

the rest of our world

Dress Code

Washington, DC – The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition (GenderPAC) applauded the release of a new guide by the National School Boards Association (NSBA) giving school administrators practical advice on dealing with students' gender identity and expression, including dress guidelines.

The guide, "Dealing with Legal Matters Surrounding Students' Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity," advises that there is no legal justification for a restriction on boys wearing dresses to school if doing so does not cause major disruption. The guide also recommends that schools with sex-specific dress codes make an exception for transgender students.

"Youth should be able to be themselves, without fearing that they'll be attacked by a fellow student, or disciplined by school administrators. There's no age limit for the right to personal expression," said Kristin Effland, GenderPAC Youth Program Coordinator.

Recent research has shown that 80 percent of students that are harassed with gender-based taunts identify as heterosexual.

There Goes the Neighborhood

Westfield, MA – According to a story in a western Massachusetts newspaper, the court ruling allowing same-sex marriages in Massachusetts is prompting some members of the local Russian community to move out of the state.

While some families say they are moving for a warmer climate and lower real estate prices, others say that the Goodridge ruling recognizing gay and lesbian marriages is a big factor.

The report indicated that at least 10 Pentecostal families, mostly members of the Russian Pentecostal Hope Church, left Greater Springfield this month, and at least another six plan to join them in the future.

Don't Ask, Just Sue

Washington, DC – The Log Cabin Republicans, the nation's largest gay GOP group, last month sued Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and the U.S. government over the military's ban on openly gay and lesbian personnel, reports PlanetOut.com. The suit was filed in the U.S. Federal District Court for the Central District of California on behalf of the gay Republican organization's gay and lesbian members currently serving in the military.

"A lawsuit should not be necessary when our allies in the war on terror, including Great Britain, Israel and Australia, all allow gays and lesbians to serve openly and honestly,"

said Log Cabin Republicans Executive Director Patrick Guerriero in a prepared statement.

Gay Basher Executed

Austin, TX – The ringleader of a gay-bashing group was executed by lethal injection last month after spending more than a decade on Texas' death row.

PlanetOut Network reported that Donald Aldrich, 39, convicted of murder, was the instigator of a number of robberies and assaults on gay men in the fall of 1993 in Tyler, Texas.

Aldrich and two teens kidnapped 23-year-old medical clerk Nicholas West from a park known as a hangout for gay men. West was taken to a clay pit outside of town, where he was robbed and repeatedly shot. West's body was discovered three days after friends grew worried by his absence.

Can't We All Swim Along?

Berlin, Germany – Berliners looking to host a major international LGBT sports competition are hoping to get rival international gay sporting organizations to reconcile. The sporting group Games Berlin e.V. invited the Federation of Gay Games (FGG) and the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association (GLISA) to negotiate a joint event in 2009 or 2010. The city's openly gay mayor, Klaus Wowereit, has agreed to facilitate the negotiations.

Sandals Ends Gay Ban

Bahamas – According to a press release and a *USA Today* story, a resort chain that has been ranked at "rock bottom" as a gay destination for over a decade because of its exclusion of gay couples has now changed its policy. Sandals Resorts has quietly lifted the ban on same-sex couples at its couples-only resorts. The "rock bottom" ranking had been bestowed by the gay travel magazine *Out & About*, whose editor characterized the former policy as "the most blatant form of discrimination."

More Data on Anti-Gay Violence

New York – The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) last month released its *2003 Supplement* to its report on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence.

The programs participating in the report documented 6,523 cases of domestic violence, a 13 percent increase over 2002. The cases included six domestic violence-related deaths.

NCAVP representatives attributed the higher numbers to increased program capacity, outreach, and expansion of services at some of agencies. SafeSpace in Burlington,

Vermont was one of nearly a dozen local and regional agencies that participated in compiling data.

Of the victims in the 6,523 cases documented by NCAVP, 44 percent were male and 36 percent were female. Two percent of victims identified as transgender.

Strike It Down

Lincoln, NE – The American Civil Liberties Union and Lambda Legal filed their opening trial brief last month in federal court urging it to strike down a Nebraska constitutional amendment that bars the state and cities from ever granting any type of legal recognition for same-sex couples and prevents groups from advocating for such rights.

"Nebraska's Section 29 treats loving, committed same-sex couples like strangers – and blocks them from even advocating for basic protections for their families," said David Buckel, senior staff attorney at Lambda Legal. "This lawsuit [is] seeking a level playing field so that all Nebraskans are full and equal citizens, regardless of whether they're gay or straight."

The brief asks the court to strike down Section 29 as a violation of the U.S. Constitution's guarantee of equal protection.

A D.C. Outing

Washington, DC – The *Washington Blade* has reported extensively on the outing campaign of Washington gay activist Michael Rogers. Last month, reporter Lou Chibarro identified two more high level GOP officials who were outed on Rogers' website, Blogactive.com. One of the men is Jay Banning, the Republican National Committee's chief financial officer and director of administration. The other is Daniel Gurley, the RNC's national field director and deputy political director. Both confirmed they are gay in recorded telephone conversations.

According to Chibarro's report, the outing by Rogers did not appear to have any negative consequences for the two men in connection with their RNC jobs. The two men were targeted for outing because of what Rogers identifies as their hypocrisy in helping the Republicans use gay civil rights as a wedge issue in support of its anti-gay party platform.

Raelians Protest Uganda

Uganda – The Raelian Movement (www.rael.org), with more than 5,000 members in Africa, issued strong protests against Ugandan authorities who told the operators of Radio Simba that it was a criminal offense to broadcast that homosexuality was "an accept-

able way of life."

The religious group's statement noted advances in gay civil rights around the world and said Uganda's position "goes totally against the Charter of Human Rights and Freedom to which Uganda has subscribed." The statement continued, "Since it is now scientifically known that homosexuality has a genetic basis as does race, to reject a homosexual for his sexuality is like to reject a cat for being a cat or a Black for being a Black."

The group demanded an official apology and called for LGBT organizations to join them in their protest.

Sharing Custody

Cincinnati, OH – An Ohio appeals court unanimously ruled that lesbian and gay couples must be allowed to protect their relationships with children they are raising together, in a decision that affirms state law and overturns a lower-court ruling that barred two women from creating a shared custody agreement, Lambda Legal said.

The ruling from the 12th District of Ohio Appeals Court, says a child "benefits from having two caregivers, legally responsible for his welfare. Both will have the ability to make medical decision on his behalf and be able to interact with teachers and school administrators without executing additional documents."

Death in Moscow

Moscow, Russia – Deputies of the Russian parliament may introduce a measure that would impose criminal penalties for homosexual activities, according to a report on the online English version of *Pravda*.

The statement on the "homosexual matter" was released from the leader of the Liberal and Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovsky. He urged the deputies to introduce the death penalty for homosexual activities during a discussion of criminal penalties for pederasty.

Etheridge Cancels Tour

Los Angeles – Singer Melissa Etheridge has been diagnosed with breast cancer and has canceled upcoming tour dates to undergo treatment, her publicist said last month.

"I am fortunate to be under a wonderful doctor's care and thankful that this was caught early," Etheridge said in a statement. "I am looking forward to a quick and full recovery."

Refunds for tickets to her upcoming shows are available where they were bought; the entertainer's Web site says she had been scheduled to play 11 dates in seven cities.

Huffington Gets The Point

Chicago, IL – Philanthropist Michael Huffington offered his financial and personal support to The Point Foundation in the form of a \$150,000 challenge grant. The Point Foundation provides multi-year financial grants, mentoring, and internship opportunities to young people marginalized because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

This donation marks the first time the prominent business leader, former congressman, and ex-husband of political commentator Ariana Huffington has publicly supported an LGBT charitable organization.

Hate Crimes Law Stripped

Washington, DC – The Human Rights Campaign decried the removal of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act (LLEEA) from the Defense Department authorization bill. Both houses of Congress had supported the amendment in previous votes.

"It's just five days away from the anniversary of Matthew Shepard's death and another year will go by without adequate hate crimes protections," said HRC President Cheryl Jacques.

LLEEA would add real or perceived sexual orientation, gender and disability to federal hate crime laws, thus allowing for federal assistance in the investigation and prosecution of hate crimes.

Sierra Leone Activist Murdered

New York – The government of Sierra Leone should bring to justice those responsible for the brutal murder of FannyAnn Eddy, founder of the Sierra Leone Lesbian and Gay Association and a lesbian rights activist known across Africa, Human Rights Watch said last month.

Eddy, 30, was found dead on the morning of September 29. While she was working alone in organization's offices the previous night, her assailant or assailants apparently broke in to the premises. She was raped repeatedly, stabbed and her neck was broken.

"FannyAnn Eddy was a person of extraordinary bravery and integrity, who literally put her life on the line for human rights," said Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights Project at Human Rights Watch.

Eddy and her organization documented harassment, beatings and arbitrary arrests of lesbian, gay and transgender people in Sierra Leone. Eddy leaves a 10-year-old son. ▼

Compiled this month by Euan Bear.