

the rest of our world

Running for Office

Washington, DC – In a reality TV twist, Chrissy Gephardt, daughter of Congressman and former presidential candidate Richard Gephardt (D-MO), won a slot on Showtime's new political reality series "The American Candidate" and announced her candidacy as her first challenge on June 8.

The show attempts to identify through a series of competitions one individual from a select few who has the qualifications and qualities to be the "American Candidate."

Chrissy Gephardt served as the national LGBT outreach director on her father's presidential campaign until January 2004.

Over the course of 10 weeks, contestants will face a series of challenges designed to test their presidential mettle and to show viewers what really goes on in the making of a presidential candidate. The final episode will be a showdown between the remaining two candidates, and one person will emerge victorious – the "American Candidate."

J-FLAG Founder Murdered

New York – Brian Williamson, an advocate for LGBT rights in Jamaica, was brutally murdered on June 9, 2004. Amnesty International urged that a thorough investigation be conducted into his death.

"Brian Williamson was a courageous individual prepared to speak out for one of the most marginalized and persecuted communities in Jamaica: the gay and lesbian community," stated Michael Heflin, Director of Amnesty International USA's (AIUSA) OUTFront program on LGBT human rights.

The police have initially concluded that the motive for the murder was robbery due to the reported removal from his home of a safe.

"There remains a strong possibility that Brian Williamson's profile as a gay man and advocate of homosexual rights made him a target for those with homophobic views," explained Heflin.

Brian Williamson was a founder member of the Jamaican Forum for Lesbians All-sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG), and one of the few individuals prepared to speak publicly about matters concerning the homosexual community.

Philippines Censors Lesbian TV Shows

New York – According to a press release from Human Rights Watch, threats made by a Philippine censorship Board's top official against broadcasts showing lesbian relation-

ships encourage discrimination and are a blatant assault on freedom of expression.

In May a government official sent a memorandum to the producers of several television shows: "Lesbian and homosexual relationships are an abnormality of human nature. To show such kind of abnormality/aberration on prime-time TV programs gives the impression that the network is encouraging lesbian and homosexual relationships."

"The Philippine government's power to censor and ban films and broadcasts it deems unacceptable is a relic of dictatorship that should finally be scrapped," said Scott Long, director of Human Rights Watch's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Project. "Using Marcos-era censorship powers against images of lesbian life means condemning part of the population not just to inequality, but to invisibility."

Help for Trans Youth

New York – In a publication released last month by Lambda Legal and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition, transgender youth have a new resource to help them educate others about their reality.

The 25-page booklet, "Bending the Mold," offers suggestions for making schools safer, helps teens address making bathrooms and locker rooms more accessible and identifies ways to raise the level of discussion about transgender issues in school.

"Young people are identifying as transgender and beginning to transition earlier, and they need the tools to help them educate their parents, peers and schools," said Michael Adams, Director of Education and Public Affairs at Lambda Legal.

Pediatrician Offers Guidelines

Burlington, VT – A newly revised clinical report titled "Sexual Orientation and Adolescents" appeared in the June issue of the American Academy of Pediatrics' (AAP) peer-reviewed journal *Pediatrics*. The report was co-authored by Barbara Frankowski, M.D., professor of pediatrics at the University of Vermont.

According to the AAP, approximately five percent of young people consider themselves lesbian, gay or bisexual, and many adolescents know a friend, classmate, neighbor or relative who is nonheterosexual. The new report cautions that sexual orientation is not synonymous with sexual activity or sexual behavior.

Frankowski and her colleagues recommend that pediatricians

be aware that one stark difference between non-heterosexual and heterosexual adolescents: the suicide rate.

According to the report, studies show that non-heterosexual youth are two to seven times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. They are also two to four times more likely to be threatened with a weapon at school, and are more likely to engage in the use of alcohol, marijuana and cocaine. These behaviors are not attributable to homosexuality per se, but are associated with societal stigmatization and the lack of support offered to non-heterosexual youths.

"Gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens often have extra challenges like harassment at school, anger from parents, and misunderstanding in their community," says Frankowski. "The pediatrician's office should be one safe place for these youth to come with their concerns."

Sneak Attack

Washington DC – According to an "action alert" sent out by the American Civil Liberties Union, a bill proposed by Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum constitutes a "sneak attack" on the civil rights and health care access of anyone not considered in the "mainstream."

No employee should be allowed to discriminate against or harass their coworkers, customers, or clients because they can claim a religious reason for it. And certainly no police officer, health care worker or counselor should be allowed to jeopardize someone's health or safety by claiming a religious reason.

But the Workplace Religious Freedom Act (S. 893) introduced by Santorum could bolster the claims of employees that they do not have to comply with state and local civil rights laws that protect against sexual orientation or marital status discrimination. It could gut employers' nondiscrimination policies that go beyond the minimum that federal law requires, allowing employees to claim that their religion requires them to flout these policies.

Got Balls?

Washington, DC – The Federal Triangles Soccer Club (FTSC), Washington, DC's gay and lesbian soccer club, are staging their annual Rehoboth Beach Classic soccer tournament from July 2 – 4, 2004 in Delaware.

Organizers expect anywhere from 50 to 70 players to participate in the tournament, which will be held at the fields of Rehoboth Beach

Elementary School. Currently in its sixth year, the tournament is expected to draw players not only from Mid-Atlantic cities like DC, Baltimore, and Philadelphia, but also from New York, Boston, Atlanta, and San Francisco, as well.

"If you like playing soccer and like going to the beach then you definitely need to be here," said FTSC board member Michael Prankoff.

The co-ed tournament features individual rather than team registration and players are placed together based on position and skill level. Trophies go to the winning squad, as well as to the top goalie, the top goal scorer, and to the winner of a penalty kick contest.

"This tournament will be a complete blast," promises FTSC Vice President Wendy Chun-Hoon. To register online for the tournament, and for more details, including the schedule of events, visit <http://www.federaltriangles.org/main/tournaments.html>.

Anti-Gay Aussie Wedgie

Sydney – In Australia, Liberal Party Prime Minister John Howard has taken a page from George W. Bush re-election playbook by proposing an amendment to ban same-sex marriage, says a report on the website SFGate.

The report quoted the French publication *Le Monde* to say that Howard has made it clear he plans "to amend [Australia's] federal marriage law in order to prohibit any unions between persons of the same sex. The Liberal leader also doesn't want homosexual ... couples to be able to adopt children from overseas."

To the disappointment of gay activists, Australia's opposition Labor Party "indicated [that it] would support the legislation" because, at least in draft form, it has been "sweetened" by a clause that would allow same-sex partners to legally designate each other as beneficiaries in wills and other legal documents.

The article suggests that Howard is using the issue as a wedge in an expected election this fall to distract attention and divert opposition to Howard's unpopular policies regarding involvement in Iraq.

Kansas Court Reviews Limon

Kansas City – In June, the Kansas Supreme Court agreed to hear an appeal on behalf of Matthew Limon, the young man who was sentenced to 17 years in prison for an act of consensual oral sex with another male teenager, says a report on PlanetOut.

Limon's lawsuit had reached the U.S. Supreme Court. But the nine justices sent the Limon case back to

the Kansas Court of Appeals for reconsideration last summer, in view of their decision in *Lawrence v. Texas*.

The appellate court ignored the Lawrence precedent, ruling that the state of Kansas could set draconian limits on underage gay sex. Under Kansas law, no one under 19 has the legal right to have sex. A statute called the Romeo-and-Juliet law sets a maximum sentence of about a year in prison for straight kids who are caught fooling around with their peers.

There's hope because the composition of the seven-member high court has changed dramatically with the appointment of three new justices last year by Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

Rainbow Grannies Pride

Despite death threats and hateful protests, Carrie and Elisia Ross-Stone, the lesbian grandmas who are riding bicycles on the Rainbow Ride Across America, persevere.

The Ross-Stones are lesbian civil rights activists and grandmothers to Jareth, age 2. They are riding their bicycles from San Francisco to New York City to raise awareness and get support for equal civil marriage rights.

They have met with many supporters of LGBT equality and have faced a few foes. They met with elected officials in several cities, including the Mayor of Salt Lake City, Utah who spoke out in support of equal civil marriage rights. They have met and rallied with progressive groups from African American, Latino, Native American, Feminist, and Youth organizations.

The pair even paid a visit to the office of Marilyn Musgrave, the sponsor of the mean-spirited Federal Marriage Amendment.

The Rocky Mountains proved a formidable climb for the 50-year-old women who see the literal ups and downs as symbolic of the struggle for LGBT equality. In addition to their physical aches and pains, Carrie and Elisia have also been the targets of death threats and insults from hate-mongers.

The Grannies are expected to reach New York City on July 10. ▼

Compiled this month by Euan Bear.