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Santa Cruz L & G Earthquake Relief Fund

A massive earthquake made National Coming Out Day a time of grief rather than celebration for gays and lesbians in Santa Cruz this year. Santa Cruz, known nationwide as a center for progressive and feminist politics, was at the epicenter of October's 7.1 earthquake, a disaster which caused the loss of over 200 lives and billions of dollars throughout much of Northern California.

Without significant help from outside the area, this disaster will have a dramatic and long-term impact on Santa Cruz's lesbian and gay community. Individual community members have suffered loss of life, homes and jobs. In addition to these personal losses, the economic devastation of the quake promises to have a debilitating impact on Santa Cruz's lesbian and gay organizations.

At this point, the full extent of the damages is unknown. But a number of gay and/or lesbian households, some of them with children, have been dislocated permanently by the quake. Due to both explicit homophobia and "guidelines" which narrowly reflect the dominant culture, dis-

placed gays and lesbians cannot easily find shelter in county facilities for displaced families. Nor do these families meet the guidelines of the FEMA family grant plan which might offer monetary aid.

Many individuals within the gay and lesbian community have suffered a loss of business or place of employment after the collapse of commercial enterprises and human service agencies in Santa Cruz's devastated downtown area.

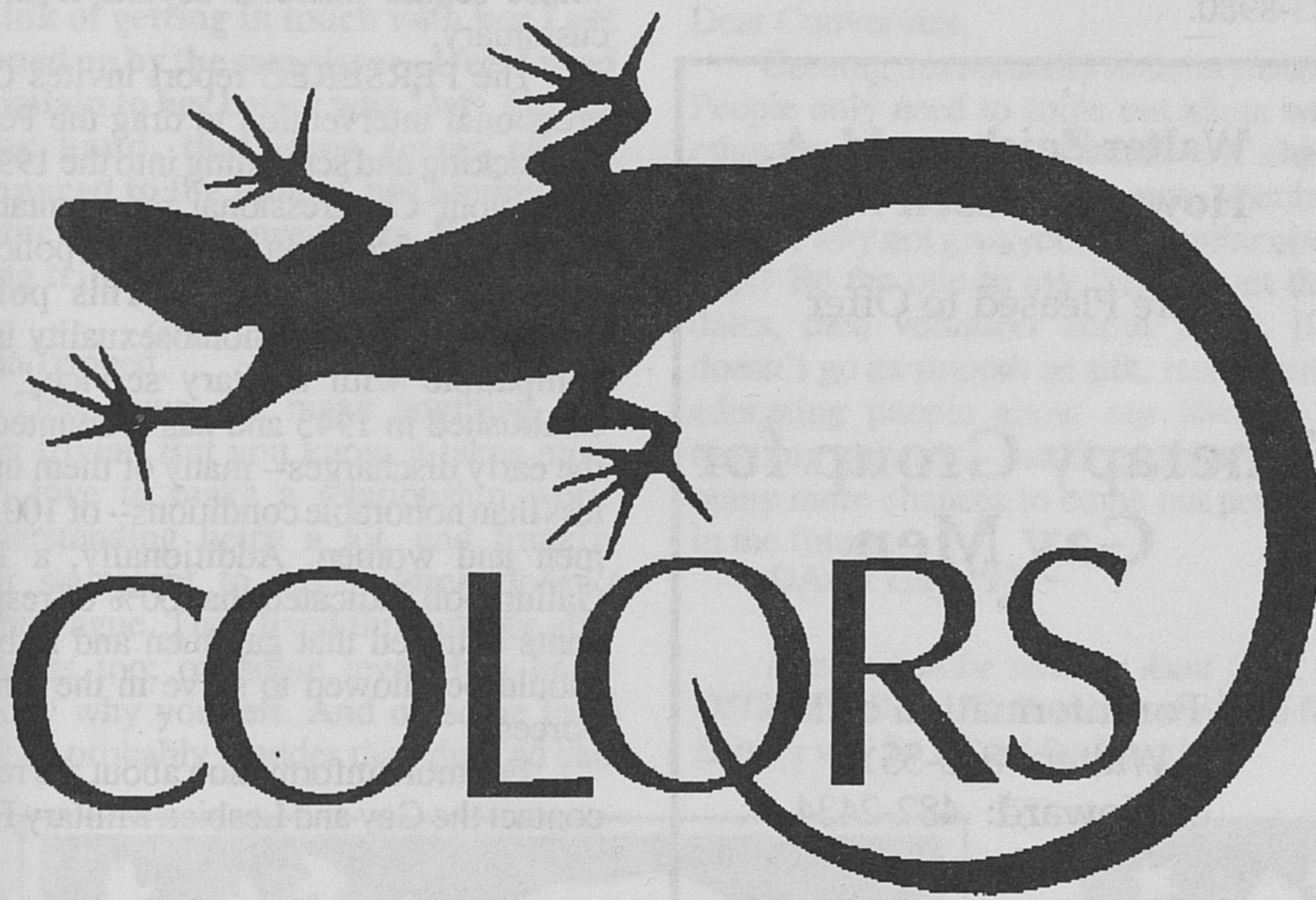
The periodicals and service organizations which have provided a support system for Santa Cruz's gays and lesbians are also damaged and in need of assistance. Local alternative periodicals depend heavily on advertising for financial support. Economic losses following the quake have undercut this financial base, with an estimated 30% of the downtown commercial district facing necessary demolition.

The Santa Cruz AIDS Project (SCAP) which relies on community donations for about 40% of its total funding is also threatened by the severe damage to Santa Cruz's financial base. The earthquake immediately caused the cancellation of the local

Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, a major fund raiser for SCAP. A number of other important AIDS fund raisers have been cancelled due to the quake, including the annual "Business Aid for AIDS" drive, in which local business traditionally contribute a portion of their sales to the AIDS project. To date, the project is already about \$9,000 behind in its fund raising and needs to secure at least \$10,000 a month to stay in operation.

The Santa Cruz lesbian and gay community is making an urgent appeal to its friends in other communities across the country and around the world for emergency support. Money collected will be divided among individuals and organizations in the lesbian and gay community most severely hurt by the quake. Contributions can be earmarked for specific aspects of quake relief (i.e., individuals, local gay media, SCAP) or can be left in the hands of local community organizers to divide according to need. All contributions should be sent to the Santa Cruz Lesbian and Gay Earthquake Relief Fund, c/o MCC PO Box

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