

the rest of our world

Denver Protects Trans Students

Denver – The Denver public school system recently amended their policy, stating that transgender and gender non-conforming students will be protected under policies unanimously adopted by the school board at its January meeting. As announced by the National Transgender Advocacy Coalition, the school board voted to add the term “gender identity” to other categories protected under the policy that declares “Equal Educational Opportunities” for students.

“We were able to convince the school board that since the Denver City Council had passed an ordinance that included transgender people in anti-discrimination policies in 2001, transgender students should not ... lose that protection once they walk through the doors of their schools,” said local transgender activist Zia Klamm.

“Transgender student safety in schools is a critical problem across the nation – one that virtually no district in the country will recognize, much less address,” said Vanessa Edwards Foster, the chair of the NTAC. “Far too often, students whose gender doesn’t conform are mercilessly harassed, threatened and assaulted, resulting in a pandemic drop-out rate among transgenders.

Utah Theaters Dump Gay Film

Park City, Utah – After reportedly receiving threats of intimidation from conservative religious groups, Madstone Theaters has cancelled its Salt Lake City engagement of TLA Releasing’s newest film, *Latter Days*, which tells the story of a young closeted Mormon who falls in love with another man while serving his missionary assignment in Los Angeles.

“We are extremely upset that *Latter Days* currently has no venue to premiere in Salt Lake City,” says Raymond Murray, President of TLA Releasing. “Very rarely is a story like this presented in such an entertaining, romantic, funny and poignant manner.”

Madstone’s president, Thomas Gruenberg, confirmed the threats in a phone interview but denied that they were the cause of the cancellation. Gruenberg claimed that *Latter Days* failed to meet the company’s standards of “artistic quality and integrity,” and that the film failed to tell a story that was sufficiently “compelling.” When asked if the

decision meant the cancellation of *Latter Days* at Madstone Theaters across the country, Gruenberg stated that this decision was just for Salt Lake City. The film has received six Audience Awards, including honors at Los Angeles’ Outfest and the Philadelphia International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival.

Pride Goers Wooed by DNC

Washington, DC – The Democratic National Committee, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Caucus of the College Democrats of America and GLBT youth community leaders joined forces last month to launch “Pride at the Polls.” This program is designed to educate, register, and mobilize the GLBT community to help elect a Democratic president and Democrats at all levels.

The program will be centered on GLBT pride season. Pride festivals, attracting hundreds of thousands of GLBT-receptive voters each year, have proven to be one of the most effective venues to reach GLBT voters.

The goals of the program are to establish a Democratic Party presence at as many Pride events as is possible, increase the visibility of the GLBT community within the Democratic Party, and give a diverse group of community leaders an opportunity to engage in a process that will help support the election of a Democratic president.

AIDS Vaccine Tested in Germany

AIDS Vaccine Tested In Germany Berlin – German scientists announced late last month the beginning of human trial on a new HIV vaccine. Known as tgAAC09, the vaccine targets HIV subtype C, prevalent in South Africa, India and China, and responsible for a large part of the world’s HIV infections. The vaccine was developed by Seattle-based Targeted Genetics Corp. and the Columbus Children’s Research Institute.

As reported by 365gay.com, the yearlong test program will involve up to 50 volunteers at clinics in Bonn and Hamburg, and at 2 hospitals. First-phase testing will determine the vaccine’s safety and whether it produces immune responses. If successful, second and third phases of testing would be carried out in developing countries.

The program is backed by the New York-based International

AIDS Vaccine Initiative which estimates that some 30 HIV vaccine tests already are under way worldwide.

Gay Rights Down Under

Hobart, Tasmania, Australia – Tasmania has become the first state in Australia to accept same-sex unions, giving gay and lesbian partnerships equal status to married couples under state law. Under the Relationships Act, as of January 2, 2004, Tasmanian residents can legally register their same-sex union with the state’s department of Births, Deaths and Marriages.

The state’s progressive laws and positive community attitudes towards same-sex couples has led Tasmania to become a top vacation destination for gay and lesbian travelers.

Help for Gay Military Families

Arlington, VA – The non-profit Military Community Services Network organization, announced its official launch in late January, as the first-ever social support structure for gay troops and their families. Because of the “Don’t Ask / Don’t Tell” policy, gay soldiers and their partners are denied full access to critical mental health and medical services. MCSN’s primary goal is to get LGBT troops the help they need when they are denied services by the military.

Existing organizations working on the gays-in-the-military issue applauded MCSN’s creation and pledged their support.

Retired Navy Captain and Vietnam Veteran Dr. Michael Rankin applauded the creation of MCSN, stating, “Our gay and lesbian troops are being shot at in Iraq and Afghanistan, while their families back home are being ignored by the Pentagon. Most gay vets are unaware of the current resources available to them through the Department of Veterans Affairs medical centers. MCSN will help to educate Vets about how they can safely utilize existing resources.”

Frank Declines BSA Request

Washington, DC – In late January, Congressman Barney Frank made public his response to a Boy Scouts of America request for Frank’s support. Frank expressed his surprise that the organization sought his endorsement, noting that the Boy Scouts have characterized gay men as

unfit.

Frank’s response stated: “Where there is much about what the Boy Scouts do that I admire and I am a former Scout myself, I was under the impression that you considered people like myself to be unworthy of association with the Boy Scouts. I am a gay man, which according to your policy as I read it in various court decisions, means that I am neither “morally straight” nor “clean.” So I will not be agreeing to any of the three drafts you sent me, because it seems to me hypocritical of you to ask me to sign it, and even more hypocritical for me to do so.”

The letter to Congressman Frank, from Roy Williams, Chief Scout Executive of the Boy Scouts of America, announced a national service initiative called Good Turn for America. “We would be honored if you would lend your support to this important effort.” The letter continued, “together, we will continue to positively influence the lives of young people throughout the nation.”

Science at Risk

Washington, DC – The National Transgender Advocacy Coalition strongly denounced a White House attempt to change policy regarding federally funded scientific research. In a move seen as another attack on scientific freedom, the Office of Management and Budget is proposing new peer review requirements for all but a few government agencies. This could politicize the proven scientific practice of independent peer review.

The OMB plan would impose new conflict-of-interest rules for peer review possibly favoring participation by industry-paid scientists over independent scientists who had been awarded government research grants. OMB also proposed that peer reviewers may be politically appointed individuals or parties. This has the potential to make a scientific process vulnerable to manipulation.

“This heavy-handed intimidation of scientific research is preposterous,” fumed NTAC Chair Vanessa Edwards Foster. NTAC joined with such scientific organizations as the National Academies of Science, the American Public Health Association, and environmental, consumer and public-interest groups in opposing OMB’s proposal.

Black LGBT Pride Guide

Washington, DC – The 2004 Black Pride Resource Guide will be

launched this month to serve as the ultimate vehicle to reach thousands of African-American LGBT consumers. Each year, approximately 200,000 members of the Black LGBT community converge on Black Pride events in cities throughout the country. Cities such as Washington, Los Angeles, Houston, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and Chicago play host to these annual celebrations of music, arts, literature, and health within this diverse segment of the African-American community. Similar events are held in smaller cities including Miami, Boston, Nashville, Indianapolis, and Baltimore. The Guide will serve as the primary source for all Black Gay Pride events throughout the year.

The publishers expect to distribute 20,000 copies free of charge to a projected readership of 100,000 at night clubs, bookstores, health clubs, community-based organizations, and other locations frequented by members of the Black LGBT community throughout the country.

UN Orientation Debate

New York – The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, along with a global coalition of non-governmental organizations, last month issued a call to LGBT organizations and allies to mobilize in support of the UN Commission on Human Rights Resolution on Sexual Orientation and Human Rights.

The resolution is the first one in the history of the United Nations that specifically and unambiguously identifies abuses on the basis of sexual orientation as human rights violations. It calls all governments to promote and protect the human rights of people, regardless of their sexual orientation. The IGLHRC called for its allies to join in mobilizing support for the passage of this resolution which will be considered at the 60th session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Key countries targeted by IGLHRC include South Africa, India, Costa Rica and the United States.

The Brazilian delegation to the Commission introduced this resolution in 2003. After prolonged debate, the Commission voted to postpone further discussion. Beginning March 15, 53 nations will sit in Geneva to publicly declare if they believe that all people should be protected from dis- >>>