

the rest of our world

Who's That Homo in the Window?

Chicago – When Marshall Field's employed a Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs theme for its 2004 holiday festivities, the Chicago-born retailer received complaints that it was promoting the homosexual lifestyle, reported the *Chicago Tribune* last month.

The concerned citizens divined that there was a "hidden gay agenda" in Field's theme "because seven men were living together," Gregory Clark, vice president of creative services for Field's in Minneapolis, recounted at an industry conference last month.

When Field's receives such complaints, the department store chain listens to them, Clark said. But unless it receives, say, 10,000 letters and phone calls, it doesn't change its strategy, he said.

The brouhaha over the seven dwarfs didn't hurt Field's financial results. The chain finished the year with a 3 percent rise in sales.

Royal Navy Recruits Gays

London – Five years after Britain lifted its ban on gays in the military, the Royal Navy has begun actively encouraging them to enlist and has pledged to make life easier when they do.

In late February, the navy asked Stonewall, a group that lobbies for gay rights, to help it develop better strategies for recruiting and retaining gay men and lesbians, reported the *New York Times*.

Last year, Parliament passed the Civil Partnership Act, which gives marriage-style rights to gays who have registered as couples. The military is subject to the legislation, and beginning this fall, gay couples in the military who have registered under the act may apply for married couple housing.

The new effort continues a pattern of changing attitudes in the navy, once derided as 'running on rum, sodomy and the lash,' in a phrase usually attributed to Winston Churchill. Before a 1999 court ruling that the ban on gays in the military violated European human-rights laws, Britain's military followed a no-exceptions policy of dismissing anyone found to be gay, often after long and intrusive investigation.

Gays in the British military are subject to the same rules of sexual conduct as heterosexuals: no touching, kissing, or flaunting of sex-

uality. Since 1991, women have been allowed to serve with men on ships, which operate under strict "no sex" rules. Sailors in such close quarters have relied on what one naval official said was "common sense and good manners."

Christians, Jews Against Gay Fest

Jerusalem – Warning of divine retribution and violent protest, evangelical Christians and rabbis from the U.S. have joined with ultra-Orthodox Jews in Israel to fight an international gay festival here. Last held in Rome in 2000, the World Pride Parade is a 10-day event including street parties, workshops and a gay film festival.

At a news conference last month, California pastor Leo Giovinetti said hosting the event could bring divine retribution upon Jerusalem, citing the biblical story of Sodom and Gomorra. Ultra-Orthodox Israeli lawmaker Nissim Zeev hinted at more earthly troubles. "With demonstrations we never know how they end up," he said. "Residents here are enraged. Everything should be done to stop this [event] and not cause people to break the law."

Giovinetti, a Christian with a radio ministry in the U.S., is seeking a million signatures for a petition to stop the festival, which he said debases the sanctity of Jerusalem. "I haven't come because I have hate for the homosexuals, I've come because I have love for the Jews," he said.

New York Rabbi Yehuda Levin, representing the Rabbinical Alliance of America, a group of Orthodox rabbis, said "This is not a parade. A parade takes a few hours. This is a 10-day homosexual convention with many outdoor activities and a 10-day pornographic film festival."

Toys R Us R Now Trans-OK

Washington, DC – The Human Rights Campaign last month lauded Toys "R" Us for agreeing to add language to its equal opportunity employment policy prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity. It appears likely that the company will also begin offering domestic partner benefits and including sexual orientation and gender identity issues in their diversity training. If implemented, the company would earn an 86 on HRC's Corporate Equality Index, a tool measuring how equitably companies are treating their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees, consumers and investors.

Based in New Jersey, Toys 'R' Us already had a non-discrimination policy covering sexual orientation. The change came following a shareholder proposal and the state of New York asking the company to abide by the Equality Principles, which include sexual orientation and gender identity-inclusive non-discrimination policies.

In June 2002, a jury found the company guilty of discrimination against three transsexual consumers who were called names and threatened with baseball bats while shopping. The jury awarded only \$1 in damages to each plaintiff.

Toys 'R' Us is the 52nd company in the Fortune 500 with a non-discrimination policy that includes gender identity. To score 100 percent on the HRC index, the company would have to demonstrate GLBT inclusiveness in advertising or philanthropy.

Trans Folk to Meet in the Bluegrass State

Louisville, KY – This fall, Louisville will host an event that will mark a turning point in the history of the African-American transcommunity: the first annual Transsistahs and Transbrothas Convention at the historic Galt House Hotel and Suites.

The meeting is in response to the need for an infrastructure and support system similar to what the Caucasian transcommunity has built up over the last 20 years. The event will reflect the African-American cultural heritage promoting networking in the transcommunity. Discussions will focus on programs around the country, what works and what doesn't, with an eye to implementing successful programs. There will also be time to lay the groundwork for interactions with allies and supporters in the mainstream African-American and African-American GLBT communities. The event is September 14-18, 2005, with more information at www.transfamilydefyinggravity.net.

Colleges Solicit Gay Youth

Washington, DC – Nearly 10 U.S. colleges have signed-up to exhibit at DC's first college fair for gay students. To date, the largest college fair for gay students was in Boston in 2003 with nearly one hundred schools in attendance. Six hundred schools were invited to the DC event, according to Youth Pride College Fair website.

"We're excited that a

diverse group of colleges, large and small, public and private, are coming together to provide a forum where gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students have the opportunity to talk to admissions officers and discover what these schools are doing to help provide them with a positive college experience," said Mindy Michels, a representative for the National Consortium of Directors of LGBT Resources in Higher Education, one of the groups planning the college fair.

The fair will take place on Saturday, April 23rd, 2005 and will be held in tandem with DC's ninth annual Youth Pride Day celebration. The list of Youth Pride colleges is at www.YPcollegefair.org/colleges.

Pope: Gay Marriage is Evil

Rome – Homosexual marriages are part of "a new ideology of evil" that is insidiously threatening society, Pope John Paul II says in his recently published book, "Memory and Identity," released just before he was hospitalized last month, according to Reuters.

The Pope takes a swipe at gay marriages when he refers to "pressures" on the European Parliament to allow them. "It is legitimate and necessary to ask oneself if this is not perhaps part of a new ideology of evil, perhaps more insidious and hidden, which attempts to pit human rights against the family and against man," he writes.

The National Religious Leadership Roundtable swiftly rejected the Pontiff's statement, in a National Gay and Lesbian Task Force press release.

"If same-sex marriage qualifies as part of 'a new ideology of evil,' then the world is in far better shape than I thought," said Catholic theologian and NRLR member Mary Hunt.

Tuxedoed Girl Banned From Yearbook

Washington, DC – The Gender Public Advocacy Coalition criticized the decision to ban a straight-A high school student from her senior yearbook for wearing a tux instead of a dress and pearls. Even though there is no written dress code for senior pictures, the principal in Green Cove Springs, Florida pulled Kelli Davis's picture and fired the yearbook editor. The school board let the decision stand.

The school board's deci-

sion conflicts with new National School Boards Association guidelines that say there is no legal justification for gender-specific dress codes. Kelli explained that she felt uncomfortable exposing her chest in a photo.

Kelli's parents support their daughter and took out an ad in the yearbook featuring the banned photo. "We hear a lot of talk these days about family values. This young woman's parents are showing real family values by supporting their daughter," said Effland. "Young people should be able to choose how they want to be remembered in their yearbooks. If that sounds simple, that's because it is."

Wrong Drug Given to Gays

Los Angeles – The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services was notified last month that a large nonprofit clinic serving the gay and lesbian community used the wrong preparation of penicillin to treat syphilis patients for five years – from January 1999 to March 2004. The clinic used Bicillin C-R, rather than Bicillin L-A. Bicillin L-A is recommended for treating syphilis and upper respiratory tract infections caused by certain streptococci. The efficacy of Bicillin C-R in treating syphilis is unknown. That formula contains half the recommended dose of the active ingredient, benzathine penicillin G.

The inadvertent use of Bicillin C-R was discovered after a patient treated for syphilis read the product insert, which stated that the medication was not indicated for treatment of syphilis.

From 1999 to 2004, over 400 patients were treated with Bicillin C-R for confirmed syphilis infection at the clinic. Nearly 250 patients were treated with Bicillin C-R at the clinic for reported sexual contact with someone who was known or suspected to be infected with syphilis.

Clinic staff attempted to reach syphilis patients and contacts treated with Bicillin C-R. To date, 66 percent of the patients with confirmed syphilis were successfully contacted. ▼

Compiled this month by Assistant Editor Susan McMillan.