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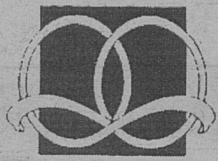
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news briefs...

Education

DALLAS - A new private school has opened in Dallas that caters to gays and lesbians.

Walt Whitman Community School in Dallas is the first private school for gays, although a few students are there not because they are gay themselves, but because a parent is.

The school was founded by Becky Thompson, a lesbian, and Pamala Stone, who is straight. The veteran educators had observed students harassing others at the Walden Preparatory School in the north Dallas suburb of Addison, which they both left in January.

They are troubled by studies concluding that gay and lesbian youth are at higher risk for destructive behaviors.

"The more we talked about it, we just became committed to doing it," Thompson said. "It was a simple 'Here's a problem,' and we had the solution."

Tuition at Whitman is \$7,000 annually. Thompson said all seven students are receiving financial assistance from people who want the school to succeed. The school also is seeking grants from private foundations.

They hope eventually to have up to 30 students.

Gay bar

MINNEAPOLIS - Two straight men tried to get into a gay bar and were turned away. Now they're suing, arguing they were victims of discrimination.

Torence Harris and Greg Krebs say they went to the Gay 90's Theatre Cafe & Bar on July 29 to meet two friends. They contend a bouncer told them they could not enter because they are not gay, lesbian or bisexual.

They say in a lawsuit that being turned away violates a 1993 amendment to the Minnesota Human Rights Act guaranteeing access to accommodations and businesses regardless of sexual orientation. They are demanding more than \$50,000 in damages.

Robert Parker, the bar's night manager, denied the allegations. "We serve anyone who isn't drunk, underage or belligerent," he said. "I think they're out for monetary gain," Parker added.

Still not telling

SAN FRANCISCO - Another federal appeals court says if you tell, you can't serve.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals upheld the discharge of two members of the service for declaring their sexuality. The court said in a 2-1 ruling that the two men were

discharged for their conduct, not their speech.

"The military has a legitimate interest in discharging service members on account of homosexual conduct in order to maintain effective armed forces," the court said.

The court also said the military was entitled to presume that self-declared gays and lesbians had a "propensity to engage in prohibited homosexual conduct." That presumption can be disproven, and some have done so, the court said.

A dissenting judge said the policy "severely burdens speech," encourages lying and has no rational connection to military effectiveness.

Museum protest

NEW YORK - A new museum is being sued because it includes a commemoration of gays and lesbians persecuted by the Nazis.

Sixteen Orthodox Jewish rabbis sued in federal court, arguing that the new Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust offends the beliefs of Orthodox Jews because of the exhibit on gays and lesbians.

The rabbis were angry over "the elevation of homosexuals to the martyred status of the six million Jews," who died in the Holocaust, said Rabbi Yehuda Levin, the lead plaintiff.

Their suit says the use of public money to build the museum near Battery Park was unconstitutional.

Gay Emmys

HOLLYWOOD - Ellen DeGeneres lost out on an Emmy herself, but her coming-out episode snagged one.

DeGeneres was beaten out for best actress in a comedy by Helen Hunt, star of *Mad About You*.

But the episode of Ellen in which DeGeneres' character comes out as a lesbian won for outstanding writing for a comedy series.

DeGeneres dedicated the award to gay and lesbian teenagers, telling them: "There's nothing wrong with you. Don't ever let anybody make you feel ashamed of who you are."

Gay-friendly Gore

WASHINGTON - Vice President Al Gore says he's on our side.

Gore pledged at a speech in Washington that gays and lesbians "certainly have my commitment to work as hard as I can" to stop anti-gay hate crimes, find a cure for AIDS

and end workplace discrimination.

"It is time for all Americans to recognize that the issues that face gays and lesbians in this country are not narrow, special interests, they are matters of basic human and civil rights," Gore told the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force at its annual awards ceremony.

The task force honored Coretta Scott King, widow of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King; AFL-CIO President John Sweeney; and the Mautner Project, a service organization for lesbians with cancer.

Ad campaign

WASHINGTON - The voices of gays and lesbians were heard in last year's elections.

A new study finds that the Human Rights Campaign was among the groups that spent heavily on advertising to promote a candidate while avoiding campaign finance laws.

The University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center documented how labor unions, trade groups, single-issue organizations and the two major parties exploited a gray area of campaign finance law and passed off the spots as generic "issue ads" by leaving out words that specifically urged viewers to vote for or against a candidate.

The Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest +gay+ advocacy group, spent \$100,000 on issue ads and public service announcements, according to the study.

Maine rights

AUGUSTA, MAINE - Gay rights have been put on hold in Maine.

A day before a new gay rights law was due to go into effect, opponents presented the secretary of state with enough signatures for a possible referendum on the anti-discrimination act.

Now the secretary of state will have to determine whether enough of the signatures are valid. If they are, the law will remain on hold until a statewide vote, which would be scheduled after November and before April. If there aren't enough, the law goes into effect.

The law, approved by the Legislature earlier this year and signed by Gov. Angus King, bars discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in housing, public accommodations, credit and employment.

In 1995, Maine voters narrowly defeated a referendum that sought to outlaw civil rights protections for homosexuals.

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