

# the rest of our world

## NTAC Studies Trans Needs

Washington DC — In an effort to better understand the needs of transgender communities nationwide, the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition earlier this fall announced a series of needs assessment studies around the country. Initiated and run with the help of NTAC members, the goal is unbiased, publishable, scholarly research that can be used by local and national organizations for their lobbying.

"We have too little information on who our communities are and what are their most pressing needs," said Julie Maverick, NTAC vice chair.

Individual groups and agencies in a community will conduct the studies. Researchers will interview the transgender community directly. A standardized survey will be used, which can be amended to address specific problems in each region (e.g., language, drug use).

## Attack on Marriage Equality in Michigan

Lansing, MI — The most conservative member of the Michigan Senate, Alan Cropsey, introduced a measure last month that, if passed, would ask Michigan voters to limit civil marriage rights to heterosexual couples. According to The Triangle Foundation, advocates for marriage equality are calling the Cropsey Amendment the most devastating attack on the institution of marriage in Michigan history. The amendment, if passed, would not only severely limit who can have a civil marriage, but would leave thousands of children without two legal parents. Michigan has already banned civil marriages among same-sex couples and will not honor such them if they are performed in other states.

"Senator Cropsey is being dishonest and disingenuous when he says he is protecting marriage," said Jeffrey Montgomery, Executive Director for Triangle Foundation. "If marriage needs protection, it's from people like Cropsey."

## Russian Chapel Razed After Gay Marriage

Moscow — The Russian Orthodox Church has demolished a chapel where a priest conducted a marriage ceremony between two men. As reported in *The London Telegraph* last month, The Chapel of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God was apparently knocked down after local churchmen determined it had

been "defiled."

Father Vladimir Enert, who performed the marriage of Denis Gogolyev and Mikhail Morozev, was expelled from the church last spring. The three men secretly entered the empty chapel one afternoon. The couple donned gold crowns, an Orthodox wedding tradition, and held hands. Although the priest initially claimed he was tricked, the men said they bribed him to ignore the ban on same-sex marriages.

Local officials reported that the chapel was due for demolition to make room for a new, larger church. However, a spokesman for the local church said the marriage may have "sped up the process."

## Lesbians & Heart Disease Risk

Washington DC — A study of California lesbians and their straight sisters, originally meant to focus on breast cancer, has shown that lesbians may be at higher risk for cardiovascular disease. The study, published in the July/August *Women's Health Issues* journal and reported in the *Washington Blade*, surveyed 324 lesbians age 40 and over, and their biological sisters. Women were asked to take body measurements and to answer questions about age, ethnicity, employment, menopausal status, eating, exercise and smoking habits.

The research revealed that lesbians have a higher body mass index than their straight sisters and the average waist circumference is within an inch of the cutoff point associated with cardiovascular disease. The findings showed that lesbians may more frequently have 'abdominal/visceral adiposity,' a condition in which fat is deposited on internal organs.

Dr. Stephanie Roberts, the lead researcher on the study and a specialist in the study of obesity believes that lesbians' different attitudes about body image and weight may mean they are not getting the message about the risks of being overweight.

## Egyptian Crackdown Continues

New York — A recent roundup in Cairo of men suspected of having sex with men, and the continued imprisonment of men already convicted, show that Egypt's crackdown on homosexuals continues unabated. Human Rights Watch reported that sixty-two men were reportedly rounded up in August by Cairo

police, who used police wagons to block a Nile bridge reputed to be a meeting place for men who have sex with men, then arrested men along the bridge.

The men were held for three days in a central Cairo police station where, according to a defense lawyer, they were verbally abused. They were freed on bail after being charged with the "habitual practice of debauchery," the provision under Egypt's penal code used to legitimize arrests for homosexual conduct. The men face up to three years' imprisonment if found guilty at trial.

## Military Court Hears Sodomy Case

Washington DC — The military's highest court heard arguments early last month in the case of *United States v. Marcum*. Technical Sergeant Eric Marcum was convicted of consensual sodomy with a fellow airman of the same sex in the privacy of Marcum's home. Counsel for the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network argued that the U.S. Supreme Court's *Lawrence vs. Texas* decision overturning state sodomy laws also invalidates the military's sodomy law, Article 125.

SLDN, the ACLU, and Lambda Legal submitted an amicus brief, joined by nine senior retired military members. Another amicus brief was filed by nine military sociologists, disputing the military's assertion that consensual sodomy undermines unit cohesion or military effectiveness.

## Kaiser Grants a Kidney

Denver — Kaiser Permanente has reconsidered its initial rejection of a kidney transplant for a Denver-area man with HIV and will now cover the procedure. Lambda Legal had filed a formal appeal with Kaiser, asking the HMO to reverse its denial.

John Carl, 53, has had HIV for 15 years and began experiencing kidney failure two years ago. He receives dialysis three times each week. He has an undetectable viral load and no opportunistic infections. When Carl requested coverage for a kidney transplant, Kaiser denied his request, "due to its experimental status and non-favorable outcomes."

A recent study of 45 liver and kidney transplant recipients with HIV on anti-retroviral medications concluded, "There is no ethical justification for withholding transplantation from this population."

Carl has been accepted by

the United Network for Organ Sharing and is awaiting a suitable kidney.

## Gay Sportswriter Comes Out

Boston — A *Boston Herald* sportswriter came out in a column early last month, saying he could no longer tolerate the "unabashed homophobia" in professional sports. "I just got to the point where I didn't want to be silent anymore," Ed Gray, a 55-year-old reporter who has worked at the *Herald* for about two decades, said in an interview with the Associated Press.

Gray came out in response to recent, widely published homophobic comments by professional sports athletes that went unsanctioned by league authorities.

The column, headlined "Out and Proud," was displayed prominently on the back page of the tabloid paper. "We support Eddie, and we just thought it was the right thing to do to give him the platform to express his views," said sports editor Mark Torpey.

## Fred Phelps' Hate Monument

Casper, WY — Rev. Fred Phelps plans to erect a so-called "monument" to the hate-crime death of Matthew Shepard in Casper, Wyoming, says a press release from the Human Rights Campaign and GLAAD.

According to Phelps' letter to the Casper City Council, the monument would include a bronze plaque with Shepard's image and the words "Matthew Shepard, Entered Hell October 12, 1998, at age 21 In Defiance of God's Warning." Because of a 10th Circuit Court ruling last year, the city may have to display the message or else remove another statue displaying the Ten Commandments.

"Matthew was killed by men who believed that hating people because they are different is something to be glorified, the same form of bigotry and intolerance fueling Phelps," said Elizabeth Birch, HRC's executive director.

Phelps, a disbarred lawyer, told *The Salt Lake Tribune* that he would buy private property in the city to display the monument or sue the city.

## Queers Advise Het Couples

New York — During "Marriage Protection Week" last month,

Lambda Legal launched "Queer Eye for the Straight Couple," a forum for heterosexual, married couples to get relationship advice from lesbian and gay couples in long-term relationships.

"Same-sex couples face all of the same challenges and joys that heterosexual couples do — but we're left navigating through them without the [legal] protections marriage provides," said Michael Adams, Director of Education at Lambda Legal.

"With 'Queer Eye for the Straight Couple,' we've brought together some fantastic lesbian and gay couples to lend their relationship experience to their heterosexual peers."

The lesbian and gay couples providing advice included, among others, Col. Margarethe Cammermeyer and Diane Divelbess, together 15 years; Brenda and Wanda Henson, together 19 years and founders of Camp Sister Spirit in Overt, Mississippi; and Toby Johnson and Kip Dollar, together 20 years, the first gay couple to register as domestic partners in Texas.

The "Queer Eye Couples" were joined by a nationally renowned relationship expert.

## Rosie Rivets Crowd With Pledge

Los Angeles — Rosie O'Donnell pledged \$100,000 in support of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and encouraged other people of means to match her gift. At the 14th Annual NGLTF Leadership Awards earlier this fall, Matt Foreman, NGLTF executive director, thanked the honorees (transgender activist Calpernia Addams, writer/producer David Lee, Kelli and Rosie O'Donnell, and LA City Councilman Antonio Villaraigosa) for the difference they've made in the lives of millions of people and told of the threat the LGBT community was facing from the right wing.

"What does it take to raise a million dollars? Ten millionaires, who will never know the money is missing, to stand up and give \$100,000 tonight in honor of Calpernia, David and Antonio, I'm going to give the first \$100,000 and ask if there are nine other people who can, please do it," Rosie asked. ▼