

the rest of our world

White Ribbon for Equality

Marathon, FL — The Marathon City Commission passed two resolutions last month supporting equality for all. The group voted to support the concept of same-sex marriage and called upon all public and private entities to give legal recognition to such marriages. At the same time, they kicked off The White Ribbon Campaign for Equality, hoping it will go national, as reported in the *Florida Keys Keynoter*.

The campaign is meant to bring out the discrepancy between simultaneously extolling freedom and banning gay marriage. I think, in a perverted way, President Bush has given us a gift, said Michael Kilgore, a leader of the drive. Before, the issues of gay rights and gay marriages were marginal. By putting us in the forefront like this, it creates a national discussion.

Third Province Gets Gay Marriage

Toronto — Quebec's Court of Appeal upheld a lower-court ruling last month that the traditional definition of marriage is discriminatory and unjustified. As reported in the *Associated Press*, the plaintiffs were two men who had been together 31 years. Last June, same-sex marriages were declared legal by provincial courts in Ontario and British Columbia.

The three provinces together represent more than half of Canada's 32 million people. Despite the rulings, polls show Canadians are about evenly split in favor and against legalizing gay marriage.

Cheney's Novel Helps Queers

St. Louis, MO — Twenty-three years ago, Second Lady Lynne Cheney wrote a steamy 19th century novel, complete with a lesbian subplot, prostitution, and explicit depiction of female sexuality. Penguin Group recently announced a reprint of *Sisters*, the book Cheney probably wishes would disappear from the shelves.

Mrs. Cheney is a part of the Bush administration which strongly advocates abstinence-based sex education and favors an anti-gay constitutional amendment.

Left Bank Books, a lesbian-owned St. Louis independent bookstore, will not only stock the book but will be giving 10 percent of sales to the National Gay and

Lesbian Task Force's scholarship fund.

Sisters received an overall rating of 2 of 5 stars by Amazon.com readers.

Are We Surprised?

Dayton, TN — In the same county that held the Scopes Monkey Trial, the 1925 trial which resulted in the conviction of a public high school teacher for teaching evolution, County Commissioners attempted to get state approval so the county could charge homosexuals with crimes against nature. Within hours of the vote late last month, Rhea was inundated with reporters and television crews. Two days later, the county retreated from that position, according to *365gay.com*.

Initially, Commissioner J.C. Fugate, who proposed the measure, made it clear that he wanted to keep homosexuals out of here. And his fellow commissioners agreed, voting unanimously to direct the county attorney to find the best way to enact a local law banning gays from living in Rhea County. Within two days, the commissioners hastily backpeddled, claiming that they had misunderstood the motion.

A Word from Her Sponsor

New York City — Rosie Jones, a 13-time LPGA winner, came out late last month after Olivia Cruises asked her to accept their sponsorship in exchange for coming out publicly.

It's a bit of a curiosity, because I've never been in the closet, Jones wrote in an op-ed piece for *The New York Times*. I came out to my family when I was 19, and my friends and associates on the Tour are all aware that I am gay. Jones has been on the tour for 22 years and when she turned to family, business associates, and LPGA staff to talk this over, she was encouraged to go forward.

One thing I love about golf is that it brings people together. A 250-yard drive down the middle of the fairway or a long putt for birdie doesn't have a political party, a race or a sexual orientation, she continued. I'm optimistic that my fans will see me as the same competitive, hard-working Rosie I've always been and respect this new aspect of my life as I respect their diversity.

Give Yourself a Hand!

San Francisco, CA — Good Vibrations, the women-owned and run sex-toy, book, and video store,

will be celebrating the 8th annual National Masturbation Month in May. Feel the love — your own, that is — and join the nationwide festivities honoring the gratifying under-appreciated activity of solo pleasure.

Masturbation is an elemental component of healthy, happy sexuality for so many people, says author and sex educator Dr. Carol Queen. The popularity of National Masturbation Month reflects the Good Vibrations motto: if you want something done right, do it yourself!

Over the years thousands of folks have participated in this event. Since the inception of this unique holiday, Good Vibrations has raised and donated over \$25,000 to various organizations dedicated to promoting safer sex, HIV prevention and AIDS education and awareness. This year, the Sperm Bank of California will be joining Good Vibrations in promoting the one foolproof method of safe sex.

Playboy Bunny Likes Girls

New York — *Playboy's* Miss November, 1992 is out of the closet and proud to be *Playboy's* first lesbian playmate. According to *The New York Post*, Stephanie Adams, who has written seven books on metaphysics and spiritual awareness, recently broke up with her girlfriend and has been seen around New York with rock icon Joan Jett, lesbian comedian Marga Gomez and a few ladies featured in *Playboy's* Girls Of Bada Bing from the hit TV show *The Sopranos*.

Chrissy Gephardt Joins Victory Fund

Washington DC — The Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund and Leadership Institute, an organization that recruits, trains and supports openly gay and lesbian candidates for office, last month announced the election of Chrissy Gephardt to the Victory Fund board. The Atlanta board meeting and fundraiser also generated \$30,000 for LGBT candidates.

Gephardt recently worked as the LGBT Outreach Director for the Dick Gephardt for President 2004 campaign. Her focus in the campaign was on increasing voter participation within the LGBT community and giving issues of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered equality a prominent place in the 2004 campaign.

Currently, there are 266 openly LGBT Americans in office, a 500 percent increase since the founding of Victory Fund in 1991 but a small number compared to the over

511,000 elective offices that make up the nation's federal, state and local governments. Thirteen states have no openly gay officeholders serving at any level of government.

Islamic Uproar Over UN DP Benefits

New York City — Secretary General Kofi Annan faced an anti-gay rights uproar from Islamic countries at the United Nations over his decision to extend benefits to the same-sex partners of UN staff. As reported on *Queerday.com*, the 56-nation Organization of the Islamic Conference lambasted Annan's order, which went into effect last month, saying only member states had the right to make such a move. Annan's limited order allows domestic partners to receive benefits as long as the UN employee's country of origin legally recognizes the relationship. A UN spokesman said only a handful of staff have applied so far.

Rocking Against AIDS

Fort Lauderdale, FL — Rhythms for Health is working to get people at risk for AIDS to be tested, in exchange for concert tickets. This organization offers HIV screening at places like amusement parks, church parking lots, neighborhood fairs, and hip-hop concerts to reach people who might not otherwise be tested.

According to the CDC, African Americans make up only 12 percent of the population, but roughly 54 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases. To reduce these numbers, the Black AIDS Institute, a national education group, began sponsoring Rhythms for Health. In Florida last month, anyone who wanted to attend the Ladies First concert, featuring Grammy winners Beyoncé, Alicia Keys, and Missy Elliott, just had to brush a cotton swab around in their mouths and answer some personal questions about sex to be entered in a ticket lottery.

Several programs nationwide have taken HIV testing to the people, according to the *New York Times* report. At some locations, test results are available in 20 minutes. Tests are conducted by health officials, and those tested must give their names, addresses and telephone numbers so health workers can follow up if the result is positive. Fighting HIV, an LA testing program, has helped as many as 12,000 blacks get tested. Of those, roughly 400 tested positive for HIV. The youngest was a 14-year-old girl and the oldest a 68-year-old woman.

Gay Bishop Welcomed

Concord, NH — Gene Robinson, the first openly gay man to be elected as a bishop in the Episcopal Church, and the worldwide Anglican Communion, was welcomed last month in a ceremony that represented the final step of his ascension from priest to bishop. The investiture ceremony transferred the diocese to Robinson, after several months of shared power with the retiring bishop. The crowd of 600 parishioners erupted with whistles, shouts, and a standing ovation, according to the *Associated Press*.

Several Anglican bishops abroad have said they will no longer associate with the Episcopal Church USA because it approved Robinson's election. A dozen conservative bishops in the US are organizing an alternative network of diocese and parishes that will not recognize Bishop Robinson.

Robinson has lived with his partner, Mark Andrew, for 15 years.

Schoolboard: You Can't Make Me

Westminster, CA — The Westminster School District, in Orange County, is refusing to recognize a state law that bans discrimination on the basis of sexuality even though it could lose millions of dollars in state and federal funding.

As reported by *365gay.com*, state law requires all California school districts to have a written anti-discrimination policy that includes protections for all LGBT students.

In meetings last month, three trustees voted not to amend the district's code of conduct to cover trans students because the trustees are Christians. I might take a lot of heat for it today, but the rewards are going to be great in heaven, said Judy Ahrens, one of the three.

Refusing to change the policy could require state and federal agencies to withhold up to \$40 million for the district's 17 schools — two-thirds of its budget.

Westminster is the only district in the state that has hesitated to update its anti-discrimination policies, said Gary Page of the state Education Department. ▼

Compiled by Assistant Editor Susan McMillan