at risk. I earn my keep at this university by embodying diversity. By being the one on the panel heading the committee writing the article explainingexplaining breathing andexplaining.

Home. *A small brown place.*

Columbia University, despite its lies to itself and you,
despite not paying taxes
despite real estate takeover
is in Harlem

Home. *A small brown place.*

The Intercultural Resource Center is a never-been-big-enough brownstone. What I do here is called living. The floors and doors are me-colored wood, but if you look, the walls and ceilings are definitely white. I spend most of my time in here staining white paper and the walls themselves with words colored like hope.

Home. *A small brown place.*

I am convinced that constant movement in my legs, feet, arms and hands will grant me infinity despite my barely 100 brown pounds. I am convinced that I have every right to stand on the sundial and scream for joy in the middle of the day, because I am the place where the sun makes her mark.

—Alexis
High School Women Writers

High School Women Writers

We are welcoming new members to this weekly group. If you write or know someone who does, check us out any Tuesday afternoon from 5 to 6:30 in the back office at Charis. We are looking forward to a workshop with Alexis Gumbs on October 25 and one with Pearl Cleage in the spring. AND we have an overnight retreat scheduled for November 15, 2003. This is going to be a very productive Fall.

Georgia Shares: Giving Made Easy

In an effort to make giving easy for current & future Charis Circle supporters, Charis Circle has joined Georgia Shares, a local employee-giving program. Georgia Shares is a federation of non-profit organizations deeply committed to social change for all Georgians. As a member, Charis Circle gains access to potential donors through the employee giving programs in many local businesses and educational institutions. Employees may choose to make a one-time contribution to Charis Circle or make regular contributions through payroll deductions. To find out if you are employed at a participating workplace, or to get information on becoming a participating workplace, visit the Georgia Shares website at www.GeorgiaShares.org.



Charis Circle News & Notes

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Comments or suggestions are welcome.
Please send them to:

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www.chariscircle.org
info@chariscircle.org

Fundraising and Fun

The Charis Circle Board, like all non-profit boards, is charged with the fiscal responsibility for Charis Circle. They are charged with managing an organization with an annual operating budget of \$110,000. They do an amazing job – they are all volunteers who donate focus, energy, time, vision, and love to the work. And we have found that times like these call for creative and diversified fund-raising tactics. Here are some of the fun things we've created that also raise money.

The women of our monthly Women Writers Group decided they wanted a scheduled way to raise funds for the Circle and also share what they're experiencing and writing in the group. Their first production of "When I was a Womanchild" back in June raised \$500.00! If you missed that, you can still catch up – they are doing another installment on the same theme on December 14 at First Existentialist Congregation.

Thanks to Debra Snell, our Board Chair, and the incredible generosity of Maureen Kalmanson of the Peasant Restaurants, we found another way to build community and raise funds at the same time. Dining for Charis Circle on September 15 was great fun – we packed the Pleasant Peasant for more than one seating – and we raised over \$3000.00! Maureen was happy, the participants were happy, the food was great, and we had a chance to socialize.

Cherie Lyon, who has become an intrepid fund raiser with the Women Writers Group and the Gaia Collective, collaborated with Gigi Conner of Dakota Blue to come up with another evening of fun and food. On October 20, we had our first "Meet and Greet" with a Mexican food buffet in a casual, relaxed atmosphere.

We have yet another brilliant idea that we're working on and very excited about. On March 7, 2004, we will kick off Women's History Month with a new event we've titled "Four Fabulous Women." This spring night will be one that honors our love for the women of words, the authors whose works enrich and change our lives. You'll hear lots more about this as it develops, but what we know right now is that two of our Four Fabulous Women will be asha bandele (poetry: *Absence in the Palms of My Hands*, memoir: *The Prisoner's Wife*, novel: *Daughter*) and our own Alexis Gumbs (writers group graduate, founder of Broken/Beautiful Press). The committee is just getting started on this event, so if you want to get involved, send us an email at jane@chariscircle.org or call at 404-522-9912.

Stories for Free Children



Stories for Free Children is getting more exciting and interactive for children and their parents. In September's story time, Nana Aagyeiwaah Anan led the children in sing along songs, tell along stories and do along dances. Children learned about collective work, unity and other life lessons while dancing, singing and laughing. The beat of the drums accompanied the story hour as well as Saturday morning Charis shoppers and a good time was had by all. October's story time, Changing of the Seasons, was just as exciting as Cara Page used drama, sound and instruments to weave powerful tales and stories. Children were introduced to sound improvisation and invited to use their hands and voices to accompany the storytelling. Fall is here and children answered the question, "What does fall sound like?" loudly and joyfully. Remember, if you want to sign your child up for Stories For Free Children's e-list, just email me at lisa@chariscircle.org. All children are welcomed, especially those ages 3-7.



Looking Forward

Save the Date

November 1st – Charis Books and More’s 29th birthday party and sale at the store.

November 2nd – Saturn Returns, a Whole-Self-Healing Expo at the First Existentialist Congregation

November 9th – Celebration of Women, Music, and Art reception, silent auction and concert at the Academy of Medicine

December 5th – Women’s Holiday Ball at the Sheraton in Buckhead

February 13th – Valentine’s Day Dance Celebrating Couples in relationships for 10-20 years at the First Existentialist

March 7th – Four Fabulous Women Literary benefit with asha bande, Alexis Gumbs and others TBA

Ongoing

Every Tuesday 5-6:30 pm – High School Women Writers Group

Most Thursdays at 7:30 pm – Evenings at Charis Community Program

2nd Wednesday at 7:15 pm – Open Women’s Book Group

3rd Friday at 8 pm – All Women’s Open Mic

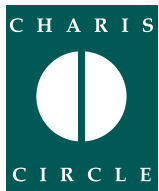
3rd Saturday at 11 am – Stories for Free Children

3rd Sunday at 6 pm – GAIA Collective

4th Monday at 6:30 pm – Open Women Writer’s Group

One Saturday per month from 1-5 pm – Sistergirls (call to sign up & get directions)

Please clip and mail to the Charis Circle.



Yes, I want to support Charis Circle and guarantee the continuation of a unique and treasured resource. Here's my **tax-deductible contribution to the Charis Circle.**

- \$20
 \$50
 \$100
 \$250
 \$500
 Other \$ _____

Please make your check payable to Charis Circle,
1189 Euclid Avenue NE, Atlanta, Georgia 30307

- My check is enclosed
 Please charge my
 Visa
 MC
 Discover
 Amex

Name _____

Address _____

City, State _____

Zip _____ Phone _____

Email _____

Thank You!

Signature

Card Number _____ Exp.Date _____

rec'd _____ ack _____