

the rest of our world

A Grant to Save Lesbian Lives

WASHINGTON, DC — "Smoking kills more lesbians each year than hate crimes, suicide, and breast cancer combined," said Mautner Project Executive Director Kathleen DeBold. "Tobacco equals death and we are sick to death of losing our sisters so needlessly." A grant resulting from the 1998 multi-state tobacco settlement will help make a difference, she added.

A \$499,000 grant from the American Legacy Foundation's \$21 million Priority Populations program to the Mautner Project is the largest ever awarded for lesbian-specific smoking prevention and cessation.

A major focus of the Mautner Project's enhanced anti-tobacco program will be the development and implementation of a successful, sustainable, nationwide lesbian-focused anti-smoking media campaign. The project will include researching the most effective messages, media, messengers, and identifying and using existing networks for reaching lesbians.

The Mautner Project's mission is to deliver services and support to lesbians with cancer, educate lesbians about cancer, train healthcare providers about the needs and concerns of women who partner with women; and advocate on lesbian health issues nationwide.

Nope, I'm Not Gay

PHILADELPHIA, PA — Following a month of rumors and a New York Post article suggesting his coming out was eminent, the New York Mets' Mike Piazza told the Associated Press that he is straight, but not narrow.

"I'm not gay. I'm heterosexual," the All-Star catcher said. However, he said he thought Major League baseball could handle an openly gay player. "In this day and age, it's irrelevant," he said. "I don't think it would be a problem at all."

The rumors about Piazza started with the New York daily's columnist Neal Travis' speculation that Mets Manager Bobby Valentine had given a pro-gay interview to Details magazine as a "preemptory strike" in preparation for one of his players' coming out.

In the June/July issue of the magazine, Valentine said baseball is "probably ready for an openly gay player. The players are a diverse enough group now that I think they could handle it," he said.

Philadelphia Phillies manager Larry Bowa wasn't as sure. "If it was me, I'd probably wait until my career was over," he told the AP. "I'm sure it would depend on who the player was. If he hits .340, it probably would be easier than if he hits .220."

Canadian Anglicans Vote to Bless Unions

VANCOUVER, BC — For the first time, a Canadian Anglican diocese has decided to formally authorize the blessing of same-sex unions.

On a 215 to 129 vote, delegates to a meeting of the Diocese of New Westminster approved the blessings that will be not be legally binding. According to the Canadian Press, diocesan staff say the ceremonies

will be distinctly unlike the marriage ceremony, a sacrament reserved by the church for heterosexual couples.

"At long last the church has found a way to give us a space to recognize God's blessing in our life," said Steve Schuh, president of Integrity Vancouver, a group representing gay and lesbian Anglicans. "It's been a long time coming."

Representatives from nine churches immediately issued a statement expressing their "dissent from the resolution of the ... Diocese of New Westminster." Some of those churches will be withdrawing their regular financial contribution to the diocese, Rev. Timothy Cooke, a spokesman for the loosely organized coalition told the CP.

Beating Overshadows Maine Pride

PORTLAND, ME — The broad daylight beating of a gay man on one of Portland's busiest streets just two days before the ninth annual Southern Maine Pride Weekend shocked residents and rallied support for the LGBT community.

Jerry Boivin, 57, and his partner, Glen Simmons, told Portland police they were verbally accosted by three people in a pickup truck. When the truck stopped and two men got out Simmons and Boivin ran. Simmons escaped, but Boivin was beaten to the point of requiring stitches over both eyes.

"We are deeply distressed and outraged by this hateful act of violence against a member of our community," said Rick Galena, executive director of the Maine Lesbian Gay Political Alliance. "Our community will not be harassed or intimidated into silence."

Portland Mayor Karen Geraghty encouraged anyone who is upset about the beating to turn out for the Southern Maine Pride festivities. "I ask our citizens, if they feel so compelled, to come out and march or to stand on the sidelines in solidarity," Geraghty told the Portland Press-Herald.

Former Microsoft Employee Claims Harassment

TEL AVIV, ISRAEL — Microsoft faces legal action in Israel due to claims from a man who says he was fired for being gay. The man said he was the victim of abusive jokes and emails after colleagues found out about his sexuality.

Workers at the Herzliya Pituh branch of Microsoft Israel became aware of the plaintiff's sexuality after attending a work conference in the US to which employees were allowed to take along their partners. The man, whose name is being withheld for legal reasons, attended the conference with his partner, and said that work troubles only began after this trip.

Microsoft Israel has countered his claims of harassment, saying that he was dismissed after "repeated complaints about his work" and that his dismissal had nothing at all to do with his sexual orientation.

The plaintiff has taken his case to a local tribunal demanding his reinstatement and financial compensation.

Homo-ism?

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK — According to psychologists at the University of Arkansas, homophobia is a misnomer. Because what we refer to as homophobia is caused by disgust and not fear and anxiety, it is not a true phobia, their study concluded.

To examine the emotions behind homophobia, the group asked 138 people to complete a series of surveys, including: the Index of Attitudes toward Homosexuals (IAH), which measures homophobia; the Sexual Attitude Scale, which charts what people think about human sexuality; the Disgust Emotion Scale, which measures a person's response level in terms of disgust; and the Padua Inventory, which assessed contamination obsessions, reports HealthScout.

Study participants also answered three questions designed to measure levels of fear and anxiety. The findings suggest that social conditions and attitudes, not psychological factors, are the basis for homophobia, the researchers said. In other words, homophobia is closer to racism than it is to a phobia.

Researchers concluded that to treat homophobia society has to look at the social context, such as homes and schools, as opposed to psychological treatment.

Mass. Ballot Measure OK'd

BOSTON — Massachusetts' highest court has upheld the legality of a ballot initiative on a constitutional amendment to make same-sex marriages illegal in that state.

Opponents claimed the amendment defining marriage as a union between one man and one woman illegally infringes on the powers of the state courts. They had also argued that it touched on unrelated topics, in violation of the law governing ballot questions.

"We hope the legislators are paying attention to this important decision," James Lafferty of the Massachusetts Citizens for Marriage told the Associated Press. The organization supports the passage of such an amendment. "Now is the time for the Legislature to act in an honest and straightforward way and allow the people to vote."

Constitutional amendments must be supported by 25 percent of the members of the state's House and Senate in two consecutive legislative sessions to be placed on the ballot. November 2004 is the earliest date voters could weigh in on the question.

"It's unfortunate that the court did not see the broad implications," said Jennifer Levi, a lawyer for Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, which opposes the initiative. "I'm still optimistic that when the people consider the incredibly harmful effects of this initiative they will vote it down."

No "Resbians" for Scooby

HOLLYWOOD — The Scooby Doo movie due for release in July had a kiss between two of its female characters cut from the film after censors deemed it "inappropriate for family viewing."

The scene in question features Daphne kissing long time les-

bian favorite, Velma, according to Sarah Michelle Gellar, who plays Daphne.

"Initially in the soul-swapping scene Velma and Daphne couldn't seem to get their souls back together in the woods, and so the way they found was to kiss and the souls went back into proper alignment," said Gellar, star of Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

A source from the film's production team went on to add, "At the film's first screening the censors were horrified by the kissing scene. They were shocked and said it was highly inappropriate for family viewing. It has now been edited out and will not be seen."

Sleeping Lawyer Case to Retry

HOUSTON - Prosecutors said they intend to retry a gay death row inmate whose conviction was reversed because his lawyer slept through parts of his trial nearly two decades ago.

Calvin Burdine, 49, won the right to a new trial when the U.S. Supreme Court declined to review a lower court's reversal of his conviction. Attorneys for the State of Texas argued that the sleeping lawyer had not affected the outcome of the trial, in which Burdine was found guilty and sentenced to die for fatally stabbing his lover in 1983.

Burdine's court-appointed lawyer allegedly slept for up to 10 minutes at a time during the 1984 trial.

Burdine's lover, W.T. Wise, was found stabbed to death at the Houston trailer they shared. Burdine confessed to police, but later recanted. He contends an accomplice killed Wise, 50.

Not at issue in the Supreme Court ruling was the prosecution's use of anti-gay inflammatory remarks during the sentencing phase of the trial, suggesting that sending a homosexual to (an all-male) prison for life wasn't much of a punishment.

Gay Senior Home

SAN FRANCISCO — The proposed Rainbow Adult Housing complex in San Francisco is drawing complaints from some who say it is city-financed discrimination.

"It's (for) bisexuals and transgendered, who by the way can be heterosexual people, but queer identified. It's gay and lesbian, and it's our friends and family that are accepting of us," Jim Mitulski, executive director of the Rainbow Community, told Fox News.

"That is discrimination and we are subsidizing discrimination," said Republican state Sen. Ray Haynes, adding that gay politicians in Sacramento are finding ways to funnel public dollars into projects that discriminate against straight people.

"If you want to run a business that caters to specific folks, I don't have a problem with that," Haynes said. "But don't come ask the taxpayers to pay for it."

Mitulski said it's perfectly appropriate for taxpayer money to fund what he said would be the nation's first subsidized housing project for gay and lesbian seniors. "The government has made it possible for

distinct communities to preserve their culture and to serve the unique needs of their seniors," Mitulski said. "It's not, to our minds, discrimination. It's us taking responsibility for our own community."

The screening process for applicants to live in the home, which is planned to be built in the next five years, is still undetermined.

"We fine land owners for saying they don't want to rent to homosexuals. Now, we're saying to homosexuals, 'we're not only not going to fine you for engaging in this kind of discrimination, we're going to subsidize you,'" Haynes told Fox.

California Hate Crime

RIVERSIDE, CA — Jeffery Owens, 40, died last month as a result of a stabbing that is being investigated as a hate crime. He and a friend, Michael Bussee were attacked by several people outside a bar.

A deputy district attorney who prosecutes hate crimes said the attack is one of the rare times such an incident has turned deadly.

Owens' partner, Jeff Holland, who saw the attack, said he heard the attackers reference their homosexuality. "They specifically said, 'You want some trouble ... fag, here it is.'"

Dozens of friends and strangers gathered in impromptu vigils in the parking lot where a makeshift memorial of candles, flowers and messages had been placed.

Mayor Ron Loveridge, who was told about the killing by police, said he was "deeply saddened and angry" about the incident and the circumstances surrounding it. He said it was critical the attackers be caught and the incident be condemned in the strongest terms.

Quebec Adopts Civil Unions

QUEBEC CITY, PQ - The Canadian province of Quebec gave legal status in June to civil unions of same-sex couples and allowed gay couples to adopt children.

Quebec joins Nova Scotia in legalizing civil unions of same-sex couples.

The bill adopted by the Quebec legislature gives same-sex couples the same rights and obligations as married heterosexual couples, including adoption and access to artificial insemination.

"I am very proud because there are not that many societies that have reached this level of understanding and acceptance of the equality of all, whatever is the (sexual) orientation," Attorney General Paul Begin told reporters in Quebec City.

"We are celebrating a historic moment today," said cabinet minister Andre Boulerice, who is openly gay.

Begin said public opinion in the liberal-minded province led the government to move forward on the legislation. "It shows that our society is very tolerant of different people," he said. ▼