

the rest of our world

Maine's Got the Bucks

BANGOR, MAINE – Supporters of Maine's new gay rights law hold a huge financial advantage over those trying to repeal it, according to reports filed with state elections officials last month. Entering the final weeks of the campaign, Maine Won't Discriminate raised nearly \$395,000 between July 6 and Sept. 30, bringing donations this year to more than \$475,000.

The Coalition for Marriage, a political action committee associated with the Christian Civic League of Maine, and the Maine Grassroots Coalition are the two major groups pushing the repeal effort. Combined, these groups raised just \$75,000 during the third quarter, bringing their total donations to more than \$210,000 for the year.

Money has not guaranteed success at the Maine polls, and campaign watchers note that the gay rights issue, particularly in an off-year election with no major candidates on the ballot, is one in which voter turnout can be just as crucial. "The Christian Civic League has always been more about trying to rally its base than convince the general public," said Jim Melcher, a political scientist at the University of Maine at Farmington.

At issue on Nov. 8 is whether voters will repeal the law that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation in the areas of housing, employment, education, lodging and lending. The law, signed in March by Gov. John Baldacci, has been put on hold pending the results of the referendum.

November's vote will mark the fourth time in 10 years Maine voters have considered a gay rights issue.

Gay Conservative Dodges Pie

CHAPEL HILL, NC – The head of the national gay political group Log Cabin Republicans was grazed by a chocolate cream pie as he gave a National Coming Out Day speech at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, according to *The Advocate*. The [Raleigh] *News & Observer* reports that Patrick Guerriero was speaking on the future of sexual politics when a person in dark clothes and a baseball cap hurled the pie. Guerriero is a former college soccer player and managed to dodge the pie, which splattered his suit coat as it went by.

Guerriero joked afterward that he "faked to the left and moved to the right, which is probably something I do in politics sometimes." Minutes later Guerriero was interrupted by a fire alarm, which drove the audience of 100–200 people outside to hear the rest of the speech on the lecture hall's steps. Police are investigating. But Coming Out Day organizers say they suspect the pie thrower was someone on the political left rather than an antigay conservative.

Mr. Gay International Crowned in Cliffhanger

PALM SPRINGS, CA – In a cliffhanger competition, where a tie-breaker was averted on a second ballot, the first ever Mr. Gay 2006 International title was captured by San Diego's Jesse Bashem, who just one hour earlier had won the title of U.S.A. Mr. Gay.

The competition, which took place Columbus Day Weekend included contestants from San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, Palm Springs, and national representatives from the Netherlands, Norway, Lapland, Bulgaria and Bosnia-Herzegovina, as reported by the U.S. Newswire.

Austria's Aaron Michael Jackson was the first runner up and Germany's Suat Bahceci landed in the second runner up slot.

Producer Don Spradlin said, "The winner will serve as a spokesman to raise the visibility of gay men, humanize gays in the media, create a positive role model and confront homophobia in today's culture." Finalists can be seen at www.mrgaycompetition.com.

Mormon Flak Over Porn Star Flick Mix

SALT LAKE CITY – The newly released, squeaky clean Latter Day Saints film *Sons of Provo* has taken on a new moniker: "Sons of porno" according to a report last month in the *Deseret Morning News*.

Fans of the film came up with the nickname after two Utah families popped in their *Sons of Provo* DVDs and instead found *Adored: Diary of a Porn Star* on their screens, according to a *Deseret Book* representative.

Deseret Book yanked the film from its shelves after two families in Utah complained they didn't get what they paid for. The PG-rated

Sons of Provo chronicles the life of an LDS boy band, Everclean, on its journey to relative stardom.

Both films hired the same Los Angeles company to make copies of their movies for mass DVD sales. Somewhere in the distribution process, copies of *Adored* got mixed in with *Sons of Provo* DVDs and were shipped to Utah.

Adored: Diary of a Porn Star "is a very heartwarming film about a porn star that reconnects with his family," said Corey Eubanks, spokesman for Wolfe Video.

HRC Names Ace LGBT Employers

WASHINGTON DC – The Human Rights Campaign Foundation unveiled its fourth annual report card last month on corporate America's treatment of glbt employees. It includes a record 101 companies with a perfect 100 percent score, more than seven times as many since the first report card in 2002.

The Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index rates Fortune 500 and other major companies on a scale from zero to 100 percent on seven key indicators of fair treatment for glbt employees. Indicators include policies prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as equal health care benefits.

Defense giant Raytheon reached 100 percent this year as a first for its industry. In addition, BP and Chevron became the first oil companies to score 100 percent and Dow Chemical became the first in its industry to do so.

In electronics retail, Best Buy offers full protections, while competitor Radio Shack scores a 29 percent and Circuit City holds a 43 percent score. Corporations shown to be actively working against equality include Exxon Mobil with 14 percent.

In the financial sector, Citigroup and J.P. Morgan Chase each scored 100 percent compared to MBNA, which has given money to anti-gay organizations and scored only 43 percent.

From A to Z, "Civil Union" Is Now Official

CYBERSPACE – Merriam Webster recently released the list of nearly 100 new words and phrases that have been added to the Eleventh Edition of Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary. The new words range from A to Z and

include "civil union (noun) 1992: the legal status that ensures to same-sex couples specified rights and responsibilities of married couples." Some activists have questioned the date of use.

A few of the other new words to be included in our language are brain freeze, chick flick, hazmat, and amuse-bouche (noun) 1984: a small complimentary appetizer offered at some restaurants.

Melissa Takes It Back Home

NEW YORK – Early last month, Melissa Etheridge announced that she's working on a sitcom. The show, still in development with ABC, is about "what my life might have been like had I not left to find my fame and fortune, and stayed in Kansas and became a teacher and been gay and dealt with life there," Etheridge told *Time* magazine, according to the Associated Press.

The two-time Grammy winner says she doesn't want to rely on touring to make a living, and a television show would allow her to "be home for dinner." Etheridge, who for much of last year was fighting breast cancer, released a greatest hits album and DVD last month.

Olivia Moves Into Retirement

SAN FRANCISCO – Olivia Travel, already a known brand in LGBT travel, is expanding into senior citizens housing complexes, according to reports in late September. "We're expanding into concentric circles around our core business," Olivia CEO Amy Errett told 365Gay.com.

Errett said that the company will build its first retirement center in Palm Springs, California. After Palm Springs the company plans to develop properties in Florida, Arizona and Nevada.

Olivia's retirement centers won't be for the budget-conscious though. "They'll be resort-focused – built around a resort theme," said Errett. The centers will feature concierges, theaters and fine dining. The entry level for a home would be in the \$300,000 range Errett said.

It is estimated that currently there about one-million LGBT seniors in America, but that will grow significantly as out-of-the-closet baby boomers reach retirement.

AIDS Vaccine Trial to Begin in Africa

WASHINGTON DC – A novel vaccine targeted to multiple HIV subtypes has moved into the second phase of clinical testing, the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases/NIH announced last month.

The study investigators plan to enroll a total of 480 participants at sites in Africa, North America, South America and the Caribbean to test the safety and immune response to the vaccine.

"This trial marks an important step in the advancement toward an AIDS vaccine," said NIAID Director Anthony S. Fauci.

The unique vaccine combines synthetically modified elements of four HIV genes found in subtypes A, B and C of the virus, the subtypes commonly found in Africa, the Americas, Europe and parts of Asia.

The Phase I study of the vaccine will be at sites in Kenya and Rwanda, and Phase I and II studies will be at sites in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania; the studies are contingent on regulatory and ethical approvals.

American Girl vs. American Family

Tupelo, Mississippi – The American Family Association is spearheading an e-mail campaign against the American Girl doll due to the company's financial support of the pro-girl group, Girls Inc. Toy maker Mattel's American Girl has partnered with Girls Inc. to sell the "I Can" band, and the dollmaker will donate \$50,000 to Girls Inc.

According to the AFA website, "The problem here is that Girls Inc. has on their webpage a statement saying they particularly support abortion and a girl's right to abort an unwanted baby. Additionally, Girls Inc. supports contraceptives for girls. They also support and offer resources encouraging lesbian and bi-sexual lifestyles."

The American Girl website encourages girls to purchase the \$1 bracelet and to sign the "I CAN" promise. With roots dating to 1864, Girls Incorporated is a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. ▼

Compiled this month by Assistant Editor Susan McMillan.