

# in the news...

## Bye, Ellen

LOS ANGELES — And we didn't see this one coming?

The "Ellen" show is now television history. ABC canceled the show starring Ellen DeGeneres as the out lesbian Ellen Morgan. DeGeneres herself came out at the same time that her character did before a national audience.

But the ratings never achieved the heights achieved during Ellen's coming-out party. The cancellation of the show for the fall season had been the topic of speculation for months as viewership fell off.

Joan Garry, executive director of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, said the cancellation was no surprise but still a letdown.

"We're all disappointed ABC made a decision based on ratings. We really wish that they had seriously considered the impact of Ellen's work and looked at it from a broader perspective," Garry said.

"The show may have been canceled, but I think she gave a gift to gay and straight Americans and that's a legacy that the cancellation cannot take from her."

## A school of our own

BAY SHORE, N.Y. — It sounded like such a good idea at first: open a special school for gay and lesbian students who say they dropped out of public high school because of harassment.

The only problem was that organizers never got permission from their bosses.

Top officials of the sponsoring government agency, the Eastern Suffolk Board of Cooperative Education Services, said they learned about the school-house from a Newsday reporter. Board president Bruce Brodsky immediately halted plans to open the school, the newspaper reported Thursday.

He was unaware that members of his own staff had enlisted a teacher, arranged for a classroom at the Long Island Gay and Lesbian Youth Inc. in Bay Shore, and had been advertising to attract students for several weeks. Three had signed up.

"I don't believe there should be a separate facility for gay and lesbian students. I don't want to throw them back into the closet," Brodsky said.

The board serves youngsters with special needs, including those who are pregnant, handicapped or seeking occupational training.

David Kilmnick, executive director of the gay youth agency, said he would still push for the separate classes. "We want to make sure that this school happens, that these kids are not harassed or subject to violence because of their sexual orientation. They need a safer place to learn," he said.

## More on marriage

Advocates of same-sex marriage have won a battle in Canada and suffered a setback in France.

In Canada, Ontario's highest court has ruled the federal government's definition of "spouse" is unconstitutional because it excludes partners of the same sex. A three-judge panel of the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled Thursday that the definition of "spouse" should be amended in the federal Income Tax Act to recognize same-sex couples as well as opposite-sex couples.

The ruling came in a case involving pension benefits and technically applies only to the Income Tax Act. But gay activists said it could set a precedent that would affect similar sections of other federal acts.

But in Paris, France's justice minister said the government had ruled out homosexual marriages and adoption by same-sex couples, although it would proceed with plans to allow gay couples to enjoy the same legal benefits as straights.

"The government has committed itself to give the possibility to resolve tax, inheritance and social problems and that will be done," said Elisabeth Guigou.

Although most French people don't attend church, the country has a strong Roman Catholic heritage and the prospect of homosexual marriages still upsets many.

"There should be no ambiguity about the possibility of homosexuals marrying or adopting children. That must be very clear in the text. It's not possible," Guigou told France Inter radio.

## Ivy leaders

Both Ivy League universities have tapped homosexual couples as undergraduate dormitory leaders. This July, a lesbian couple will assume duties as housemasters at Harvard's Lowell House, a six-story brick building with a grassy quadrangle and a bell tower close to the fabled Harvard Yard.

A gay man appointed dormitory dean is moving with his partner into Yale's Trumbull College, a Gothic structure of seam-faced granite with limestone trim and arching windows enclosing three courtyards.

"I think it's a great new era in being able to provide role models that have not been available at this level before," said Peter Novak, 32, the Yale appointee. "We've been welcomed, and it says a lot about the Yale community and how tolerant it is, especially within the administration."

At Harvard, professor Diana Eck, 52, realizes that she and her partner of 20 years may raise some eyebrows. "We know what

it's like in the culture generally: There are many people who are still very uncomfortable with this issue, so I'm sure that will be the case here," said Ms. Eck, a professor of comparative religion and Indian studies at Harvard.

## Gay teens

CHICAGO — Researchers have come up with some not-terribly-surprising conclusions about gay and bisexual teen-agers. The researchers, who studied youths in Vermont and Massachusetts, say the teens are more likely to attempt suicide and take risks — sexual and otherwise — that endanger their health.

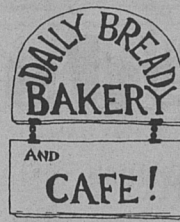
They also face more harassment at school and start experimenting with sex and drugs at an earlier age than their heterosexual peers, according to the study, published in the journal Pediatrics.

"Most gay and lesbian kids grow up healthy," said Dr. Rob Garofalo, an instructor in pediatrics at Harvard Medical School and a co-author of the study. "But there is a subset that don't."

He said the gay teens most likely to take risks are those who grow up without support for their sexual orientation, especially from their family. "There's a real impact when you're stigmatized and grow up in a culture that's unaccepting of who you are," Garofalo said. The study analyzed data collected on 4,159 high school students by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for a 1995 survey. The researchers looked only at the data from Massachusetts, one of only two states where students were asked their sexual orientation. The other state was Vermont.

Of the 2.5 percent who identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual, about half said they had engaged in more than five risky forms of behavior, compared with less than 25 percent of heterosexual teens surveyed.

Those risks included having sex before age 13, engaging in unsafe sex, and using cocaine, alcohol and marijuana before age 13. The study also found that gay, lesbian and bisexual teens were: 3 times more likely to have attempted suicide in the past year; nearly 5 times more likely to have been absent from school because of fear about safety; and more than 4 times as likely to have been threatened with a weapon at school.



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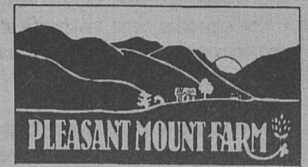
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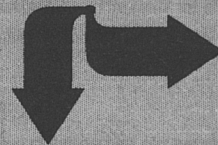
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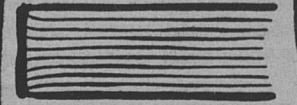
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