

the rest of our world...



Miss'd America

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Those Miss America contestants aren't the only girls who have it.

There's also the real queens, the drag queens of southern New Jersey. Seven blocks and a world away from the stage where Miss America 2000 was crowned, the Miss'd America Pageant lampooned its famous older sister with a raucous, gender-bending spoof funny enough to bust a girdle. Held annually on the night after Miss America's crowning, Miss'd America provides a sarcastic antidote to the apple-pie sincerity of the real pageant.

The event raised more than \$15,000 for support programs run by the South Jersey AIDS Alliance.

Catholic teaching

NEW YORK — The Catholic Church is clamping down on what the church's colleges and universities teach — and that includes more controls over gay and lesbian issues.

The U.S. bishops' 54-member board approved a policy proposal that will be voted on at a November meeting of all of the nation's bishops. The proposal requires that theology teachers have the endorsement of bishops in order to teach. That would make them subject to removal in cases of conflict.

Catholic conservatives say some church-affiliated colleges are nearly indistinguishable from secular campuses. Catholics have tangled over theology professors criticizing church policy, commencement speakers in favor of abortion rights, gay student clubs and crucifixes on classroom walls.

Nunstoppable?

BALTIMORE — Sister Jeannine Gramick is changing tactics.

The Catholic nun has stopped her ministry to gays and lesbians, as the church ordered her to do. Now she's going to try to change church policy. She said in a statement that she believes it "more beneficial" to minister to gays with the church's blessing than without it.

She called on fellow Roman Catholics to "help me find creative, collaborative ways to lift the burden of this directive from my shoulders." Ms. Gramick, 57, and the Rev. Robert Nugent, the founders of

New Ways Ministry in Maryland, were summoned to Rome in July and ordered to stop their work.

Marriage in Utah

SALT LAKE CITY — Maybe they just do things differently in Utah, but here's a new twist on same-gender marriage: A straight man is suing because he can't marry another straight man.

Mayoral candidate Ken Larsen and lawyer Victor Gordon, both heterosexuals, filed a civil rights lawsuit in U.S. District Court after being denied a license in county court. Utah law prohibits marriages between persons of the same sex.

The suit accuses the state, Salt Lake County and the county clerk of violating the Utah Constitution's equal protection guarantees. Larsen, a Libertarian who isn't considered a serious contender among the 11 mayoral candidates, said he is suing to make the point that same-sex marriage is a basic right.

"That's the whole point, non-gays fighting for gay rights," Larsen said. "If we don't fight for the lifestyles of others, then there won't be anybody there to fight for our rights."

But gay rights activists fear he could do more harm than good in what may be a well-intentioned publicity stunt. "Utah is not the state to push forward the issue of equality for gays and lesbians in marriage," said Jared Wood, a spokesman for Utah's Gay and Lesbian Political Action Committee.

Uganda gays

KAMPALA, Uganda — It's still not safe to be out and proud in many parts of the world. Take Uganda, for example.

President Yoweri Museveni has ordered the arrests of homosexuals in Uganda, saying UN human rights conventions do not necessarily apply to Africa.

Homosexuality is illegal in Uganda and carries a maximum punishment of life imprisonment. "I have told the Criminal Investigation Department to look for homosexuals, lock them up and charge them," the government-owned New Vision newspaper quoted him as saying.

Two recent and highly publicized gay marriages in Uganda

appeared to prompt Museveni's remarks during a speech to regional legislators meeting in the capital.

Gay bank

PENSACOLA, Fla. — Talk about mainstream. Now there's a bank catering to gays and lesbians.

The first bank to cater to a national gay market has opened its doors in Pensacola and began doing business Oct. 11 on the Internet.

G&L Bank — the initials stand for gay and lesbian — is among a small number of Internet-focused banks and the first to obtain a thrift charter for Internet lending, founder Steven Dunlap said.

"Homophobia runs rampant in the banking industry," said G. Kay Griffin, the bank's chairwoman, president and chief executive officer. "Many banks think a couple needs to have a marriage certificate to show that they are creditworthy."

The Internet operations will be open around the clock, seven days a week.

California laws

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — Here's evidence that politics matters: With a Democratic governor, California gays and lesbians are getting more and more protections. Gov. Gray Davis has signed into law four major advances in the cause of civil rights.

The first was a bill that increases the penalty for murders motivated by the victim's gender, sexual orientation or disability. Under California's current hate crime law, a murder committed because of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin can bring the death penalty or life in prison without parole.

"Finally, a political leader has taken meaningful action. This is the most important piece of legislation ever passed in regard to gay-lesbian youth rights," said Kevin Jennings, executive director of the national Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network.

Davis also signed: Legislation to outlaw the harassment of gay students and teachers in public schools and colleges, calling the action an attempt to "beat back the forces of hatred."

A new state domestic part-

ners registry for couples who are gay or over age 62, extending to them hospital visitation rights and allowing state and local government workers to get health benefits for their partners.

An initiative to block job and housing discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The bill places authority over the cases in the state's Fair Employment and Housing Department, a key state civil rights agency.

Bradley for us

DEARBORN, Mich. — Democratic presidential candidate Bill Bradley is working hard for the gay vote.

He says if he becomes the Democratic presidential nominee he will make supporting an anti-hate crime bill a key campaign issue. Speaking during the Human Rights Campaign's anniversary dinner Saturday night, Bradley said he "would be breaking faith with himself" if he didn't.

"We have to oppose any manifestations of hatred with undiminished fervor whenever and wherever it occurs," he said. He also said that benefits given to others also must be given to gays, although he says he wouldn't use the word marriage for same-sex unions.

Anti-gay violence

ATLANTA — Matthew Shepard's mom is working to make the world a safer place. Judy Shepard is appearing in a public-awareness campaign intended to help reduce anti-gay taunting in public schools.

The television announcement featuring her was unveiled by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network and began airing last month on MTV. Her son, Matthew, a University of Wyoming student, died Oct. 12, 1998, days after he was beaten unconscious and tied to a ranch fence outside Laramie, WY.

Two men were accused of luring the 21-year-old student out of a bar, driving him to a remote prairie spot and then robbing and pistol-whipping him.

In the announcement, high school boys in a locker room shout anti-gay insults. Then Mrs. Shepard says: "The next time you use words like these, think about what they really mean." A photo of her son flashes on the screen with the

dates 1976-1998. Then the phrases "Murdered because he was gay" and "End Hate" are followed by a shot of Mrs. Shepard with her head bowed.

"Please don't let there be a next time," she says quietly.

Police harassment

NEW YORK — There's another lawsuit over alleged harassment by New York police against a lesbian, but this time it's a cop herself who is suing.

Officer Elizabeth Bryant, 34, claims in a \$5-million civil lawsuit that she was harassed by fellow officers and superiors after her wedding to another female officer.

She said that prior to the ceremony, no one bothered her. But that changed after the June 24, 1997, ceremony in Central Park — a story that made several newspapers, including photos on the front page of the *New York Post*.

After that, she claimed, graphic sexual pictures with her face pasted on them were hung in her Bronx precinct house, other officers refused to ride on patrol with her and she was assigned to stereotypical "female" duties such as cleaning the precinct. She claims one co-worker assaulted her. The Gay Officers Action League is supporting Bryant in her fight.

Bryant still works as a police officer in Brooklyn.

AIDS prevention

ATLANTA — The federal government is working again to prevent the spread of AIDS.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has awarded \$32 million to more than 100 organizations in an effort to expand HIV prevention efforts in minority communities. The announcement came a day after the CDC awarded \$7 million to seven states to reduce the rate of HIV in prisons.

Researchers say one in 50 black men and one in 160 black women are infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Hispanics also have been disproportionately impacted — Hispanics make up 11.5 percent of the national population but account for 20 percent of new HIV infections.

Gay murder

REDDING, Calif. — Two brothers have pleaded innocent to charges of murdering a gay