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Proud Queer Youth

The fact that it was rainy and cold didn't stop the 100-plus queer youth and allies from carrying their banners and chants through the streets of downtown Burlington on May 14. And after the speakout, march, activities, and dinner, came the dance, DJ'd by DJ Llu and DJ Li'l Korey, making her debut at the turntables. ▼



Minnesota, and Lollie was finishing a degree in Environmental Studies at Unity College in Maine.

They were killed on Memorial Day weekend in 1996 at their campsite near the Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park. Their case is still unsolved. Darrel Rice was charged and the trial was scheduled. He had admitted to killing them and stated that he "hated women and gays." In fact, then-U.S. Attorney General John Ashcroft said in April 2002, that the federal hate crimes statute would be invoked for the first time for gays, because Julie and Lollie were lovers and were murdered on federal property. Consequentially, Rice would face the death penalty because of the higher punishment for hate crimes. But shortly before his scheduled trial in 2004, charges were dropped because new DNA evidence found in one hair at the campsite did not

match. Rice is currently being held in prison on charges of abductions of other women in Shenandoah National Park and the nearby area.

In 1997, the year following their murders, the AEE Women's Professional Group (WPG), led by Nina Roberts, Marti O'Keefe, Diane Bedell, Angel Russek, and others, held a major national event called "Take Back the Trails." Thousands of women and supportive men hiked on Memorial Day weekend in memory of Julie and Lollie, as well as for all women who have faced violence in the outdoors to any extent. Julie's mom, Patsy Williams, and close family friends led a group along the section of the Bridle Trail where her daughter last hiked.

This year, the WPG is again sponsoring memorial activities across the United States. We have changed the name to reflect our intention of making this an annual

event that honors all women, especially those who have experienced violence in the outdoors. The idea is that women outdoor leaders everywhere will lead an outdoor activity of their choice and invite other women and supportive men to join them. The title for this year's Memorial Gathering is "Safe, Smart and Sassy," because our intention is to promote safety while celebrating life and womanhood, just as Lollie and Julie did.

We are continually adding resources to our WPG webpage at www.aee.org/ and will include event coordinators as they are identified.

To read other news articles about the case, see www.fred.net/kathy/at/tragedy.html ▼

Brenda Porter is a coordinator of WPG activities to honor Julie and Lollie.