Observing Tucson And The Greater Arizona Community

OBSERVER

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Forum On Anti-Gay Marriage Initiatives Held; Coalition Formed To Stop Effort In Arizona

By Mark R. Kerr

TUCSON (ON) - More than 150, Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) and straight supportive Tucsonans, and representatives from various community groups, organizations turned out for the Community Forum on Marriage, held Tuesday, January 25, in Nation's Hall at the Muse.

This forum, sponsored by Wingspan, launched the formation of a coalition, named the Southern Arizona Coalition For Fairness, to fight a proposed measure adding a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage, civil unions and domestic partnerships by government, the extension of medical and dental benefits to the same-sex domestic partners and beneficiaries by governmental entities, as well as the extension of domestic partner benefits by businesses.

Cathy Busha, Director of Programs at Wingspan, opened the program, discussing the 2004 election, in which 11 states, in November, passed various measures banning either same-sex marriages, civil unions and domestic partnership, or all three.

Busha talked about the intended consequences for these measures, as well as the unintended consequences, citing Ohio's domestic violence laws, for which accused wife-beaters have said that the laws no longer are valid since they covered more than just marriage between a man and a woman.

Laura Penny, a longtime political activist, and Board Member of the Women's Foundation, talked about how unnecessary the proposal is since Arizona already has a law on the books, since 1996, and what it involves to advance an issue through the initiative process and the legislative process.

Local attorney and member of the City of Tucson Commission on GLBT Issues talked about the Center for Arizona's Policy, the organization spearheading the effort to add such an amendment to the state constitution, and about the Arizona Human Right's Fund efforts to enact a civil union/domestic partnership registry, with rights, based on the recent proposal passed by the State of California, with more than 150 rights and benefits. "Taking an affirmative role with affirmative legislation," Bogard concluded.

About the proposed initiative by the Center for Arizona Policy, Bogard said the measure will be like to constitutional amendment approved by voters in Ohio, banning same-sex marriages, civil unions and domestic partnerships, as well as the extension of benefits by governmental entities and businesses to their employees who are in such relationships.

Nancy Polikoff, a visiting law professor at the University of Arizona stated that the community should hold more conversations to define the relationships in a positive manner to reach out to potential allies, such as senior citizens, who can't get married after 62 if they want to hold on to the amount they receive in Social Security benefits.

Kristen Felan, an activist on local and national campaigns and issues discussed the efforts on the Oregon measure, moving the audience with her description of her efforts in the Oregon campaign, No on Proposition 36, talking how she went door to door, in a one on one effort, asking voters the question of "would you discriminate against me." Making it personal is an important point for the upcoming campaign, she added, to the agreement and applause of the audience.

Questions from audience members followed, with the subjects ranging from how a measure is approved to the Arizona Constitution; possible court actions; domestic partner registries and political experiences

More events are scheduled, openly Gay Rabbi Steve Greenberg, on Wednesday, February 2, 7:00 p.m., will be speaking about same-sex marriage and the civil and religious values for it at the Hillel Foundation, 1245 E. 2nd St.

On Saturday, February 5, 2 - 4:00 p.m., a sign making party at Wingspan, 300 East Sixth Street, to make signs for the Coalition rally on Sunday, February 13.

For more information on these and other events being scheduled, call Wingspan (520) 624-1779. To join the Coalition, call Wingspan and ask for Kendall.

Gays and Lesbians Mark Inauguration Day With Protests

WASHINGTON, D.C. - As President Bush began his second term in Washington, Gay rights demonstrators joined others across the country to protest another four years of his administration, Advocate.com reported.

They marched through the streets of cities and towns, denouncing Bush's marginalization of Gay people and his opposition to same-sex marriage. In Washington, D.C., thousands of protesters, including a number of Gays and Lesbians, were kept far from Bush, and about a dozen were arrested for trying to penetrate various barricades. Along the parade route from the Capitol to the White House, protesters roared boos and chants as Bush and then Vice President Dick Cheney passed by in their limousines.

At a large protest in Seattle, Lesbian activist Meighan Doherty, 25, said she found Bush's inaugural address hypocritical and was not impressed with his focus on freedom, liberty, and equality. "He willingly marginalizes groups such as pro-choice, the Gay community, and people of color if they do not agree with his personal values, particularly in the world of religion," said Doherty, outreach director for Action Northwest. The Seattle-based group provides training and grants for organizations interested in women's reproductive rights, labor issues, civil rights, marriage equality, and socio-economic justice.

The Seattle protesters carried signs reading, "I am not a second-class citizen" and "Gay rights are civil rights," as well as posters reading, "Axis of Evil," with a photograph of Bush, Cheney, and Condoleezza Rice, Bush 's nominee for secretary of state. At Seattle Central Community College, students marched through buildings, pounding on doors and encouraging others to leave. About 1,000 demonstrators then marched from the community college to the downtown area, where several people gave speeches.

In Lincoln, Neb., about 150 people, many of them Gay and Lesbian high school and college students, marched to the capitol for a rally supporting Gay rights. Ruth Kepfer, a Lincoln High School teacher and cosponsor of youth group Gay-Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender , Straight Alliance, said the rally was planned for Inauguration Day for visibility, not to protest the inauguration.

But many in the crowd criticized Bush, who has promised to make a federal anti-Gay marriage amendment a priority of his second term. "He doesn't have any room to comment on values," said Jill Francke, a 21-year-old student at Doane College in Crete. "He doesn't carry a banner of value about anything." Several people in the crowd carried signs reading, "We vote for values of equality" and "Hate is not a family value." Tom Kolbe, a 35-year-old middle school teacher from Lincoln, echoed Francke's sentiments. "These 'value voters' are the people who elected George Bush as our president," he said. "And to me, these are not values of equality. The people that have supported 'defense of marriage' across America also voted for Bush."

Groups Allege Cover-Up In Gay Video Purge At Lincoln Memorial

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Arguing that the Bush Administration is illegally withholding documents on its plans to cut scenes of Gay rights, pro-choice and anti-war demonstrations from an educational video shown at the Lincoln Memorial, People For the American Way Foundation (PFAWF) and Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) filed a lawsuit in federal court to force the National Park Service to release the documents, 365Gay.com reported.

The groups allege that the documents demonstrate that Park Service officials were planning to change the videotape to satisfy the objections of right-wing organizations, and the lawsuit follows PEER and PFAWF's unsuccessful attempts to obtain the documents under a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request.

In November 2003, under pressure from right-wing organizations, the Park Service announced that it would alter an eight-minute video containing photos and footage of demonstrations and other historic events that have taken place at the Lincoln Memorial. (story)

The organizations reportedly complained that brief seconds of footage showing Gay rights, pro-choice and anti-Vietnam War demonstrations implied that "Lincoln would have supported homosexual and abortion 'rights' as well as feminism." In response, the Park Service is reported to have promised to develop a "more balanced" version of the videotape that has been playing at the Lincoln Memorial since 1995.

Alerted to these plans by concerned Park Service employees, PEER and PFAWF requested correspondence and other documents on the subject from the Park Service under FOIA.

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UPDATE

Hate Crimes Forum January 27

TUCSON - The Wingspan Anti-Violence Project (WAVP) will hold a community forum, Wednesday, January 27, to reflect on the outcome of the David Higdon trial and discuss responses to hate crimes in general.

On trial for the murder of Philip Walsted, a 24-year old Gay man murdered in the 4th Avenue area in June, 2002, Higdon has been incarcerated since his arrest. The murder has been labeled a hate crime. The trial process began on January 11, and is expected to last several weeks.

"This trial has been a long time in coming," says Lori Girshick, Coordinator of the WAVP. "It has been difficult for Philip's family members as the case has taken many twists and turns. It finally looks like justice is within reach."

Confirmed panel members so far include Teresa Godoy, county prosecutor in the case, Detective Tim Rupel of the Tucson Police Department's Special Investigations Section who works closely on hate crimes in Tucson, Matt Heil, writer and reporter with Echo Magazine, who has extensively covered hate crimes and bias acts, and a survivor of a bias-motivated attack. Panelists will discuss this case in particular and what we can do as a community to respond to hate violence.

This community forum will be held on January 27, 6 - 8 p.m. at Wingspan, 300 E. 6th Street. It is free and open to the public.

The Wingspan Anti-Violence Project is part of a national coalition of LGBT anti-violence programs which pools statistics, information, and strategies to address hate violence.

"We encourage LGBT community members to call the WAVP crisis line to report any bias acts and receive support, safety planning, and referrals. Staff is available during week-days from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. for walk-in hours and appointments. Wingspan is committed to advocating for individuals and working on local and state levels to respond to hate violence," continues Girshick.

For more information about the forum and WAVP, contact Lori Girshick, (520) 624-1779 ex. 20, lori@wingspan.org.

Rainbow Build Coalition Formed

TUCSON - A coalition of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender (GLBT) and allied organizations is forming under the name Rainbow Build Coalition to raise the funds and the labor to construct a Habitat for Humanity home.

Currently, there are over 20 community groups and organizations that have committed to being part of the Rainbow Build Coalition:

Arizona Human Rights Fund (AHRF), Cornerstone Fellowship, City of Tucson GLBT Commission, Desert Voices, First Congregational United Church of Christ, Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN), LGBT&S Alliance Fund, Men's Social Network, Parent's, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG), Rainbow Families, Rainbow Interfaith Coalition, Raytheon's GLBT Alliance, Rubyfruit, St. Philip's Episcopal Church LGBT Phamily, Southern Arizona Gender Alliance (SAGA), Stonewall Democrats, Tucson GLBT Chamber of Commerce, Tucson Pima Public Library GLBT Committee Tucson Pride, Inc., Water of Life MCC, White Space Design and Wingspan.

This coalition decided to take on this project as a way of allowing the GLBT and allied communities to join forces and work together on a non-partisan, non-divisive project that will better the community. It is a way for GLBT and straight people to work together, learn from one another, and give back to our Tucson community.

"To our knowledge, this may be the first GLBT Rainbow Build anywhere in the nation. This type of project is particularly important given the highly charged and politically volatile atmosphere we face over the upcoming years," says Kent Burbank, executive director of Wingspan.

Any community organization is welcome to become a member of the coalition as long as they are committed to working with the GLBT community and agree to: A) raise funds to support the construction, and B) recruit volunteer labor for the actual build. January 31, 2005 is the first deadline for coalition membership.

Individuals may also wish to participate by volunteering in the coming months to be a part of a work crew building the home, or may provide financial support by sending a check made out to "Habitat for Humanity" and you should write on the memo line "Rainbow Build". If you would like a specific GLBT or Allied organization to get credit for your donation please also put their name on the memo line of the check. Checks should be sent to Habitat for Humanity, 621 W. Lester Street, Tucson, AZ 85705. You may also call Habitat for Humanity at (520) 326-1217 with your credit card information.

The concrete slab for the Rainbow Build home will be poured this month and the wall raising is scheduled for February 26, 2005. It will be one of thirty-six Habitat houses build in the Balboa Laguna neighborhood near Oracle and Glenn. It takes $60,000 and approximately 2,200 hours of volunteers labor to complete. For more information please contact Toni Bravo at rainbowbuild@wingspan.org or call the Outreach Committee at (520) 624-1779 ext. 12.

Hit Drag Musical Is A Must See!

By Larry Moore, a.k.a. Lucinda Holliday

TUCSON - Run, don't walk to see the hysterically funny Ruthless! The Musical playing only till January 30th at Zuzi's Theatre.

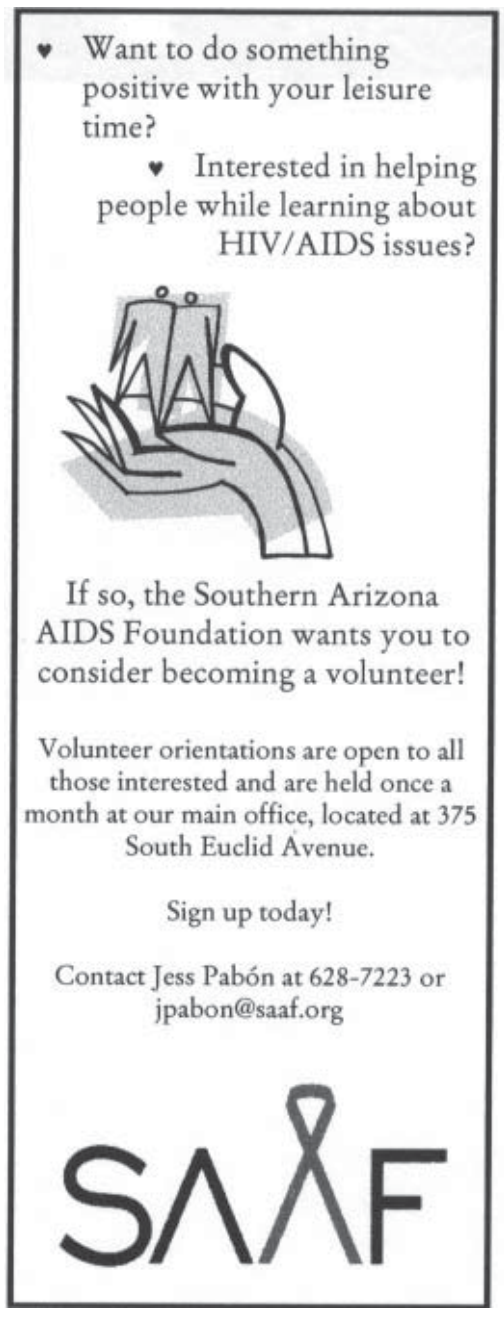
Now, there is funny, and then there is funny! This wonderfully staged musical comedy is beyond words – beyond praise. People complain that there are not many gay themed musicals or plays here in Tucson. Well, people if you miss this you just need to shut up!

Arizona Onstage Productions, the local theatre company that just won the Arizona Daily Star and Tucson Weekly "Best Musical of 2004" for their stunning production of Steven Sondheim's controversial "Assassins," and produced the heart breaking musical "Falsettoland" last year has done it again. Everything about this production shines, including the fast paced direction by Kevin Johnson, who is also the Artistic Director of Arizona Onstage Productions. The set is so vivid and bright that it looks like you are in the middle of a cartoon. The costumes are so campy and wild, and of course the wigs (I confess, I did them, and they are up to my usual standards of perfection) are so amazing that they actually get applause.

Now lets talk about the story. This show is about little third grade Tina Denmark, played to perfection by Jayln Wheatley. She wants the lead in her school play "Pippi in Tahiti – the Musical." She is cast instead as Pippi's dog Puddles. Enter mysterious talent agent Sylvia St. Croix – played to drag perfection by David Olsen. Together they get Tina the spot of Pippi's understudy. Little Tina realizes that if something should happen to the other girl…then the starring role becomes hers. Suddenly the poor other girl is found hung from the rafters of the middle school auditorium. Tina is about to become a star! Her mother, played by the wonderfully gifted Stephanie Sikes, is a combination of Donna Reed and Cruella DeVille. She goes for broke on stage. Then there are so many other wacky characters that there is no shortage of laughs. In fact, I cannot remember an evening of theatre that had so many laughs.

This is the last chance to see this show. People are always asking "when is there going to be another great musical comedy like When Pigs Fly?". The answer is in Ruthless! The Musical. This is your last weekend to see this show. Tickets are going fast. I have seen this three times, and the audiences are packed. Don't miss it. Don't make excuses that you are to busy. When are we to busy to laugh?

When: Friday January 28. 8:00 p.m., Saturday January 29, 2:00 and 8 p.m. Sunday January 30 2 p.m. Where: Zuzi's Theatre, 738 North Fifth Ave (near the corner of 5th and University – in the old historic YWCA – not the Muse. How much: $20 general, $16 for students and seniors 55 and older. How: go online at www.arizonaonstage.org or call (520) 270-3332.



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Informing the Community
The Observer

Contacting Your State Legislator

By Mark R. Kerr

PHOENIX (ON) - With Arizona's Legislature currently in session, at least through April for those who hold on to the perception that the Legislature finishes actually finishes their work in 100 days but probably going through till May or June with a Democratic Governor and conservative Republicans holding majorities in both chambers - the question is how best to reach your respective state Representatives and Senator.

To contact your legislators by phone, there are two options, contacting them directly by the phone numbers listed or using their toll free number (800) 352-5404, and then following the voice-mail system and dialing in the last five digits of the phone numbers for the respective legislator (remember, starting with 6). Since citizens pay their salaries, they shouldn't have to pay to contact their elected officials.

To send an E-mail, a key tip to remember. If you want your E-mail read, and possibly replied to, since legislators receive numerous E-mails on a daily basis - especially when they are session, send an E-mail to each legislator you wish to contact, don't group them together because the legislators won't read those. Individual contact is paramount since Legislators, according to sources, consider each contact the equivalent of 200 people.

So you wish to contact your legislators but you are unsure which Legislative District you're in. Two options, at least for those in Pima County to determine which District you're in. First, the Legislative District that you reside in is listed on your voter registration card. Second, if you are like many people - who just don't remember where the card is, go online to the Pima County Recorder's Web site to: http://www.recorder.pima.gov/search/geocode/search.html, type in your name and address and hit enter and the site will tell you which Legislative District you reside in.

What follows is the contact information for the individuals who currently serve in Arizona's Legislature for Southern Arizona:

Legislative District 25 - Sen. Marsha Arzberger (D), Phone: (602) 926-4321, Fax: (602) 417-3246, E-mail: marzberg@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Manuel Alvarez (D), Phone: (602) 926-5895, Fax: (602) 417-3025, E-mail: malvarez@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Jennifer Burns (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-5836, Fax: (602) 417-3125, E-mail: jburns@azleg.state.az.us.

Legislative District 26 - Sen. Toni Hellon (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-4326, Fax: (602) 417-3259, E-mail: thellon@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Pete Hershberger (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-5839, Fax: (602) 417-3026, E-mail: phershbe@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Steve Huffman (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-3394, Fax: (602) 417-3126 E-mail: shuffman@azleg.state.az.us.

Legislative District 27 - Sen. Jorge Luis Garcia (D), Phone: (602) 926-4171, Fax: (602) 417-3162, E-mail: jgarcia@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Olivia Cajero-Bedford (D), Phone: (602) 926-5835, Fax: (602) 417-3027, E-mail: ocajerob@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Phil Lopes (D), Phone: (602) 926-3278, Fax: (602) 417-3127, E-mail: plopes@azleg.state.az.us.

Legislative District 28 - Sen. Gabrielle Giffords (D), Phone: (602) 926-5262, Fax: (602) 417-3166, E-mail: ggifford@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. David Bradley (D), Phone: (602) 926-3300, Fax: (602) 417-3028, E-mail: dbradley@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Ted Downing (D), Phone: (602) 926-5108, Fax: (602) 417-3128, E-mail: tdowning@azleg.state.az.us.

Legislative District 29 - Sen. Victor Soltero (D), Phone: (602) 926-5342, Fax: (602) 417-3169, E-mail: vsoltero@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Linda Lopez (D), Phone: (602) 926-4089, Fax: (602) 417-3029, E-mail: llopez@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Tom Prezelski (D), Phone: (602) 926-3424, Fax: (602) 417-3129, E-mail: tprezels@azleg.state.az.us.

Legislative District 30 - Sen. Tim Bee (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-5683, Fax: (602) 417-3247, E-mail: tbee@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Jonathan Paton (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-3235, Fax Number: (602) 417-3030, E-mail: jpaton@azleg.state.az.us.

Rep. Marian McClure (Rep.), Phone: (602) 926-3312, Fax: (602) 417-3130 E-mail mmcclure@azleg.state.az.us.

Gay Rabbi To Give Talk At U of A

TUCSON - An openly gay Orthodox rabbi will be in Tucson on Feb. 2 to speak about same-sex marriage and contemporary values, reported the Tucson Citizen.

His talk at the Hillel Foundation, on the University of Arizona campus at 1245 E. Second St., is sponsored by a number of UA and community groups, including Hillel's diversity council, UA's department of sociology and Wingspan.

Rabbi Steve Greenberg's talk is set for 7 p.m. and is open to the community at no charge.

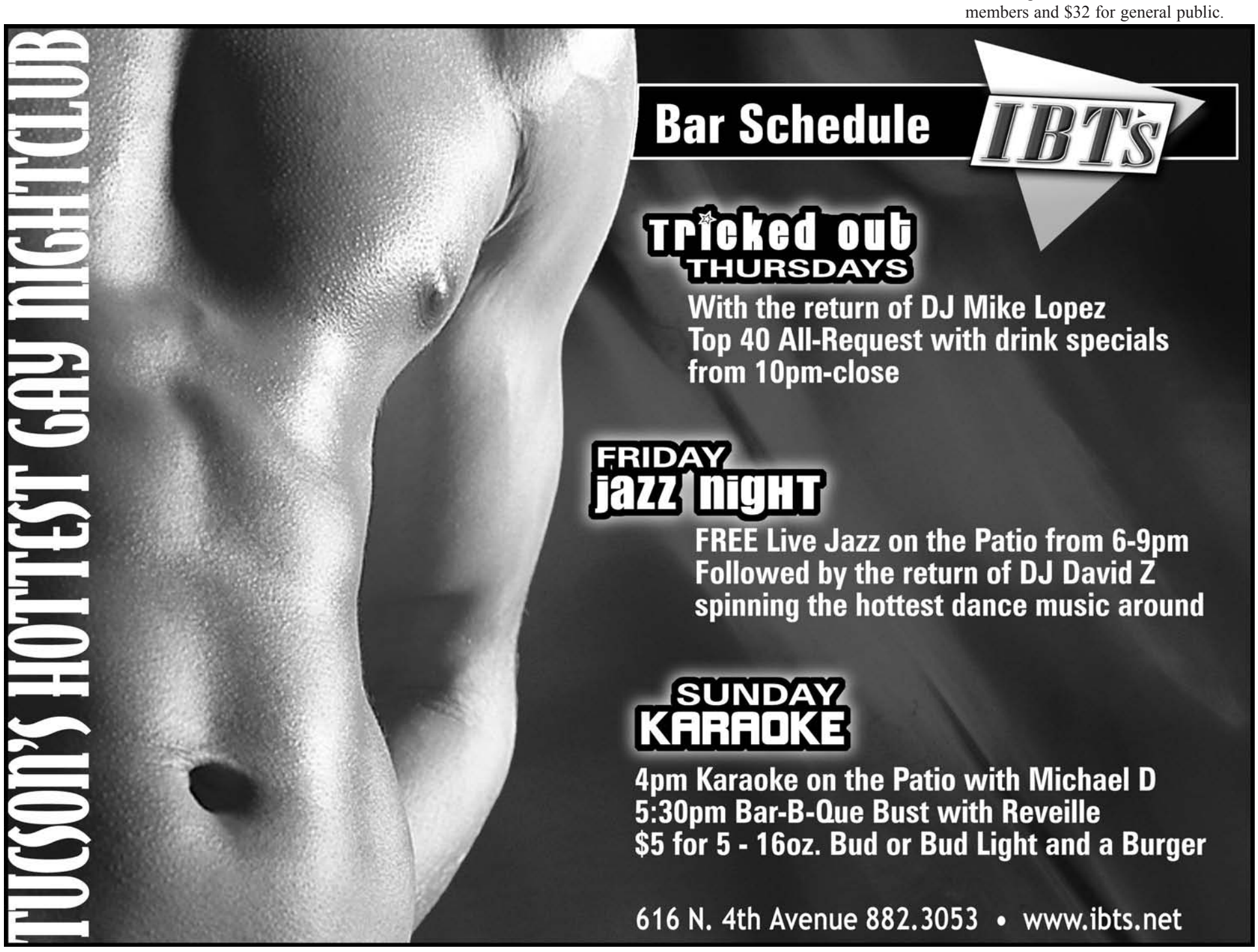
Greenberg is the author of "Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality and the Jewish Tradition." He was featured in a 2001 documentary film on homosexuality and religion, "Trembling Before G-d." For information, call (520) 624-6561.

Ani Di Franco Comes To Town

TUCSON - KXCI 91.3 FM brings Ani Di Franco to Tucson, Thursday, February 10, at UA Centennial Hall. Righteous Babe's Andrew Bird opens at 8:00 p.m.

Come see the only artist to put three straight albums on KXCI's Top 100 of the Year countdown. Her 'Little Plastic Castle' was chosen as one of the Top 50 Albums of the Past 21 Years by our listeners. Ani battles the corporate music world as one of the most influential heroines of contemporary music. She's an ardent feminist whose songs tackle the issues with insight and compassion, tempered by poignant candor.

Reserved tickets available now at the Centennial Hall box office (520) 621-3341, Antigone Books, KXCI and KXCI.org. Tickets are $27 for KXCI members and $32 for general public.



Right Wing Warans Of Gay Sponge Bob

NEW YORK - The jovial cartoon character SpongeBob SquarePants continues to soak up real-life criticism from Christian conservatives who believe he is Gay and a harmful influence on children, the PlanetOut Network reported.

The latest incident involves a "pro-homosexual video," featuring SpongeBob and other popular children's TV characters that, according to Focus on the Family founder James C. Dobson, will be mailed to U.S. elementary schools.

"Does anybody here know SpongeBob?" Dobson asked on Tuesday, January 18, from the stage at a Washington pre-inaugural dinner for members of Congress and Republican allies, the New York Times reported.

The American Family Association also warned its members about the video earlier this month, according to WorldNetDaily.com.

The producer of the children's video, Nile Rodgers and his We Are Family Foundation (WAFF), said the video promotes the togetherness implied by the word "family." Though WAFF supports a policy of nondiscrimination that includes sexual orientation, the video does not address sexuality, Rodgers said.

According to the WAFF Web site, characters in the video sing a version of the song "We Are Family," which Rodgers wrote. The song was also a disco hit for Sister Sledge in 1979 and has since become a Gay Pride anthem.

Creators of the "SpongeBob SquarePants" show, which airs on Nickelodeon, have said the show is about tolerance and that SpongeBob is not Gay, despite the fact that he often holds hands with his friend Patrick, a starfish.

Nevertheless, he's been pegged repeatedly. In a review of last year's "SpongeBob SquarePants" movie, a Focus on the Family writer said the movie "repeatedly plays with" the character's mysterious sexuality. In addition, a Charlotte Observer movie critic said, "It took some guts to make Bob and Pat so apparently Gay."

The ongoing controversy has amused many in the Gay community, who have purchased SpongeBob-themed gifts in large quantities. It also recalls the 1999 flap over the purple, purse-wearing Tinky Winky, whom religious conservatives branded as Gay.

"But there's a serious side to this, too," said Glennda Testone, media director for the Gay & Lesbian Alliance against Defamation (GLAAD). "This video and this Web site encourage kids to respect and embrace difference. Dobson and company want exactly the opposite."

"When Dobson and his ilk try to make bogeymen out of SpongeBob or Tinky Winky," she added, "they put an appropriately absurd face on their peculiar obsession with homosexuality."

'Alexander' Among Top Nominees For Razzies

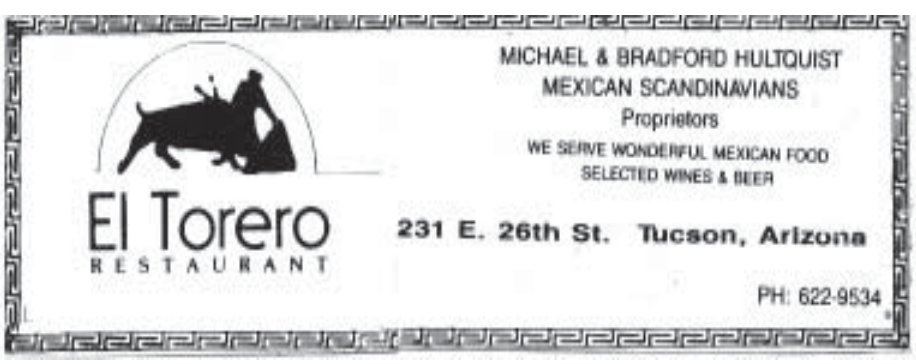
LOS ANGELES - This could be the year in which Alexander the Great conquers Catwoman and President Bush wins a prize as worst actor, Advocate.com reported/

Nominations for the 25th annual Razzies, which honor the worst films of the year, were announced on Monday with Catwoman, the Halle Berry box office bomb, besting Alexander, Oliver Stone's much maligned tale of the bleached-blond conqueror, by seven nominations to six. In addition, the president made the list for worst actor for his film clip appearances in Fahrenheit 9/11, a movie he might well consider the worst of the year. Also nominated for their appearances in the politically charged film about the Iraq war were Secretary of State-designate Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The Razzies are a traditional spoof award made at Oscar time by the nonprofit Golden Raspberry Award Foundation. The group's prizes are given out on February 26, the day before the Oscars. Never has one of its films gone on to win an Oscar.

Catwoman and Alexander were nominated for Worst Picture, a category that also drew SuperBabies: Baby Geniuses 2, Ben Affleck's career-eroding Surviving Christmas, and White Chicks, the Wayans brothers' dress-up, gender-bending comedy that left critics cold. Bush was nominated for worst actor along with Affleck for Surviving Christmas and Jersey Girl, Vin Diesel for Chronicles of Riddick, and Colin Farrell for Alexander. Ben Stiller was nominated for Along Came Polly, Anchorman, Dodgeball, Envy, and Starsky & Hutch.

Halle Berry was nominated for worst actress for Catwoman, alongside Hilary Duff for Cinderella Story and Raise Your Voice, Angelina Jolie for Alexander and Taking Lives, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen for New York Minute, and Shawn and Marlon Wayans in their incarnation as spoiled white sisters in White Chicks. The nominations for worst screen couple include: Ben Affleck and either Jennifer Lopez or Liv Tyler in Jersey Girl, Halle Berry and either Benjamin Bratt or Sharon Stone in Catwoman, George W. Bush and either Rice or the book My Pet Goat in Fahrenheit 9/11, the Olsen twins in New York Minute, and the Wayans brothers, in or out of drag, in White Chicks.

Worst supporting actress nominees were Carmen Electra for Starsky & Hutch, Jennifer Lopez for Jersey Girl, Rice for Fahrenheit 9/11, Britney Spears for her cameo role in the Michael Moore documentary, and Sharon Stone for Catwoman. Val Kilmer was nominated for worst supporting actor for Alexander. Also nominated were California governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for Around the World in 80 Days, Rumsfeld for Fahrenheit 9/11, Jon Voight for SuperBabies: Baby Geniuses 2, and Lambert Wilson for Catwoman. Leading the pack was Catwoman with seven nominations, followed by six for Alexander, five each for Fahrenheit 9/11 and White Chicks, and four for SuperBabies.



Play Safe!

Barney Frank: Gays & Poor To Feel Effects Of New Bush Term

WASHINGTON, D.C. - There were no cowboy hats, no cowboy boots. The only fur coat on the rack was a fake one. While 50,000 revelers celebrated President George W. Bush's inauguration Thursday night, January 20, at nine official balls across Washington, a couple of hundred people chose the company of fellow liberals at an Alternative Inaugural Ball downtown, the Associated Press reported on 365Gay.com.

The ball raised $65,000 for the Independent Action political action committee, which supports non-incumbent Democratic candidates.

"Instead of our constituency staying home and being miserable, we decided to celebrate our hard work," said the PAC's executive director, Ralph Santora.

Comedian and radio show host Al Franken was one of the star draws for the evening.

"People are saying: 'You know, it's not so bad,"' Franken said, referring to Bush's re-election.

"It's terrible!"

Franken mocked the Bush inauguration speech's call to support freedom around the world, saying the United States supports allies like Uzbekistan that repress their people.

He also challenged Bush's high ground on values, particularly concerning the war in Iraq.

"What is the morality of going to war on false premises?" demanded Franken, who is mulling a challenge to Minnesota Republican U.S. Senator Norm Coleman in 2008.

U.S. Representative Barney Frank, the openly Gay Massachusetts Democrat, said progressives must make the case that Bush's policies are hurting minorities, Gays and poor and working people.

"They're going to see some erosion in their position," he said.

"We have to make it clear to them that this was not some force of nature, not some tsunami but the results of conscious policies by these people in power."

"If we succeed in connecting those dots," Frank said to loud applause, "then I think we'll be able to disconnect those people."

Some attendees clearly resented the Republicans who came in from all over the country to attend the official inauguration balls.

"There's this Republican head-in-the-clouds mentality - we just want to have a good time, because we gave a lot of money to the Republican National Committee," said Denise Ross, 31, of Arlington, Va.

She also lambasted their fashion sense, recalling seeing women in open-toe sandals and fur coats.

"I wanted to find some way to enjoy the evening without feeling disgusted," added her 34-year-old friend, Alicia Love.

Anti-Bully Campaign Aids GLB Students

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Monday, January 24, thousands of middle schools nationwide kicked off "No Name-Calling Week," a program aimed at ending bullying, but some groups claim it focuses too much on Gay youth, the PlanetOut Network reported.

No Name-Calling Week seeks to draw national attention to the problem of name-calling in America's schools and to provide students and educators with the tools and inspiration to talk about ways to eliminate name-calling in their communities.

The initiative is co-sponsored by the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) and Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.

"Name-calling is a form of violent expression that has no place in a school environment," said Craig Bowman, executive director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, an advocacy group that aims to end discrimination against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender or questioning youth.

Bowman told the PlanetOut Network the initiative is an important opportunity for teachers and school counselors to start dialogue about verbal bullying, which he called "a form of violent expression that has no place in a school environment."

No Name-Calling Week was inspired by "The Misfits," a book written by Jason Howe, an openly Gay author of children's books. The book's four main characters, having been taunted by classmates, run for student council with the objective of ending name-calling. One of the main characters is Gay.

No Name-calling Week condemns all kinds of negative epithets, including comments based on a child's size, appearance, ethnicity, religious background or actual or presumed sexual orientation.

Some anti-Gay groups have complained the program overemphasizes harassment of Gay youth.

"I hope schools will realize it's less an exercise in tolerance than a platform for liberal groups to promote their pansexual agenda,'" Robert Knight, director of Concerned Women for America's Culture and Family Institute, told the Associated Press.

"Gay students aren't the only kids targeted. This isn't about special rights for them," Howe said. "But the fact is that 'faggot' is probably the most common insult at schools."

Bowman said name-calling could put LGBT youth at greater risk than the general student population, because a Gay child may think he or she is the only one who feels the way they do, leading to desperation.

"With LGBT kids in particular this creates a cycle that starts with isolation. Isolation can turn into desperation. Desperation can often lead to kids becoming statistics," he said, pointing to higher rates of suicide and substance abuse among Gay youth.

More than 5,000 educators from 36 states have registered to take part in No Name-Calling Week this year, up from 4,000 last year. In addition, more than 40 national education organizations are partners in the program, from the National Education Association to the Girls Scouts of America.

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Senator Unveils 'Marriage Protection' Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Sen. Wayne Allard, R-Colo., reintroduced legislation on Monday that would amend the Constitution to ban same-sex couples from marrying, the PlanetOut Network reported.

Last year Allard championed the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA) in the Senate, where it failed to get a simple majority. The House version of the measure failed to get the necessary two-thirds vote required by the Constitution.

But according to the Rocky Mountain News, Allard believes the results of the November election will help his bill pass this time. Same-sex marriage bans were passed by 11 states, and several senators who voted to block Allard's bill, such as former Senate Democratic Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota, have been voted out of office.

"We think we have more support this time than we had last time around," Allard told the paper.

Allard has lined up at least 12 co-sponsors, including Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, R-Tenn. He told the Rocky Mountain News he expects his amendment to be designated Concurrent Resolution 1, indicating that it is the top legislative priority.

LGBT groups were quick to sound alarm about Allard's new measure, which he calls the Marriage Protection Amendment.

"The American people value freedom, not discrimination," said Human Rights Campaign (HRC) political director Winnie Stachelberg. "Americans want laws that ensure the safety and stability of their neighbors, and that's what our policymakers should be focused on. Pushing an amendment that would deny protections to millions of Americans is completely out of step with our nation's values."

"The only institution that this amendment is designed to protect is the Republican Party, and even at that this legislation will prove inept," said Dave Noble, executive director of the National Stonewall Democrats. "With the full support of the Republican Senate Leadership, Republicans are demonstrating that they are unwilling to stand for millions of American families in the face of an extremist agenda that seeks to deny them equality under the law."

President Bush, who supported the FMA, rankled conservatives when a Jan. 17 edition of the Washington Post quoted him as saying a constitutional amendment against same-sex marriage may not be needed as long as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which was signed by President Clinton, remains intact.

"The point is, is that senators have made it clear that so long as DOMA is deemed constitutional, nothing will happen," Bush told the newspaper.

Christopher Barron, the spokesman for Log Cabin Republicans, said the president's stance reflects the reality in Congress. "There's simply not the support necessary to pass it at this time. I hope this means the president will realize that since this amendment won't go anywhere the president will focus his time on more positive projects."

To become law, the marriage amendment would have to be passed by both the House and Senate with a two-thirds majority. Three-quarters of the states would then have to ratify the bill.

Spokane: The New Gay Mecca

SPOKANE - Gay activists in this staid Washington city are planning to create a neighborhood of Gay-oriented homes, businesses, and nightlife—a development religious conservatives contend would clash with Spokane's family-centered culture, the Associated Press reported on Advocate.com.

"A Gay mecca is not what we'd like to see Spokane marketed as," said Penny Lancaster, director of Community Impact Spokane, a network of evangelical Christians. "I'd rather see us promoted as a conservative, family-oriented community without any reference to sexual orientation."

But proponents of the plan say a Gay district would signal that Spokane is tolerant and progressive. "There is a very large Gay population here," said Bonnie Aspen, a business owner who arrived with her partner two years ago to escape the congestion of the San Francisco Bay area.

Spokane, which in trendy Seattle is shorthand for tragically unhip, has long been dominated by conservative politics that stem from its history as a mining and farming center. But it also has a large core of Democrats and libertarians who share the West's live-and-let-live philosophy.

Most of all, the city identifies itself as a good place to raise a family, and opponents contend that's at odds with the image of a Gay district. The idea for the district has roots in the theories of Richard Florida, an economist whose 2002 book The Rise of the Creative Class contends that the economy of the future will be created by the 38 million workers who toil in creative industries.

Florida, a Carnegie Mellon University professor, said members of the creative class consider recreation, culture, and ethnic diversity, including a large population of Gays, as central to where they live. Places like New York, Boston, San Francisco, and Seattle have those qualities. Places like Spokane generally do not.

Even though they face little discrimination, Gays stay under the radar in Spokane, said Aspen, a member of the Inland Northwest Business Alliance, an association of Gay and Gay-friendly businesses that is pushing the idea. "Visibility equals freedom," Aspen said. "Invisibility we have dealt with all our life." She predicted a Gay district will exist within the next year or two.

With about 200,000 residents, Spokane has little history of Gay activism, other than an effort a few years ago that amended its human rights ordinance to include sexual orientation.

Tom Reese, an economic development officer for Spokane, said city government officials are not exactly pushing the notion of a Gay district, but they don't oppose it either. "It is our desire to create an environment where diversity and different interests and lifestyles of all types can flourish," Reese said.

No public funds will be used to create the district, which is dependent on developers, Aspen said. No location has been announced. Spokane already has a Gay newspaper, Stonewall News Northwest, and some businesses that cater to Gay residents. It has had an openly Gay member of the city council. But creating a district is still important, said Marvin Reguindin, owner of a Spokane graphic design firm. "It would help youth struggling with their sexuality to realize they don't have to go away to a big city to be Gay. You can be Gay right here in Spokane," he said.

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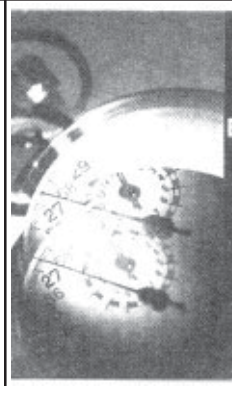

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Court Reinstates Louisiana's Ban On G/L Marriage

BATON ROUGE - Despite the Louisiana supreme court's Wednesday (January 19) decision to uphold a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in the state, some Gay rights lawyers were still declaring victory, the Associated Press reported on 365Gay.com.

"This is a win. This is a complete win for what we had been asking the court to do," declared Randy Evans, attorney for the Forum for Equality. "The right of people in same-sex couples and, for that matter, all Louisianians to enter into contracts and wills and dispose of property has been completely protected by the supreme court," said another Gay rights attorney, John Rawls.

Buoying their optimism was a single 10-line footnote among the more than 30 pages handed down Wednesday by the high court. It said the amendment would "not impair any property rights, which are not 'identical or substantially similar to' the package of unique property rights necessary to marriage." It gave specific examples involving co-ownership of property, one partner designating the other as an agent for making critical medical or legal decisions, and inheritance rights.

Evans praised the ruling as one "worthy of Solomon." "They have preserved an amendment that the voters approved in terms of who can get married and who can't, but at the same time they have preserved all the rights that unmarried couples have had in Louisiana and they have left all of those rights intact," Evans said. As for the right to marry, Evans said, "You have to be a political realist, and that's just not where Louisiana is right now. In 20 years or 30 years or 50 years that may be something that Louisiana's ready for, but that's just not in the cards right now."

Not all Gay rights advocates were as content with the ruling. Chris Daigle, a longtime Gay activist in New Orleans and currently a candidate for a state legislative seat, said the rights of some Gay couples remain in jeopardy under the ruling, including those who want to file joint tax returns or jointly adopt children. "The real threats to marriage still exist," Daigle said. "High divorce rates, high adultery rates, poverty, lack of education, parents having to hold more than one job. Those are the real threats to marriage."

Lawmakers voted last summer to put the amendment on the ballot, and 78% of voters in the September 18 election approved it. Gay rights activists argued that it was adopted illegally because the state constitution requires that amendments have a single purpose. The amendment's ban on civil unions as well as marriage was a fatal flaw, they said. Supreme court justices rejected the argument unanimously, reversing the decision of a Baton Rouge district judge. The high court ruling, written by Justice Jeanette Theriot Knoll, said that "each provision of the amendment is germane to the single object of defense of marriage and constitutes an element of the plan advanced to achieve this object."

Conservative groups uniformly praised the ruling. Michael Johnson, the attorney who argued for the amendment for the Alliance Defense Fund, said opponents who raised fears that private contracts involving estates, medical decisions, and employee benefits had used "scare tactics" in their fight against the amendment. The author of the amendment, Republican state representative Steve Scalise of Jefferson, said he was pleased by the decision. "This makes it clear that marriage will remain a sacred union between a man and a woman and removes the ability of activist judges from changing that definition," Scalise said in a statement issued by his office. "I'm proud that the court rejected all of the misinformation put out by the opponents of traditional marriage."

Federal Doma Case Not To Be Appealed

MIAMI - ruling upholding the federal Defense of Marriage Act will not be appealed the attorney in the case announced Monday, January 24, reported 365Gay.com.

"With the present Supreme Court not willing even to hear the Florida adoption case, and the possibility of newly appointed Supreme Court judges by the Bush administration being even more conservative, it would not be prudent at this time to continue this effort," said Ellis Rubin.

The case was the first legal challenge to federal DOMA.

The decision, Rubin said, followed a meeting with Matthew Coles, Director of the ACLU Lesbian and Gay Rights Project.

The case involved a Tampa Lesbian couple who were married in Massachusetts.

Rev. Nancy Wilson, a Metropolitan Community Church minister, and Paula Schoenwether, a family marriage counselor were married July 2 in Massachusetts, the only state where same-sex marriages are recognized.

The two have been together for 27 years.

The suit named John Ashcroft, who at the time was Attorney General, as defendant.

In his ruling, U.S. District Judge James S. Moody ruled in favor of filings by the Justice Department that the government has a legitimate interest in allowing states to ban same-sex marriages.
Ellis had argued that that right to marry is a "fundamental right."

But Moody disagreed, saying the Defense of Marriage Act was not discriminatory on the basis of sex because it treats men and women equally and that the government met its burden of stating a legitimate interest for only allowing marriages to exist between men and women.

"The fact that so many courts have closed themselves to the equal rights of our community demonstrates the urgent need for our movement to get back into the streets, where history has shown that civil rights movements are ultimately won," said Robin Tyler, Executive Director of the Equality Campaign where Rubin is chief legal counsel.

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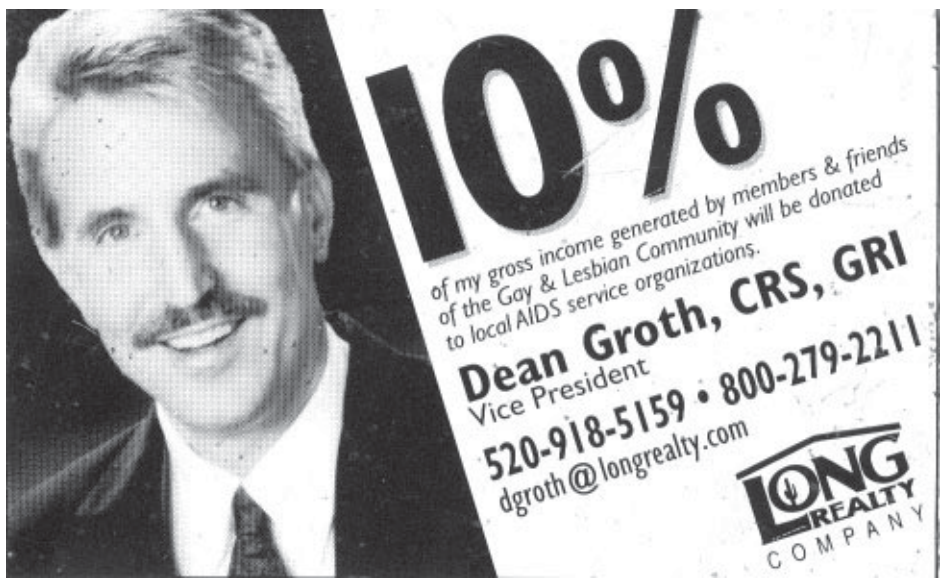

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POLITICS 2005
by Mark R. Kerr

Arizona Legislative Update

As the first regular session of Arizona's 47th Legislature continues, the deadline to file bills for consideration is fast approaching in both chambers, with Monday, January 31, 5:00 p.m. the deadline for the Arizona Senate and Monday, February 7, 5:00 p.m. in the Arizona House of Representatives.

Of the bills of note filed, as of press time: HCR 2027 is the proposed state constitutional amendment and if approved by voters, would define marriage as "a union between a man and a woman."

HCR 2027 has still not been first read and assigned to a respective committee for consideration, and according to sources involved with HCR 2027 at the State Capital, the measure won't "see the light of the legislative day," but with Arizona's Legislature, nothing is over till Sine Die.

Led by Len Munsil and the Center for Arizona Policy, the radical right's effort to ban same-sex marriage, domestic partnerships (including Tucson's registry) and civil unions for governmental entities, school districts and business will continue through the petition route, for which they will need 183,917 valid signatures of registered Arizona voters, submitted by July 6, 2006.

As reported first in this column, HB 2310, with 18 sponsors and co-sponsors, the House bill that would expand the state's bias crimes law to cover misdemeanor offenses was introduced and assigned to the House Judiciary Committee for consideration.

HB 2310 still has not received a date to be heard by the House Judiciary Committee chair, state Representative Eddie Farnsworth, R-Mesa, and the bill's prime sponsor, state Representative Linda Lopez, D-Tucson, has urged people to contact Farnsworth and the other committee members and politely urge them to give HB 2310 a hearing date:

State Representative Eddie Farnsworth, R-Mesa, Phone Number: (602) 926-5735, E-mail Address: efarnswo@azleg.state.az.us.

The vice-chair of the Committee is state Representative David Burnell Smith, R-Phoenix, Phone Number: (602) 926-5766, E-mail Address: dsmith@azleg.state.az.us;

Other members of the Judiciary Committee are state Representatives: Ray Barnes, R-Phoenix, Phone Number: (602) 926-5503, E-mail Address: rbarnes@azleg.state.az.us;

Ted Downing, D-Tucson, Phone Number: (602) 926-5108, E-mail Address: tdowning@azleg.state.az.us;

Steve Gallardo, D-Phoenix, Phone Number: (602) 926-3392, E-mail Address: sgallard@azleg.state.az.us;

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Doug Quelland, R-Phoenix, Phone Number: (602) 926-4639, E-mail Address: dquellan@azleg.state.az.us; and,

Steven Yarbrough, R-Glendale, Phone Number: (602) 926-5863, Email Address: syarbrou@azleg.state.az.us.

State Senator Gabrielle Giffords, D-Tucson, in an interview with this reporter, said that she will be filing a bill in the Senate to expand Arizona's bias crimes law to cover misdemeanors. In 2004, Giffords introduced legislation which received a hearing by the Senate Judiciary Committee, but died on a 4-4 vote.

SB 1077, entitled schools; sex education, sponsored by state Senator Toni Hellon, R-Tucson, would provide medically accurate instruction pertaining to sex education curricula in Arizona's school system. SB 1077 has been assigned to the Senate K-12 Education Committee but has not received a hearing date.

COMMENTARY

Nautical Nonsense

"Who lives in a pineapple under the sea?"

"Spongebob Squarepants!"

"Absorbent and yellow and porous is he ..."

... not to mention dopey and charming and more hugely overexposed than ever, thanks to an anti-homosexual attack from the Christian right. Because of a media fuss ignited by the American Family Association and Dr. James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, this cartoon character is well on his way to culture-war immortality, up there with those moral saboteurs Murphy Brown and Tinky Winky.

It's not that Dr. Dobson has a problem with Mr. SquarePants per se. He is angry, rather, about a video made for grade schools by the We Are Family Foundation that features SpongeBob and other TV characters. It doesn't mention sex. But the foundation's Web site says this: "I pledge to have respect for people whose abilities, beliefs, culture, race, sexual identity or other characteristics are different from my own." How could anyone be against that?

Dr. Dobson is. He has denounced the video as a bait-and-switch, one that uses cartoons to legitimize a group that will corrupt children with a homosexual agenda.

We find it strange, actually, that the intolerant Dr. Dobson has not taken aim at SpongeBob himself, who is naughty and rude enough to give many parents pause. After "The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie" came out, a Christian family Web site made a long list of worrisome bits, including "cartoon rear male nudity, repeatedly," "pinching of banner staff between nude buttocks" and "suggestion of sadomasochism in transvestitism."

As any weary parent knows, America's children spend billions of hours watching movies and shows like that, absorbing underwear jokes, flatulence gags and mushy messages of tolerance until their brains run out their ears.

There may be a threat in all that, but Dr. Dobson and his allies seem to have missed it entirely.

[The above was an editorial in the January 22 edition of The New York Times.]

'The Aviator' Leads Oscar Picks With Eleven Nominations

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. - The Howard Hughes epic "The Aviator" led Academy Awards with 11 nominations Tuesday, January 25, including best picture, plus acting honors for Leonardo DiCaprio, Cate Blanchett, and Alan Alda, and a directing slot for Martin Scorsese.

The boxing saga "Million Dollar Baby" and the J.M. Barrie tale "Finding Neverland" followed with seven nominations each, among them best picture and acting nominations for Clint Eastwood, Morgan Freeman, Hilary Swank and Johnny Depp, the Associated Press reported.

Eastwood also got a directing nomination for "Million Dollar Baby."

The other best-picture nominees were the Ray Charles portrait "Ray" and the buddy comedy "Sideways."

Along with Eastwood, Jamie Foxx also scored two nominations, as best actor for the title role in "Ray" and supporting actor as a taxi driver whose cab is hijacked by a hit man in "Collateral."

Foxx's dead-on emulation of Charles has made him the front-runner in the lead-actor category.

Starring as aviation trailblazer and Hollywood rebel Hughes, DiCaprio also was nominated for best actor. He and Foxx will compete against Depp as "Peter Pan" playwright Barrie in "Finding Neverland"; Eastwood as a cantankerous boxing trainer in "Million Dollar Baby"; and Don Cheadle for "Hotel Rwanda," starring as hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, who sheltered refugees from the Rwandan genocide.

The best-actress category presents a rematch of the 1999 showdown, when underdog Swank won the Oscar for "Boys Don't Cry" over Annette Bening, who had been the front-runner for "American Beauty."

This time, Swank was nominated as a bullheaded boxing champ whose life takes a cruel twist in "Million Dollar Baby." Bening was chosen for "Being Julia," in which she plays an aging 1930s stage diva exacting wickedly comic revenge on the men in her life and a young rival.

Both actresses won Golden Globes for the roles, Swank for best dramatic actress, Bening for actress in a musical or comedy.

Also nominated for the best-actress Oscar were Catalina Sandino Moreno as a Colombian woman imperiled when she signs on to smuggle heroin in "Maria Full of Grace"; Imelda Staunton as a saintly housekeeper in 1950s Britain who performs illegal abortions on the side in "Vera Drake"; and Kate Winslet as a woman who has had memories of her ex-boyfriend erased in "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind."

Joining Eastwood and Scorsese among directing nominees are Taylor Hackford for "Ray"; Mike Leigh for "Vera Drake"; and Alexander Payne for "Sideways."

Scorsese, arguably the most prominent modern filmmaker who has never won an Oscar, also has never delivered a best-picture winner. Considered a nominal best-picture favorite, "The Aviator" offers him a shot to finally triumph on Oscar night, though Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby" is a formidable competitor.

"The Aviator" won the Golden Globe for best-dramatic film, but Eastwood beat out Scorsese for the directing prize at the Globes. Eastwood is a past Oscar winner for best-picture and director with 1992's "Unforgiven."

Along with Foxx in "Collateral," Alda was nominated for supporting actor as a senator tussling with Hughes in "The Aviator" while Freeman was picked as a worldly-wise ex-boxer in "Million Dollar Baby." The other nominees: Thomas Haden Church as a bridegroom out for a final fling in "Sideways"; Clive Owen as a coarse lover in "Closer."

For supporting actress, academy voters picked Blanchett, who plays Katharine Hepburn in "The Aviator"; Laura Linney as the title character's sexually adventurous wife in "Kinsey"; Virginia Madsen as a deceived lover in "Sideways"; Sophie Okonedo as innkeeper Rusesabagina's wife in "Hotel Rwanda"; Natalie Portman as a gutsy stripper in "Closer."

It was the best year ever for black performers, who had five of the 20 acting nominations. The most previously was three, including the 2001 Oscars when Halle Berry, and Denzel Washington both won the lead acting prizes.

"Sideways" star Paul Giamatti was overlooked for a nomination, a surprise given that he had been a contender for most previous film honors. Liam Neeson, who had the title role in "Kinsey," also missed out, as did the movie, which had considered a best-picture contender.

Mel Gibson 's religious blockbuster "The Passion of the Christ" missed out on main categories, but did pick up nominations for cinematography, makeup and original score.

Michael Moore's gamble to hold his hit film "Fahrenheit 9/11" out of the documentary category — to boost its best-picture prospects — backfired. The movie was shut out across the board.

Moore won the documentary prize two years ago for "Bowling for Columbine."

Morgan Spurlock's "Super Size Me," which hilariously chronicles his monthlong feed frenzy on an all-McDonald's diet, was among the documentary nominees.

Also nominated was "Born into Brothels," "The Story of the Weeping Camel," "Tupac: Resurrection," and "Twist of Faith."

With its epic scope and dazzling re-creation of early Hollywood, Scorsese's "The Aviator" could claim the inside track as front-runner for best picture. The film won the Golden Globe for best dramatic picture.

Yet unlike last year, when "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" went in as the odds-on favorite and swept all 11 of its categories come Oscar night, the outcome is more uncertain this time.

"The Aviator" could finally bring Scorsese the best-picture and directing wins that have eluded him during his distinguished career. But Eastwood's "Million Dollar Baby" is a heavyweight opponent that could spoil Scorsese's chances.

The fairy-tale comedy "Shrek 2" and the superhero adventure "The Incredibles" will duke it out for the animated feature film Oscar, along with the undersea romp "Shark Tale."

Nominated for foreign-language film were Sweden's "As It Is in Heaven," France's "The Chorus," Germany's "Downfall," Spain's "The Sea Inside" and South Africa's "Yesterday."

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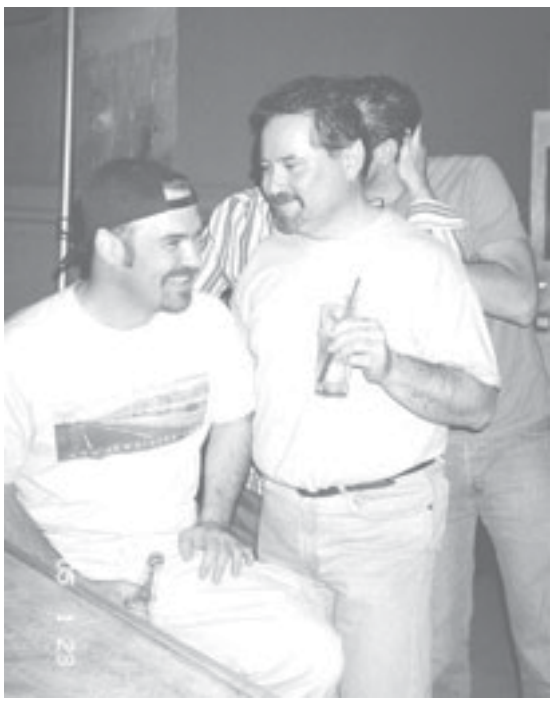

HOROSCOPES

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The Sun ambles into Aqueerius and sets off a chain of fortuitous events that are bound to have long term implications. Don''t accept anything except first class. You will traveling on this particular dream for a while and need more leg room.

ARIES (MAR. 21 - APR. 20)
What is it about proud Rams that make them so sociable now? There is something otherworldly, enticing and interesting about you. What a nice change of pace! Your popularity soars and your need to connect is apparent to friends, acquaintances and even strangers. Bask in the heat of Sun in Aqueerius and make yourself well known in various circles. Try to avoid the squares.

TAURUS (APR. 21 - MAY 21)
Don''t let the series of past frustrating events hold you back from advancing in your career. Sun in Aqueerius emboldens you and gives you a leg up on the corporate ladder. You appear confident and competent to senior staff. Make the most of this political capital. Remember: Laugh and the world laughs with you. Complain and spend your day sorting mail in the basement.

GEMINI (MAY 22 - JUNE 21)
Do you have ants in your pants? Well not really, but you do feel a bit antsy with Sun in Aqueerius. Pack your bags and buy a ticket. It is a great time to travel or at least get out of your usual routine. You need new stimuli and adventure. If money is tight, reach out to the world in other ways. Study, cruise the internet or get out of the neighborhood. Think all things new. So nu?

CANCER (JUNE 22 - JULY 23)
Sizzly pink Crabs are ready to be cooked and eaten when the Sun is in Aqueerius. There is something in the air that makes you especially sexy and ready for all sorts of mischief. Your various amours come from far afield, can be unusual, different from your usual choices and may arrive unexpectedly. Fall head over heels for a dream but pack a pillow for your landing.

LEO (JULY 24 - AUG. 23)
When the cruel world has its way with you, thank goodness the Sun ambles into Aqueerius and gives you your own private cheering section. Relationships become even more important over the next few weeks so treat partners with all the love and respect they deserve. Proud Lions learn to give and take. Let''s hope it is more on the former than on the latter....

VIRGO (AUG. 24 - SEPT. 23)
Let''s give credit where it is deserved. Sun in Aqueerius foists a series of job-related tasks on queer Virgins. You handle everything with tact, grace and efficiency. In fact, things that you accomplish now will have a nice pay off in the not too distant future. Plant those seeds, cousin. You will be happily surprised at what will sprout. Is that a lavender or green thumb?

LIBRA (SEPT. 24 - OCT. 23)
If you can''t seem to concentrate on the nitty gritty details, don''t worry. Sun in Aqueerius takes you on a “”wilde””, frivolous detour for the next few weeks. Gay Libras are giddy, silly and even a bit savant. The point of life is to explore your creativity, expand your mind and enjoy the fun while it lasts. Procrastinate at work, baby! Payback will be a killer.... but worth it!

SCORPIO (OCT. 24 - NOV. 22)
If you find yourself hanging around the house for the next few weeks, blame Sun in Aqueerius. While there will be various opportunities to improve your surroundings through redecoration or renovation, your energy may be directed to more relaxing and sociable outlets. Proud Scorps are perfectly content to lounge. Do you have the proper attire? Is there any?

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 23 - DEC. 22)
Usually you know the exact wrong thing to say at the most inappropriate time. Gay Archers are known for hoof in mouth. But now, as Sun enters Aqueerius, you become diplomatic and even compelling. Speak from the heart, take your dusty theories off the shelf and try them out. Very risky ideas can create a new exciting movement. Don''t forget to flush.....

CAPRICORN (DEC. 23 - JAN. 20)
Sun in Aqueerius fertilizes your money garden and gets things to grow. If you have been tending to your portfolio, saving your money and investing wisely, this can be a time to reap your rewards. If you have been less than diligent and a bit of a spendthrift, this is an excellent time to get started. Pink Caps dream of a comfortable retirement. Stop dreaming and start doing!

AQUARIUS (JAN. 21 - FEB. 19)
There is something about the Sun in your own sign that provides you with that certain special sauce. Apply liberally and get yourself noticed this week. Things begin to percolate as fresh ideas lead to new directions and long term projects. The fates will conspire to place influential people in your path - those who can change the course of your existence. Prepare, pardner.

PISCES (FEB. 20 - MAR. 20)
When in doubt, go with your gut. At least be ready to do so while the Sun lounges in Aqueerius. Guppies start the week feeling pent up and isolated but can end it on an intuitive high note. Your closeted secrets are revealed and you feel liberated. Good. Don''t allow your psychological baggage to pile up. Book it on an airline and let them lose it for you.

Ending the violence.

Wingspan launches the Anti-Violence Project – a community initiative to assist lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender victims of discrimination, domestic violence, sexual assault and hate crimes.

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Major HIV Vaccine Study Begins

NEW YORK - A potential HIV/AIDS vaccine developed by Merck & Co. that uses synthetic genes to prepare cells to fight the deadly virus is moving into the second stage of testing, reported the Associated Press.

An approved vaccine would be about a decade away if the trial and a third study are successful, said officials with the international coalition that is collaborating on the work.

"It is the most promising candidate that we've seen so far," said Sarah B. Alexander, associate director of the coalition, known as the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, or HVTN. She cautioned, however, "something better could come along tomorrow."

Volunteers began enrolling last month for the Phase II study, which will eventually give the potential vaccine's three doses to 1,500 people in North and South America, the Caribbean and Australia, the network and Whitehouse Station-based drug maker announced Monday.

The study is using male and female volunteers aged 18 to 45 of diverse racial groups who are at high risk for contracting HIV. Participants will receive counseling about how to reduce their risk of HIV infection, Alexander said. from the market amid safety concerns, has traded in a 52-week range of $25.60 to $49.33.

About a dozen companies and organizations worldwide are attempting to develop an AIDS vaccine. Of the 10 associated with HVTN, the Merck candidate is the first to reach Phase II testing, Alexander said.

Of the two that reached Phase III, the final stage before certification is sought, one was deemed unsuccessful in 2000, and another, led by the U.S. Department of Defense, is enrolling volunteers, she said.

The Merck candidate _ the MRKAd5 HIV-1 gag/pol/nef, or trivalent, vaccine _ is designed to persuade the defenders of each cell, called "killer T cells," to attack HIV when the virus enters the cell. Other vaccines generate an antibody response.

The potential vaccine uses the virus of a common cold, modified so it cannot reproduce or cause people to catch a cold, to transport three synthetically produced HIV genes to the cells.

"We give the body enough of the virus so it can recognize it and create an immune response," but not enough to infect a person, Alexander said.

The Phase I study of the possible vaccine, involving about 1,000 people, "generated strong and durable cellular immune responses against HIV," Merck spokeswoman Janet Skidmore said.

Seattle-based HVTN is funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases of the National Institutes of Health, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and comprises more than 25 research institutions worldwide.

Weight Might Affect Prostate Cancer Test

SAN ANTONIO - A new study suggests a man's weight may affect the accuracy of a common test to detect prostate cancer, leading researchers to warn that doctors could be missing the dangerous cancer in obese men, the Associated Press and Advocate.com reported.

Researchers at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio studied 2,779 men without prostate cancer between 2001 and 2004. In the study released online Monday in the journal Cancer, they reported finding that the more obese the men were, the lower their levels of prostate-specific antigen or PSA. A PSA of 4.0 or lower usually means no cancer. Previous studies have shown that prostate cancer is more aggressive in obese men than in men of average weight. The researchers wanted to see if the cancer's detection was somehow being delayed in obese men.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers among U.S. men, and ranks among all types of cancer as the second-highest killer among males, behind only lung cancer. Nearly 30,000 American men die from prostate cancer each year.

The Texas study found that the most morbidly obese men had about 30% lower PSA levels than men of normal weight. "That tells us it's likely or it's possible that prostate cancer detection may be delayed in overweight or obese men," said Jacques Baillargeon, associate professor of epidemiology at the health science center.

The research may encourage many doctors to take a closer look at the tests of obese men. "For sure, I will be more vigilant in my patients who are obese in evaluating their PSA," said Nelson Stone of Mount Sinai School of Medicine, who was not involved in the study. "We may be losing some of the sensitivity of the test in the obese patient in our ability to detect prostate cancer. We may have to set our sights lower."

The antigen used in the screening test is made by normal prostate cells and is measured in blood. The higher the antigen level, the more likely the chance of prostate cancer, as the cells multiply uncontrollably, according to the American Cancer Society. The Texas study did not explain why obese men have lower PSA levels. But doctors believe obese men produce more estrogen, which drives down testosterone levels and could affect cells that produce the antigen used in the test.

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NOTES FROM THE FOR-REAL SIDE

by Lee Thorn

Party On

Our current president has been known as a party animal since his cheerleading days at Yale. Now, according to a recent segment of Public Television's 'Washington Week In Review', he's about to break all presidential records for inauguration partying.

The four days of inauguration parties will cost 40 million dollars, mostly collected from corporate contributions. According to the same TV show, about thirty companies have already kicked in and about 70 more are expected to climb aboard.

But the best part, at least to my twisted sense of humor, is that, again according to WWIR, there are "no rules" governing this corporate largesse. There is a "voluntary cap" of $250,000 per corporation, but, knowing how little action can be expected from that paltry sum, many corporations have volunteered to ignore the cap.

You have to bear in mind of course that some corporations only want the current administration to tweak a regulation or two while others, for example the drug giants, are looking to renew their four-year license to continue the ravaging of the rapidly disappearing middle class.

This is so delicious. Just think of it: We spend all our time and energy huffing and puffing about campaign finance reform. We make all these corporations go through elaborate nonsense to buy their politicians without breaking campaign laws. And then, after the election is over, we let them walk right up and buy their politicians with no rules or impediments whatsoever.

Inaugural giving takes the gamble out of it. After all, what if you give a bunch of money to a campaign and your guy loses? Not good. With inaugural buying, this wonderful playground without rules, you know you're paying the winner. It's like being able to bet on a horse race after it's been run.

On the other hand, corporations pouring their wealth into the second inauguration of this particular president may not be using their resources that brilliantly. In his first term the president made a perfect record of favoring corporate over consumer interests. He also made a perfect record of favoring investor over wage-earner interests. The question becomes, "What can he possibly do for the corporations that he hasn't already done?" Aren't the corporate types paying for someone they already own?

Are they afraid that he might make Haliburton return its blood money? Are they afraid that he might make the Food and Drug Administration stop licensing lethal drugs? Do they worry that he'll do something to stop the flood of illegal immigration and thereby force up labor costs? Is he suddenly going to do something to defend the environment against the insatiable rapacity of the corporate despoilers? Is he on the verge of doing anything to regulate some destructive, greedy, immoral corporate enormity? Not bloody likely.

I wonder if anyone recalls the sweet innocence of the Keating-seven scandal. The state was Arizona. The tragic hero was John McCain. The time now seems eons and eons ago. The deal was, if I remeber right, that some shady savings and loan guy gave campaign bucks to senators who then put some informal pressure on federal regulators to tone down their investigations of savings and loan operations. The regulators were only somewhat cowed. The senators were exposed and embarrassed. The shady operator ended up doing some time.

What an age of innocence that was. Imagine a senator being embarrassed by something today. The only thing that would embarrass one now would be finding out that a rival politician had been purchased for a higher price.

History buffs will remember that someone once actually purchased the Roman Empire. Fans of epigrams will remember, "The more things change, the more they stay the same.~[1]

Through it all we pretend to celebrate the everyday folks who "work hard and play by the rules." Of course you can't really claim that the corporations don't play by the rules. It's just that they buy the politicians who make the rules they play by.

The Washington Week In Review segment that inspired this column has also inspired me to think up a brand new idea for a bumper sticker that I hereby offer everybody free of charge: "WORK HARD. PLAY BY THE RULES. GET SCREWEDBYUSAINC."

[Thorn welcomes comments, suggestions for future columns, and tips on local skulduggery that ought to be exposed. Write to Box 85571, Tucson, AZ 85754. e-mail: Doid3@alo.com]

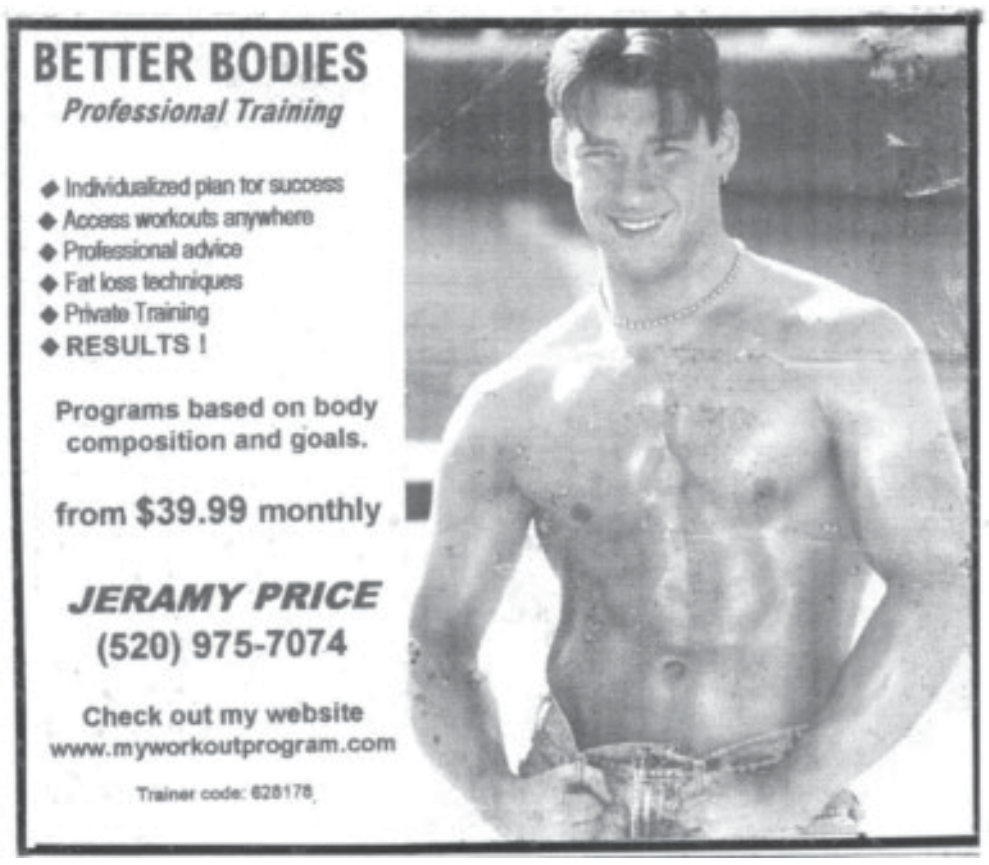
Oscars

Continued from Page Nine

Nominees in most categories are chosen by specific branches of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, such as directors, actors and writers. The full academy membership of about 5,800 is eligible to vote in all categories for the Oscars themselves.

ABC will broadcast the Oscars live Feb. 27 from Hollywood's Kodak Theatre. Chris Rock is the show's host, the first time since 1996 that either Billy Crystal, Whoopi Goldberg or Steve Martin has not been master of ceremonies.

A man who doesn't advertise is like one who winks in the dark: he knows he's doing it, but nobody else does.



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Company To Pay $3.5M To Settle AIDS Scam Charge

LOS ANGELES - An Orange County company has agreed to pay $3.5 million to settle charges that it deceptively marketed a supplement to prevent or cure HIV/AIDS, cancer, and asthma, 365Gay.com reported.

Body Wise International sold the supplement under the brand name "AG-Immune". The Federal Trade Commission, the Orange County District Attorney, and the California State Attorney General filed suit alleging the drug was useless in treating or preventing any of the diseases and violated a 1995 FTC order.

Under the settlement, Body Wise has agreed to pay a $2 million civil penalty to the FTC. California's proposed settlement would require Body Wise to pay the State of California an additional $1.58 million in penalties and costs for allegedly violating the State's Business and Professions and Health and Safety Codes.

The FTC also reached a settlement with Jesse A. Stoff, M.D., an expert endorser of AG-Immune, to resolve allegations that he made deceptive claims for the product.

"There is no immunity for violators of FTC Orders – especially those making false and unsubstantiated claims that their products cure or treat serious diseases," said Lydia B. Parnes, Acting Director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection.

According to the complaint, in April 2000, Body Wise began marketing AG-Immune, a dietary supplement containing "antigen infused dialyzable bovine colostrum/whey extract" or "AI/E-10." BodyWise marketed this and other AI/E-10 products directly to consumers and through a network of "consultants" who market and sell Body Wise products to consumers. Body Wise sold AG-Immune for approximately $50 for a one-month supply, and had over $14 million in sales.

The complaint also said that Body Wise contracted with Dr. Stoff to explain the purported medical benefits of AI/E-10 and endorse Body Wise products containing AI/E-10.

In promotional materials and at seminars, Body Wise and Dr. Stoff allegedly claimed that AG-Immune could prevent or treat numerous diseases or conditions, including cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, and asthma, and that scientific research suggested these claims. The defendants also allegedly claimed that AG-Immune improves immune system function to prevent or treat these and many other diseases and conditions. Dr. Stoff was paid royalties for every bottle of AG-Immune sold.

In 1995, Body Wise settled FTC allegations that the company made unsubstantiated claims for weight loss and cholesterol products. The resulting order bars Body Wise from making certain false or unsubstantiated claims for dietary supplements, misrepresenting any test or study, and failing to disclose any material connection between Body Wise and any person endorsing a Body Wise product.

The agreement must be approved by the court.

TV Station Delays Show Featuring Lesbians

BOSTON - WGBH-TV has pushed back airing an episode of its new ''Arthur" spinoff ''Postcards From Buster" because the episode features a Lesbian couple and their three children, the Boston Globe reported.

The episode was originally scheduled to air Feb. 2 but is now slated for March 23. WGBH, which produces the children's show, said it wants to give other PBS member stations around the country a chance to review the contents. Those stations can then decide whether to air it.

WGBH's decision comes the same week as complaints by some Christian conservative groups that a video about diversity due to be sent to 61,000 US schools in March promotes the acceptance of homosexuality. The video features Barney and a host of cartoon characters including SpongeBob SquarePants.

The episode of ''Postcards From Buster" is not about homosexuality, said Jeanne Hopkins, a spokeswoman for WGBH. Still the station acknowledged that it had heard ''concerns" from other stations recently. Hopkins declined to identify the stations because conversations about programming go on constantly, she said. WGBH said it plans to send the episode to member stations next week.

''PBS wants to make sure we are sensitive to local concerns. We wanted to make sure stations had time to see it," she said.

''Postcards From Buster" airs weekdays at 5:30 p.m. The series — which is part animated and part live-action — focuses on an 8-year-old rabbit who travels around the country with his father, an airplane pilot. In each episode, Buster visits with children and asks questions about their way of life. Real-life children are featured in the live-action segments while Buster's voice is heard in the background.

Since it launched last year, ''Postcards From Buster" has profiled several different types of families, including children who live with their grandparents. The show has also focused on children from a variety of religious backgrounds, including Muslims, Mormons, and evangelical Christians.

''The show's goal is to reflect the lives of American kids," said Hopkins. ''It's not meant to be political."

The episode in question, called ''Sugartime!," features a family in Vermont. Buster accompanies the kids when they visit a sugar house, where maple syrup is made, and a dairy farm, where a cow is milked. The Lesbian couple, said Hopkins, are in the background.

''The program is not about these moms or Gay couples. The family is the backdrop," Hopkins said. ''One mom is in the kitchen, making a grocery list. Another mom says, 'Hi.' Later they have a meal together with some friends. Most of the time, Buster is off with the kids," she said.

Lea Sloan, a spokeswoman for PBS, said that Pat Mitchell, PBS's president, did ask to review the tape this week and is satisfied with its contents. ''We are aware that this is sensitive subject matter," Sloan said. ''Pat wanted to make sure that the episode was handled in a way that is appropriate. She's seen it. We now feel comfortable."

At least one member station, WNET in New York, plans to air the show. Stella Giammasi, a spokeswoman for the station, said that management there has ''no problem" with the concept. Representatives for other PBS stations around the country could not be reached.

''We never withdraw programming from the air simply because someone may not agree with the ideas portrayed," she said. ''We simply present programming that fairly represents reality, and we leave it up to our viewers to make their own decisions about the content."

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Italy To Honor Gay Holocaust Victims

ROME - Italy has announced it will unveil its first memorial to the members of Europe's Gay community who were sent to concentration camps by the Nazis during the Second World War, Gay.com UK reported.

The memorial, which will be unveiled as part of the Holocaust Memorial Day next week, will feature a pink triangle with a black marble plaque.

It will stand at San Sabba, near Trieste, where the Nazis built their only Italian camp, the Independent reports.

As with other camps, the converted rice mill was used as a holding place for those minority groups who did not fit into the Nazi worldview.

Figures suggest as many as 25,000 opponents of the regime were tortured in the camp from 1943 to 1945, with 3,000 to 5,000 killed and burned.

Although originally proposed by Italian Gay rights group ArciGay, the memorial has seen widespread support from the city's mayor and council. It was voted for unanimously by the council, with local people expected to attend the unveiling along with Gay groups.

It is not the first public memorial to represent the large number of Gay people killed at the concentration camps.

The first was unveiled in the United States in 2003, while Germany finally approved its own monument to recognize Gay victims later the same year, despite ongoing arguments between Gay rights groups and conservatives.

Germany also gave a formal pardon to the 50,000 Gay people convicted under Nazi rule in 2002, and acknowledged that the total number of Gay people sent to concentration camps could well have been 20,000.

ArciGay's Sergio lo Giudice said San Sabba's act of remembrance was an important step for Italy's Gay community. "It's a sign that something in Italy is changing," he told the newspaper.

Curacao Courts G/L Travelers

WILLEMSTAD - Seven years after the Cayman Islands refused to let a Gay-themed cruise dock, another Caribbean island has put out the welcome mat. The Dutch island of Curaçao is encouraging Gay and Lesbian travelers to visit with the help of a new Web site, www.Gaycuracao.com.

Coming six months after the Sandals resort chain dropped its ban on same-sex couples, the move could signal a change of attitudes in the region.

Under the slogan "We Live and Let Live," Gaycuracao.com includes details on Gay-friendly lodgings and nightclubs, as well as general tourist information and a message board, where tourists and locals can share their experiences.

The message board is a "great community-building tool," according to Jim Hepple, the island's director of tourism.

"People are often more reassured and feel a greater level of comfort to hear an endorsement of the island's Gay-friendliness from an independent traveler rather than an island-sponsored Web site, and they can find that here," Hepple said in a statement announcing the Web site's creation.

Still under development on the site are online links for booking travel arrangements.

From San Francisco, American Airlines is the only airline to offer one-stop service to Curaçao, flying overnight via Miami.

To receive a free DVD about the island, call (800) 328-7222 or visit www.curacao-tourism.com.

Lincoln Memorial

Continued from Page One

On January 16, 2004, the Park Service released press reports and a copy of the then-current videotape, but denied the remainder of the groups' request, claiming that even correspondence from outside organizations and members of Congress were internal, pre-decisional records and thus exempt from public records requirements.

PFAWF and PEER appealed that denial of documents to the U.S. Department of Interior, of which the Park Service is a component, on January 28, 2004. After nearly a year, Interior has not responded. The groups determined that filing a lawsuit was the only remaining course.

"One of the basic tenets of democracy is that decisions are made in an open and transparent manner. If the Bush Administration wants to rewrite history on the basis of ideology then it should stand up and say so," said PFAWF president Ralph G. Neas. "Stonewalling the public is not an option."

The Park Service has reportedly spent nearly $200,000 making two new versions of the video. The first version is a wholly new video that, according to other Park Service documents, "revise(s) and update(s) the Lincoln Memorial video [including] off-line and symphony picture editing, the acquisition and addition of commercial and public domain stock footage and specialized captioning."

Last June, a second version of the video was ordered. This version would make "three minor picture changes to the Lincoln's Living Legacy Video. This work includes purchasing new stock footage, edit [sic], mastering and captions for the video."

"We are simply trying to unearth the history of an attempt by the Bush Administration to rewrite history," stated PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch, whose organization represents Park Service employees. "Our tax dollars are being spent so that images of feminists, war protestors and Gays can no longer be glimpsed at what is supposed to be a shrine of democracy."

Throughout the controversy, the original videotape has been showing at the Lincoln Memorial, except for a brief shutdown for projector repair. The Park Service has not shown its proposed replacement videos to members of the public and has also resisted requests for copies to be released.

Arrest In Gay Designer's Murder

MUNICH - A 25 year old hustler has been charged with the killing of famed German designer Rudolph Moshammer, 365Gay.com reported.

Police say the suspect, who has not been publicly named, is an Iraqi. The man was identified by people who saw him leave a Gay bar with Moshammer. Investigators say the man confessed killed Moshammer after a dispute over payment for sex.

Moshammer, who designed clothes for celebrities such as Arnold Schwarzenegger and magicians Siegfried and Roy, was found with a telephone cable wrapped around his neck in his home on January 13.

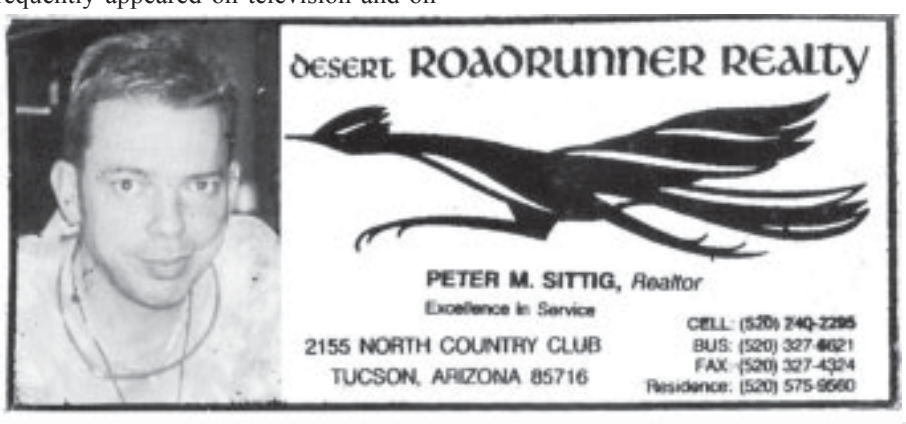
Moshammer was a well-known figure in Germany. He was camp and frequently appeared on television and on the celebrity circuit. He was known for his bouffant hairstyle and outrageous suits. Moshammer was always accompanied by his Yorkshire terrier, Daisy.

Thousands of people lined Munich streets Saturday for his funeral procession.

The funeral cortege stopped for a minute's silence outside his boutique - reputed to be the most expensive men's shop in Europe.

After the brief tribute in front of the store a marching band led the procession through the city as an estimated 10,000 people looked on.

Several television stations broadcast the procession live.



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NON-BAR CALENDAR
Groups / Clubs / Organizations /

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26
#1 Men's Social Network (open to men of all ages; newcomers welcomed): 7:00 p.m. Join Richard and T. Jay for Canasta. If you don't know how to play, we'll be glad to teach you. For reservations and directions, please call Richard and T. Jay at 881-7919.
#2 Men's Social Network (open to men of all ages; newcomers welcomed): 7:00 p.m. The Circle of Men is a support group that helps you deal with yourself and your relationships with others. For directions and reservations, please call Tom at 591-2828.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27
Men's Social Network (open to men of all ages; newcomers welcomed): 1:00 p.m. Les hosts a Lunch Out at Colors, Tucson's one and only gay-owned restaurant. For reservations and directions, please call Les at 690-9565.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 28
Men's Social Network (open to men of all ages; newcomers welcomed): - Join us for an evening of Dominoes at 7:00 PM. It's easy to learn; we'll teach you. For details and directions, please call Karol at 744-9017

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
Men's Social Network (open to men of all ages; newcomers welcomed): 7:00 p.m. Steve hosts Pinochle Night. If you don't know how to play, but would like to learn, this is the place. For more information, please call Steve at 664-2076.

Tucson Prime Timers Food & Drinks, Woody's, 3710 N, Oracle Rd.

MONDAY, JANUARY 31
Tucson Prime Timers Lunch - 12:30 p.m., Wildcat House, 1800 N, Stone Ave.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5
Tucson Prime Timers, Food & Drinks - 5:00 p.m., Woody's, 3710 N. Oracle Rd.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 7
Tucson Prime Timers, Lunch – 12:30 p.m., The Wildcat House , 1800 N. Stone Ave.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12
Tucson Prime Timers, Food & Drinks - 5:00 p.m., Woody's, 3710 N. Oracle Rd.

MONDY, FEBRUARY 14
Tucson Prime Timers, Lunch – 12:30 p.m., The Wildcat House, 1800 N. Stone Ave.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19
#1 -Tucson Prime Timers, Lunch/Business Meeting - Noon, Home Town Buffet, 5101 N. Oracle Rd.

#2 -Tucson Prime Timers, Food & Drinks- 5:00 p.m. Woody's, 3710 N. Oracle Rd.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21
Tucson Prime Timers, Lunch – 12:30 p.m., The Wildcat House1800 N. Stone Ave.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 26
Tucson Prime Timers, Food & Drinks- 5:00 p.m., Woody's, 3710 N. Oracle Rd.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 28
Tucson Prime Timers, Lunch – 12:30 p.m, The Wildcat House, 1800 N. Stone Ave.

BAR CALENDAR
Of Upcoming

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 26
IBT'S - DivaLicious show hosted by Bunny FuFu with special guest Raquel Chevallier (Miss Gay America 2005) and also starring Lucinda Holliday, Veronica Hallilwell, Tori Steele and Jannee Starr. Showtime 9:00 p.m.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 27
HOWL AT THE MOON - UofA Men's Basketball on the TVs - UA vs. Washington.

WOODY'S - 'Twisted Thursday'. Woody's Smirnoff Twisted Party. Play twisted and win - Giveaways - hot go-go's and music. Featuring special prices for Smirnoff Twisted flavors.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29
HOWL AT THE MOON - UofA Men's Basketball on the numerous TVs - UA vs. Washington State

IBT'S - An evening with Ajia Simone with special guest Miss Gay America 2005 Raquel Chevallier.

YARD DOG - Meat Loaf Dinner by chef Ray, 7:00 p.m. In the Kennel, Ring Toss with Dennis.

SUNDAY, JANUARY 30
IBT'S - Benefit Show for Veronica Halliwell and Josie P. Showtime 8:30 p.m.
WOODY'S - Drag Bingo 8:00 p.m. hosted by Janee Starr

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 3
VENTURE-N - The annual, fabulous Aquarian Party - Nardu Gras Edition - is here along with food at 7:00 p.m., drink specials, Mask Contest at 11:00 p.m. Prizes and surprises. DJ Jerry playing 9:00 p.m. until closing.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 6
HOWL AT THE MOON - Super Bowl Party here with free hot dogs, chili, chips and fixin's.

WOODY'S - Super Bowl Party 4:00 p.m. Food, fun - drink specials each quarter.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 8
WOODY'S - Mardi Gras Party. Tons of beads and sin! Mark your calendars.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 14
WOODY'S - Valentine's Day Party. Watch for more details.

DAILY BAR CALENDAR

SUNDAY
COLORS - Fabulous Brunch 11am - 2pm with complimentary mimosa. Dinner 5-10pm..
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 10:30 am. Chuckwagon Breakfast 10:30 am – 1:30 pm, includes Bloody Mary or Mimosa. $2 Smirnoff Sunday. Enjoy the smooth sounds of Susie Rough 7-10:30pm.
IBT's -Open Noon. $1.75 Bloodys, Screws or mimosas. til 4pm 4-7:30 Karaoke with Michael D. on the patio 5:30-8 Benefit BBQ for community organizations 7:30-2Am Dance with David Z.All drink specials not available during special events
VENTURE-N - Open 10am. Patio open 3pm. $1.75 Bloody Marys or Screws til 3pm Patio Beer Bust 3-7.Burger BBQ 5-7. Selection of burger meats to choose from. $2 proceeds go to Pet Watch (helping HIV/AIDS clients with their veterinary bills).
WOODY'S - Open 11am. Sunday Brunch 11:30 - 2:30. Eggs and meat du jour plus BMs, Mims or Screws $5. $1.50 Bloody Marys, screwdrivers, Mimosas; Happy Hour 11am-8pm. Patio Bar open 5-close. Pick-up Beach Volleyball games 5-?. $2.50 sirloin burger w/salad 5-9pm. Karaoke with Michael D. 9pm
YARD DOG - Open Sundays 10am - 1am. Bloody Marys or Screwdrivers $1.75 from 10am - 3pm.

MONDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch; 5pm for dinner. Happy Hour 4-7pm. Domestic beer and well cocktails $2.25
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 3 pm. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. Monday Munchies 3 – 8 pm with reduced prices on appetizers - best deal in town.
IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, Audio Anomoly 9pm-2am with DJ Trinidad, 10pm-2am $1.50 well vodka drinks, All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 8am. Patio 6pm. Free pool til 4pm. $2.75 Skyy Martinis 4-8. Free Hot Dogs.
WOODY'S - Open 10am. Karaoke w/Michael D. 9-1
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am. 50¢ off any Scotch until 7pm. Beer Bust 3-7pm.

TUESDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch, 5pm dinner. Happy Hour 4-7pm. Domestic beers and well cocktails $2.25. Karaoke 10:30pm to close w/Johnny DJ.
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 3 pm. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. Tequila Tuesday: $2.00 well margaritas, 50¢ off call tequilas. Karaoke Debbie 8-midnight. IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, Tropical Tuesdays $2.50 Tropical drinks and DJ Q playing Retro Music 70's, 80's and 90's 9pm-close, All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 8am. Patio 6pm. Free Pool til 4pm.
WOODY'S - Open 10am. Bartender Calls It drink specials..
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am.50¢ off any Tequila until 7pm Beer Bust 3-7pm.

WEDNESDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch; 5pm dinner. Happy Hour 4-7pm Domestic Beers or Well cocktails $2.25.
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 3 pm. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. Free Pool all day. Draught Beer Specials all day. Beginning couples dance lessons with Amanda 7:30 – 8:30 pm. Country DJ Jake plays 8:30 - close
IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, 9pm "Diva-Licious" show w/ Bunny Fu Fu. HiNrgy dance with DJ Q, All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 8am. Patio 6pm. Free Pool til 4pm. Draft Special 12-4pm. $2.75 Cuervo Margaritas 4-8pm
WOODY'S - Open 10am. Free Hot Dog Buffet 5-11pm. Underwear- fetish- leather nite w/Gary and Chris along with GMHP. $1 off any drink or bottled beer.(Excludes draft & schnapps) for all in leather or underwear.
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am.50¢ off any Vodka until 7pm Beer Bust 3-7pm.

THURSDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch, 5pm dinner. 4-7pm Happy Hour Domestic Beers or Well cocktails $2.25. Karaoke 10:30 - close with Johnny DJ.
HOWL AT THE MOON –Open at 3 pm. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. $2.00 Mexican Beers all day. Karaoke with Debbie from 8 to midnight.
IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, Tricked Out Thursday with your Bartenders in their undies and DJ Mike Lopez spinning Top 40 & All request $1.75 Long Islands and $1.50 Cocksucker shots 10pm-2am, All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 8am. Patio open 6pm. Free Pool til 4pm. Pool Tourney 7pm. $3 entry. Special prices for players. Steak Nite (4th Thursday of each month). Bring your own or get it here $5.
WOODY'S - Open 10am. Free Pool 8 to close. Volleyball Court is Open. See bartender.
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am.50¢ off any Bourbon til 7pm. Beer Bust 3-7pm.

FRIDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch. Dinner 5-10pm. Happy Hour 4-7pm domestic beers or well cocktails $2.25.
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 3 pm. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. Line Dance Lessons 7:30 to 8:30 pm. DJ Pat plays your country dance songs 8:30-midnight then a mix of dance and country until close. Kitchen open 10pm-2am for late night munchies.
IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, Live Jazz on the Patio with Susan 6pm-9pm, Hot Dance from 9pm-2am, All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 8am. Patio open 6pm. Free Pool til 4pm. DJ 9pm to close.
WOODY'S - Open Noon. Martini Party - Well Martini's $2.00 3-4pm. Call Martinis $3 from 3-4pm. Complimentary Shrimp Cocktail 4-8pm. Patio Bar Open 7pm - midnight.
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am.50¢ off any Gin until 7pm. Beer Bust 3-7pm. Kennel open 9pm.

SATURDAY
COLORS - Open 11am for lunch; 5-10pm full dinner.
HOWL AT THE MOON – Open at 10:30 am. Happy Hour 3 – 8 pm, $2 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3 sm pitchers, $5 lg pitchers. $3.00 Burger & Fries all day. DJ playing your favorite country songs 8:30-midnight then 'anything goes' requests until close. Kitchen open 10pm-2am for late night munchies.
IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-7pm, 8:30pm Show time w/ Ajia Simone or Janee Starr, Circuit Saturday's with DJ Q spinning Hot Club Music. All drink specials not available during special events.
VENTURE-N - Open 10am. Patio Bar open 3pm. Patio Beer Bust 3-7pm. DJ 9-1.
WOODY'S - Open 11am Patio Bar opens 5pm. 5-9pm Steak or Mahi Mahi BBQ with all the trimmings $5.
YARD DOG - Open daily 6am. Beer Bust 3-7pm. 75¢ glass, $2.25 pitcher. 50¢ off any Rum 1pm to 7pm. Beer Bust 3-7pm. Kennel Open 9pm.

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HALLELUJAH RECOVERY DRUG & ALCOHOL 12-STEP. Every Thursday 5:30-6:30pm at Cornerstone Fellowship, 2902 N. Geronimo. 622-4626.

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE CLINIC provided daily by the Pima County Health Department. Gay friendly. Confidential. Treatment and Medication too! Any questions? Call 624-8272

SOUTHERN ARIZONA AIDS FOUNDATION (SAAF), 375 S. EUCLID. Office Hours 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Direct services and emotional support for persons with and affected by HIV. Anonymous HIV testing and support groups available. Prevention education programs. 628-SAAF (7223). World wide web: http://www.saaf.org. VOLUNTEERS WELCOME.

LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP. Involving discussion, support and activities. Designed to support each other. Meets 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month from 6:30 to 8pm. Alternate Saturdays the group meets for social activities. For info call Dorian Easty. 882-7723

P.F.L.A.G. - Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays - is a support group available to anyone who has a son, daughter or friend who is Gay. Call 575-8660 or write P.O. Box 36264, Tucson, AZ 85740-6264. All replies confidential.

TUCSON GLBT AL-ANON GROUP meets Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. at Wingspan, 300 E. 6th Street. Call 624-1779 for more info.

YOUNG AND GAY?
GLBT Youth 23 and under, meet every Saturday in Tucson for sharing, support and information. Meetings are held at 300 E. 6th Street from 3 to 4:30 pm. You are not alone. For more info call Wingspan, 624-1779.

The TUCSON Chapter of PRIME TIMERS WORLDWIDE invites Gay or Bisexual men and their admirers to join and share Prime Timers fellowship. We welcome mature men (and admirers) who wish to become involved with planned and future Prime Timers (TPT) activities. Meetings luncheons and dinners are held monthly. For dates, times and information call529-2269, leave name and phone number. Tucsonpt@primetimersww,org

TUCSON INFORMATION & REFERRAL
For Information on Gay human service organizations, health and mental health services, financial and government assistance, emergency services such as food and shelter, education, etc. Call Information and Referral 881-1794 - 8 am - 5 pm Mon. - Fri.

AIDS HOTLINE - 326-AIDS. Hours M-F, 9:00 am to 10:00 pm. Information, counseling, HIV-related services, Tucson.

GAY OR BI-SEXUAL MEN in relationships with women. Need friends you can talk to? Weekly support group meets Wednesdays 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Licensed psychologist facilitator. Call 745-6977 in Tucson for more information. Strictly confidential.

WINGSPAN - Tucson's Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual Community Center, 300 E. 6th St., offers support groups / info line / social events / library / meeting space. Volunteer Opportunities. Board meetings every 2nd Thursday (open to all), 6:00 p.m. Information 624-1779.

GREATER PHOENIX GAY & LESBIAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (GPGLCC) P.O. BOX 2097, Phoenix, AZ 85001-2097. E-mail: webmaster@gpglcc.org or call (602)225-8444.

SOURCES UNLIMITED, a Lesbian & Gay referral service. Business and individual listings are free of charge. All information available to anyone just simply by asking. 322-5655. Leave message. TucsonSources@aol.com

GET NAKED with TNTucson MEN! We're a social and recreational club. Have you ever longed to camp, swim, hike or play with others who enjoy the same, dropping all the masks and pretensions? We're for you! TNTucsonMEN@nethere.com, P.O. Box 12176, Tucson 85792 or call 514-9894

INNER WISDOM - Try hypnotherapy for pain relief, past life exploration and addiction release. Also available: Spiritual Counseling and Dream Interpretation. 579-9020

BEARS OF THE OLD PUEBLO — a social club for bears and bigger, more robust men (and of course, those who prefer their company). For more info, Call the Bears Hotline (520)790-5775 or write P.O. Box 43910, Tucson, AZ 85733-3910 or visit our website at www.botop.com All are welcome to our general meetings/potlucks on the 2nd Friday of every month, 7pm at Sentinel Bldg. On the City of Tucson Resource Campus, 310 N. Commerce Park Loop on Bonita St. between St. Marys and Congress.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE GROUP - Outreach to Gay and Lesbian people in Arizona. Meets monthly. Write to P.O. Box 893, Phoenix, AZ 85001 or call Eddy Walters, (602)371-1102

CRONIES SOCIAL GROUP. A Social group for Gay men who enjoy the fellowship of their peers. Call Leo at 624-6768.

T-SQUARES Lesbian and Gay square dance club meets every Tuesday from 6:30-9:00 p.m. at Cornerstone Fellowship Social Hall, 2902 N. Geronimo (near 1st Ave. and Laguna). Open to All. Call Liz at 325-9466 or Ray at 749-5247.

LIGHTNING LIGHTING will provide lighting for AIDS and related benefits at no charge. For more info call Adrienne at 889-7298.

COME EXPLORE YOUR SPIRITUALITY! St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church offers a variety of Gay and Lesbian groups and services for the spiritually minded. Come meet the Family! For more information call Debbie 579-9827 or David 323-7943.

LESBIAN/GAY WRITERS: Workshop at 7:00 p.m. third Wednesday of every month. Read and critique current projects. Network and support. For info call 325-4737.

DESERT VOICES, Tucson's Gay & Lesbian Chorus. Want to join? E-mail: www.desertvoices.org or call 791-9662 .

Join the LESBIAN & GAY PUBLIC AWARENESS PROJECT. In Tucson write Awareness Project, 3661 N. Campbell Ave. #365, Tucson, AZ 85719.

AA Meeting with HIV/AIDS focus, Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., Wingspan Annex, 739 N. 4th Ave. All alcoholics welcome.

MEN'S SOCIAL NETWORK: Social organization for men of all ages. Building an extended Gay family in Tucson. Monthly social potluck gatherings the first Saturday of each month and almost weekly social activities. Call 690-9565 for information and a newsletter. Check the Non-Bar Calendar in the Observer.

CARE TEAMS ARE AVAILABLE to offer support to people living with HIV/AIDS. The Tucson Interfaith HIV/AIDS Network offers trained, compassionate and committed volunteers to provide services including friendly visits, light housekeeping, assistance with meals, shopping, errands, transportation and companionship for medical appointments, and respite care for primary care givers. No judgement or proselytizing - we are here to be of service. For information call Scott at 299-6647.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT SPORTS TEAMS and updates on Gay Games 2002, contract TEAM ARIZONA at their website: teamarizona.org

ARE YOU GAY OR BISEXUAL AND UNDER 21 YEARS OF AGE? The Gay Young Men's Project is now looking for volunteers for the project. We need people who want to help create a positive social change for young Gay men as well as reduce the risk for HIV infection. For more information please call 628-7223.

THE MEN'S MASSAGE GROUP meets the 3rd Sunday of each month. It is a good way to meet other men of all ages, safely, and with the art of nurturing touch. There is a fee. You must sign up in advance to participate. Call Marc at 881-4582 for more information or sign up.

COMMUNITY BUSINESS ASSOCIATION (CBA), Tucson's Gay and Lesbian business networking group holds regular meetings the third Thursday of every month. Call 615-6436 for more info.

TUCSON PRIDE, INC. (Formerly Tucson Lesbian and Gay Alliance - TLGA) meets on the second Tuesday at 845 S. Craycroft Road at 6pm. Tucson Pride events: Pride Week, Gay West and OUToberFEST. Inquiries about support groups and individual needs should be directed to Wingspan and other local agencies listed here. For more information call 622-3200 or visit the TPI website at www.tucsonpride.com

LEARN TO BE A LISTENING FRIEND Unique Hospital Volunteer Program teaches listening skills to Volunteers who provide a safe/compassionate environment to at-risk patients. Training every 6 weeks. 694-7063.

TUCSON INTERFAITH HIV/AIDS NETWORK (TIHAN), a coalition of faith communities committed to a compassionate response to HIV/AIDS, provides HIV education in congregational settings, volunteer CareTeams to support HIV+ persons, a referral network of HIV-sensitive clergy, and interfaith services of healing and hope. For more information call 299-6647.

ANONYMOUS HIV COUNSELING AND TESTING is available through the Pima County Health Department at sites throughout Tucson, Very Gay Friendly. For more information or to make an appointment call 791-7676.

GRACE GROUP - CATHOLIC GAY/LESBIAN SUPPORT GROUP meets every 2nd and 4th Monday at 7:30 p.m. in the Madonna Hall at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church, 1436 N. Campbell across from University Hospital. For more info. Call Anabeli at 325-0892

SMART (Self Management And Recovery Training) a free non-12-step self-help alternative for people working to overcome addictive and other emotional problems meets in Tucson Monday thru Thursdays at different locations. For more information about SMART, contact Jennifer at 838-3975.

AZdykes is a new email list for Lesbians living in Arizona. For information mail tyan@theriver.com and request guidelines.

OUTLOUD! Tucson's premiere Local Lesbian and Gay Radio Show, broadcast every Sunday from 7-8 pm on 91.3 FM, Community Radio KXCI.

THEATER / DINNER / ETC! Non-Smoking Lesbian Network meets every 3rd Saturday night of each month. If you'd like to meet women 35+ (flexible) and socialize in a smoke-free environment 888-8010 before 10:00 p.m. The group dines out and attends shows or movies. Now in their 16th year! (2nd in Tucson).

SOUTHERN ARIZONA GENDER ALLIANCE (SAGA). The Southwest's largest transgender and gender-variant advocacy organization. Speakers and panelists available. General meetings monthly on the 1st Mondays at 7pm; Dezert Girlz MTF Support) meets 2nd Mondays at 7pm; Dezert Boyz (FTM Support) meets 3rd Tuesdays at 7pm. Also serving partners, youth, intersex, service providers and allies. Call (520)867-0083 for more info.

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT GROUP FOR ALTERNATIVE LIFESTYLES. Not a dating club. Discreet. Meetings every Monday evening. Call for more info. APEX (Arizona Power Exchange) 602-415-1123. 24-hr multi-choice message including information, calendar and location.

ARIZONA AIDS POLICY ALLIANCE (AZAPA) seeks to educate legislators and citizens about sound AIDS policy. For more information write AZAPA, 6523 N. 14th St., #112, Phoenix, AZ 85014 or call 602-279-4805.

DESERT DOMINION, whose focus is providing information and education for people interested in the BDSM lifestyle, meets monthly for group discussion and social events. Visit our web site http://www.desertdominion.org or call (520)792-6424

SEXUAL ASSAULT SURVIVORS. Starting this February, the Tucson Rape crisis Center will be providing free confidential group services for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender survivors of all manner of sexual assault. Interested persons please call Mirto Stone, MSW, at 327-1171 (if unavailable leave message with phone number.

AAPSP - ARIZONA ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC SAFETY PROFESSIONALS: a confidential organization committed to providing support and networking for all Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual public safety professionals in Arizona. Membership open to Law Enforcement Officers, Firefighters, Probation, Parole and Corrections Officers and civilians working within these agencies. Website: AAPSP.org or e-mail: AAPSP@aol.com or call Dave (520)745-9059 (Tucson) or Kim (602)534-6219 (Phoenix)

GLSEN - Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network meets first Thursday of every month at 4:30pm at Wingspan, 300 E. 6th Street. 743-4800.

TUCSON CATHOLIC GAY & LESBIAN FAMILY MINISTRY. Currently meeting the 4th Monday of every month at SS Peter & Paul Church, Madonna Hall 7:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Fr. Fiedler in attendance every meeting and willing to speak one on one. Reaching out to Parents and Families. For more info call Doc or Barbara 293-6624.

SAA (Sex Addicts Anonymous) has 5 meetings a week in Tucson. People who wish to stop their compulsive sexual behavior, please call (520) 745-0775 for current information.

TUCSON GREATER SOFTBALL ASSOCIATION. Interested? Call Kelly Quinn, (520)906-0669 and or Mona Garcia 256-8728.

LUTHERANS CONCERNED — Tucson chapter for Gay/Lesbian Lutherans meets 3rd Sunday, 6:30 p.m. each month at Santa Cruz Lutheran Church, 6809 S. Cardinal Ave. For information visit www.lctucson.org write: LC, 7014 E. Golf Links Road, PMB 212, Tucson, AZ 85730.

ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS: Confidential individual or group support for Gay, Bisexual or Trans men who are victims/survivors of domestic violence. For more information call 624-0348 (24-hour line)

REVEILLE GAY MEN'S CHORUS rehearses Tuesdays 7-10pm at MCC Church, 3269 N. Mountain. Have any history/ experience singing? Join us!! Call 617-3100 for more info.

"OUT ON THE TRAILS - EQUESTRIAN FUN!"
Rider Club forming. Looking for women and men to ride together on the trails of Southern Arizona. Must have own horse, truck and trailer. For more info write: "Out On The Trails" P.O. Box 44045, Tucson, AZ 85733-4045

LIKE TO READ?
The Guys Book Club (TGBC) invites new members to join them. The group meets once a month, on the 3rd Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at Magpie's Pizza on 4th Avenue to discuss the Gay-themed book read by members the previous month.

THE MAN TO MAN Social/erotic education club is the tantric men's group that offers passionate friendships, fun activities and sex education. Marc 881-4582

GLBT Buddhist meditation group meets Sundays from 9:30 - 11:00 a.m. at the Wingspan annex space, 739 N. 4th Ave. Please be willing to sit for two twenty minute sessions in silence. All are welcome.

LGBT SUPPORT GROUP FOR VICTIM/SURVIVORS OF Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Hate Crimes, Bias Acts, Harassment. Call Lori at Wingspan, 624-1779, ext. 20. Services are free.

NEW TUCSON SOBRIETY SUPPORT GROUP. Secular Organizations for Sobriety - Sundays 8:00 - 9:30 p.m. at 739 N. 4th Avenue. Contacts Rick R. 520-792-2604 or Gary S. 520-323-1969. More information at www.secularhumanism.org/sos/ This group is an alternative to 12-step programs.

MEN'S KINK DISCUSSION GROUP (Open to all who identify as male and are 18 or older) meets 2nd Tuesday of the month, 7:00 p.m. at Desert Dominion, 3843 E. 37th Street, Tucson, AZ. (Map available at www.desertdominion,org) For those who are kinky or just curious. No fee, contributions are appreciated, but not required.

Massachusetts G/L Couples Face Tax Filing Nightmares

BOSTON - As if tax season isn't stressful enough, Gay newlyweds in Massachusetts are pondering what should be a simple question: Do they check "married" or "single" on tax forms for the federal government that doesn't recognize their union?

A landmark court ruling made Massachusetts the first state to sanction same-sex weddings nearly a year ago, but Gays and Lesbians will have to untie the knot, on paper, by declaring themselves "single" to the IRS, reported the Associated Press reported on 365Gay.com.

Or not, in some cases.

"I fully intend to file married joint return, regardless of the fact the we're not supposed to," said Arthur Henneberger, 46, of Springfield. "If they kick it back, fine, we'll go to court."

Ultimately, Gay and Lesbian advocates who pushed to get same-sex marriage legalized in Massachusetts hope to overturn the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

But for now, the Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders aren't looking to pick a fight with the IRS.

"It's not something that should be done quickly or precipitously," GLAD spokeswoman Carisa Cunningham said. "We wouldn't advise anyone to try to do it alone."

Instead, the group is advising the state's estimated 4,900 same-sex couples who married in the past year to file federal returns as if they are single, but to note either through an attached letter or on the return itself, that they were married in Massachusetts.

Seven Gay and Lesbian couples who had been denied marriage licenses across the state sued, leading to the landmark ruling by the state Supreme Judicial Court that legalized same-sex marriage.

A wave of same-sex weddings took place when the ruling took effect May 17, and sparked a social revolution when the mayors of San Francisco and New Paltz, N.Y., issued thousands of Gay marriage licenses, which were later declared invalid.

On Election Day, however, anti-Gay marriage ballot questions in 11 states prevailed. Even in Massachusetts, the Legislature last year gave preliminary approval to a proposed constitutional amendment that would ban Gay marriages but simultaneously legalize civil unions.

Julie and Hilary Goodridge, the lead plaintiffs in the lawsuit, plan to follow GLAD's advice and file separate single returns to the IRS, along with a letter noting their marriage.

"I don't want to do something that's not legal, frankly, whether it's discriminatory or not," Julie Goodridge said. "I consider it every single day, but I won't do it.

"We created a lot of change in this state," she said. "There's a lot of ways that we're incredibly lucky. We were able to get married in our home state. If I have to wait two or three or four more years to file a joint federal tax return, then I'm willing to wait."

IRS spokesman William Cressman said the agency has issued no guidance regarding same-sex couples.

"We're going to follow the Defense of Marriage Act," he said. "We've not given any other guidance."

If the IRS catches same-sex couples filing as "married" on their federal tax returns, "the status would be changed and they would be notified of that," Cressman said.

The IRS would bill the filer for any overdue amount, plus interest, and possibly levy a fine. Cressman said, however, that if people pay up with interest, they likely wouldn't get fined.

Cases vary widely, but there's little financial difference between filing as single or as married, Cressman said.

The IRS won't discuss its audit criteria, but Cressman added: "We are always looking to make sure that tax returns are accurate and filed correctly."

Opponents of Gay marriage say same-sex couples who file federally as married are out of line.

"We need to respect the laws of the land," said Kris Mineau, president of the Massachusetts Family Institute. A same-sex marriage joint return "would be a fraudulent return and they would be subject to prosecution."

Filers are permitted to write comments on their returns, but those comments are ignored when it comes time to calculate tax payments or refunds, Cressman said. He noted that electronic filers don't have that option.

"It's hard enough to be different," Bob Murch said. "I don't understand why the government needs to see me as Gay. I pay my taxes, I go to work, I'm a good person."

Murch and husband Gary Halteman's tax preparer advised them to file "single" federal returns along with a certified letter and copy of their marriage certificate. But the couple, who live in Salem, haven't decided what they'll do.

"If you say you're single, you've actually lied on your taxes," said Murch, 30.

Murch, who like his husband works for a financial investment firm in Boston, says he won't be offended if he has to file as single.

"In any civil rights struggle there's always bumps in the road," he said. "It's just part of what we need to change."

Henneberger, of Springfield, who married his partner of 23 years, Donald Smith, who changed his last name to Henneberger, said he won't consider filing as single.

"We're not second-class citizens. The fact is, we're married," he said.

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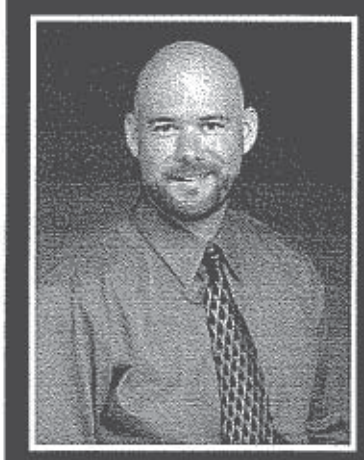
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