



Movin' On Up

Gay community center revitalizes programs, services with '03 move.

Page 15

Ex-gay leader experiences 'moral fall'

Johnston allegedly had sex with men without disclosing he has HIV

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

Five years after starring in a national advertising campaign claiming gays can change their sexual orientation, Michael Johnston experienced a "moral fall" and left behind his ministries, two conservative Christian groups that worked with Johnston confirmed this week.

"I received a call from [Johnston] asking forgiveness as a Christian brother and asking for our prayers, indicating that he was working with his pastor and his church to try to find some restoration in his relationship with God," said Buddy Smith, American Family Association administrator.

The Mississippi-based AFA partnered with Johnston to promote ex-gay programs, including Johnston's National Coming Out of Homosexuality Day.

The annual event is unlikely to continue following Johnston's "moral fall," but Smith said the AFA won't abandon its claims that gays can change.

"I don't think the message is changed at all, though of course the messenger is certainly harmed," Smith said. "I don't foresee he would ever be back in a place of public ministry, especially in an outreach to homosexuals like the ministry he had."

Johnston founded Kerusso Ministries, based in Newport News, Va. The ministry's published phone number is now disconnected and the Web site is no longer operational.

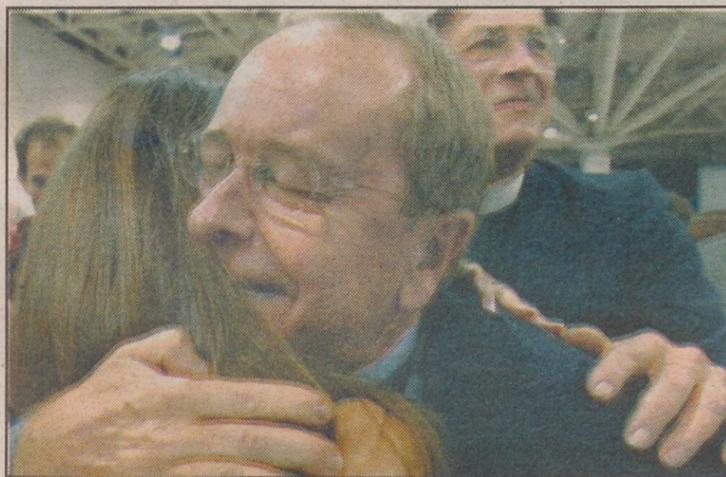
"He obviously had a moral failing, that's true," said Peter LaBarbera, president of Americans for Truth, which had been affiliated with Kerusso before a "pro-

Please see EX-EX-GAY on Page 6



Michael Johnston appeared with his mother, Frances Johnston, in a controversial 1998 television ad claiming he 'walked away from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ,' but not before contracting AIDS.

Episcopalians confirm first-ever openly gay bishop



Bishop-elect Gene Robinson and his partner Mark Andrews have been together for 13 years. Robinson's daughter Ella joined him this week in Minneapolis for the confirmation vote. (Photo by Jim Moore/AP)

Rev. Gene Robinson's consecration threatens to divide church

By JOE CREA

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn. — Despite 11th-hour allegations of sexual misconduct and connections to pornography, Episcopal bishops voted on Tuesday to elect the church's first openly gay bishop, Rev. V. Gene Robinson.

It was an action critics called "a Satanic attack on God's church" that demanded intervention from the Archbishop of Canterbury to prevent a "likely" fracture in the 77-million Anglican Church.

The bishops voted 62 to 43, with two abstentions, to elect Robinson bishop of New Hampshire at their General Convention in Minneapolis. Robinson was cleared of the late-breaking misconduct allegations hours before the vote was taken.

"I can't wait for the gay part to be over so I can just

be the Bishop of New Hampshire," Robinson told National Public Radio on Wednesday. "I don't want to be the gay bishop. I want to be the good bishop."

Critics said that opponents engaged in a last minute "smear campaign" as the likelihood of Robinson's confirmation became apparent.

"It was clearly a last-ditch effort to derail this election," said Susan Russell, executive director of Claiming the Blessing, a group that seeks to achieve approval of liturgical support for same-sex marriage.

The man who accused Robinson of inappropriately touching him said he regretted using the word "harassment" in his e-mail that first alerted the bishops to the alleged misconduct, the Associated Press reported.

David Lewis said in an e-mail that was made public in Minneapolis on Monday that Robinson "put his hands on me inappropriately every time I engaged him in conversation" at a church event in 1999, referring to an incident in which Robinson touched him on his

Please see GAY BISHOP on Page 7

ENDA CHRONOLOGY: Latest bill free from gender identity despite lip service to trans inclusion by gay groups. Page 8

Political Bell-wether: Houston Democrat Chris Bell supports same-sex partner immigration bill. Page 4





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Pancreatitis and liver problems, which can be fatal, have been reported. Tell your doctor if you have or have had liver disease such as hepatitis. In patients taking protease inhibitors, increased bleeding (in patients with hemophilia) and diabetes/high blood sugar have occurred. Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients receiving antiretroviral

therapy. Some patients receiving KALETRA have had large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol.

In clinical trials, the most commonly reported side effects of moderate or severe intensity were: abdominal pain, abnormal bowel movements, diarrhea, feeling weak or tired, headache and nausea. This is not a complete list of reported side effects. KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol.

KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS and does not reduce the risk of passing of HIV to others.

Please see adjacent page for Patient Information.

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Read this leaflet carefully before you start taking KALETRA. Also, read it each time you get your KALETRA prescription refilled, in case something has changed. This information does not take the place of talking with your doctor when you start this medicine and at check ups. Ask your doctor if you have any questions about KALETRA.

What is KALETRA and how does it work?

KALETRA is a combination of two medicines. They are lopinavir and ritonavir. KALETRA is a type of medicine called an HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) protease (PRO-tee-ase) inhibitor. KALETRA is always used in combination with other anti-HIV medicines to treat people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. KALETRA is for adults and for children age 6 months and older.

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Does KALETRA cure HIV or AIDS?

KALETRA does not cure HIV infection or AIDS. The long-term effects of KALETRA are not known at this time. People taking KALETRA may still get opportunistic infections or other conditions that happen with HIV infection. Some of these conditions are pneumonia, herpes virus infections, and *Mycobacterium avium* complex (MAC) infections.

Does KALETRA reduce the risk of passing HIV to others?

KALETRA does not reduce the risk of passing HIV to others through sexual contact or blood contamination. Continue to practice safe sex and do not use or share dirty needles.

How should I take KALETRA?

- You should stay under a doctor's care when taking KALETRA. Do not change your treatment or stop treatment without first talking with your doctor.
- You must take KALETRA every day exactly as your doctor prescribed it. The dose of KALETRA may be different for you than for other patients. Follow the directions from your doctor, exactly as written on the label.
- Dosing in adults (including children 12 years of age and older): The usual dose for adults is 3 capsules (400/100 mg) or 5.0 mL of the oral solution twice a day (morning and night), in combination with other anti-HIV medicines.
- Dosing in children from 6 months to 12 years of age: Children from 6 months to 12 years of age can also take KALETRA. The child's doctor will decide the right dose based on the child's weight.
- Take KALETRA with food to help it work better.
- Do not change your dose or stop taking KALETRA without first talking with your doctor.
- When your KALETRA supply starts to run low, get more from your doctor or pharmacy. This is very important because the amount of virus in your blood may increase if the medicine is stopped for even a short time. The virus may develop resistance to KALETRA and become harder to treat.
- Be sure to set up a schedule and follow it carefully.
- Only take medicine that has been prescribed specifically for you. Do not give KALETRA to others or take medicine prescribed for someone else.

What should I do if I miss a dose of KALETRA?

It is important that you do not miss any doses. If you miss a dose of KALETRA, take it as soon as possible and then take your next scheduled dose at its regular time. If it is almost time for your next dose, do not take the missed dose. Wait and take the next dose at the regular time. Do not double the next dose.

What happens if I take too much KALETRA?

If you suspect that you took more than the prescribed dose of this medicine, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately.

As with all prescription medicines, KALETRA should be kept out of the reach of young children. KALETRA liquid contains a large amount of alcohol. If a toddler or young child accidentally drinks more than the recommended dose of KALETRA, it could make him/her sick from too much alcohol. Contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately if this happens.

Who should not take KALETRA?

Together with your doctor, you need to decide whether KALETRA is right for you.

- Do not take KALETRA if you are taking certain medicines. These could cause serious side effects that could cause death. Before you take KALETRA, you must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or are planning to take. These include other prescription and non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.

For more information about medicines you should not take with KALETRA, please read the section titled "MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA."

- Do not take KALETRA if you have an allergy to KALETRA or any of its ingredients, including ritonavir or lopinavir.

Can I take KALETRA with other medications?

KALETRA may interact with other medicines, including those you take without a prescription. You must tell your doctor about all the medicines you are taking or planning to take before you take KALETRA.

MEDICINES YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE WITH KALETRA:

- Do not take the following medicines with KALETRA because they can cause serious problems or death if taken with KALETRA.
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 - Hismanal® (astemizole)
 - Orap® (pimozide)
 - Propulsid® (cisapride)
 - Rythmol® (propafenone)
 - Seldane® (terfenadine)
 - Tambacor™ (flecainide)
 - Versed® (midazolam)

- Do not take KALETRA with rifampin, also known as Rimactane®, Rifadin®, Rifater®, or Rifamate®. Rifampin may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.

- Do not take KALETRA with St. John's wort (hypericum perforatum), an herbal product sold as a dietary supplement, or products containing St. John's wort. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take St. John's wort. Taking St. John's wort may decrease KALETRA levels and lead to increased viral load and possible resistance to KALETRA or cross-resistance to other anti-HIV medicines.

- Do not take KALETRA with the cholesterol-lowering medicines Mevacor® (lovastatin) or Zocor® (simvastatin) because of possible serious reactions. There is also an increased risk of drug interactions between KALETRA and Lipitor® (atorvastatin); talk to your doctor before you take any of these cholesterol-reducing medicines with KALETRA.

Medicines that require dosage adjustments:

It is possible that your doctor may need to increase or decrease the dose of other medicines when you are also taking KALETRA. Remember to tell your doctor all medicines you are taking or plan to take.

Before you take Viagra® (sildenafil) with KALETRA, talk to your doctor about problems these two medicines can cause when taken together. You may get increased side effects of VIAGRA, such as low blood pressure, vision changes, and penis erection lasting more than 4 hours. If an erection lasts longer than 4 hours, get medical help right away to avoid permanent damage to your penis. Your doctor can explain these symptoms to you.

- If you are taking oral contraceptives ("the pill") to prevent pregnancy, you should use an additional or different type of contraception since KALETRA may reduce the effectiveness of oral contraceptives.
- Efavirenz (Sustiva™) or nevirapine (Viramune®) may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood. Your doctor may increase your dose of KALETRA if you are also taking efavirenz or nevirapine.
- If you are taking Mycobutin® (rifabutin), your doctor will lower the dose of Mycobutin.

A change in therapy should be considered if you are taking KALETRA with:

Phenobarbital
Phenytoin (Dilantin® and others)
Carbamazepine (Tegretol® and others)

These medicines may lower the amount of KALETRA in your blood and make it less effective.

Other Special Considerations:

KALETRA oral solution contains alcohol. Talk with your doctor if you are taking or planning to take metronidazole or disulfiram. Severe nausea and vomiting can occur.

- If you are taking both didanosine (Videx®) and KALETRA: Didanosine (Videx®) should be taken one hour before or two hours after KALETRA.

What are the possible side effects of KALETRA?

- This list of side effects is not complete. If you have questions about side effects, ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist. You should report any new or continuing symptoms to your doctor right away. Your doctor may be able to help you manage these side effects.

- The most commonly reported side effects of moderate severity that are thought to be drug related are: abdominal pain, abnormal stools (bowel movements), diarrhea, feeling weak/tired, headache, and nausea. Children taking KALETRA may sometimes get a skin rash.

- Blood tests in patients taking KALETRA may show possible liver problems. People with liver disease such as Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C who take KALETRA may have worsening liver disease. Liver problems including death have occurred in patients taking KALETRA. In studies, it is unclear if KALETRA caused these liver problems because some patients had other illnesses or were taking other medicines.

- Some patients taking KALETRA can develop serious problems with their pancreas (pancreatitis), which may cause death. You have a higher chance of having pancreatitis if you have had it before. Tell your doctor if you have nausea, vomiting, or abdominal pain. These may be signs of pancreatitis.

- Some patients have large increases in triglycerides and cholesterol. The long-term chance of getting complications such as heart attacks or stroke due to increases in triglycerides and cholesterol caused by protease inhibitors is not known at this time.

- Diabetes and high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) occur in patients taking protease inhibitors such as KALETRA. Some patients had diabetes before starting protease inhibitors, others did not. Some patients need changes in their diabetes medicine. Others needed new diabetes medicine.

- Changes in body fat have been seen in some patients taking antiretroviral therapy. These changes may include increased amount of fat in the upper back and neck ("buffalo hump"), breast, and around the trunk. Loss of fat from the legs, arms and face may also happen. The cause and long term health effects of these conditions are not known at this time.

- Some patients with hemophilia have increased bleeding with protease inhibitors.

- There have been other side effects in patients taking KALETRA. However, these side effects may have been due to other medicines that patients were taking or to the illness itself. Some of these side effects can be serious.

What should I tell my doctor before taking KALETRA?

- If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant: The effects of KALETRA on pregnant women or their unborn babies are not known.
- If you are breast-feeding: Do not breast-feed if you are taking KALETRA. You should not breast-feed if you have HIV. If you are a woman who has or will have a baby, talk with your doctor about the best way to feed your baby. You should be aware that if your baby does not already have HIV, there is a chance that HIV can be transmitted through breast-feeding.
- If you have liver problems: If you have liver problems or are infected with Hepatitis B or Hepatitis C, you should tell your doctor before taking KALETRA.

- If you have diabetes: Some people taking protease inhibitors develop new or more serious diabetes or high blood sugar. Tell your doctor if you have diabetes or an increase in thirst or frequent urination.

- If you have hemophilia: Patients taking KALETRA may have increased bleeding.

How do I store KALETRA?

- Keep KALETRA and all other medicines out of the reach of children.
- Refrigerated KALETRA capsules and oral solution remain stable until the expiration date printed on the label. If stored at room temperature up to 77°F (25°C), KALETRA capsules and oral solution should be used within 2 months.
- Avoid exposure to excessive heat.

Do not keep medicine that is out of date or that you no longer need. Be sure that if you throw any medicine away, it is out of the reach of children.

General advice about prescription medicines:

Talk to your doctor or other health care provider if you have any questions about this medicine or your condition. Medicines are sometimes prescribed for purposes other than those listed in a Patient Information Leaflet. If you have any concerns about this medicine, ask your doctor. Your doctor or pharmacist can give you information about this medicine that was written for health care professionals. Do not use this medicine for a condition for which it was not prescribed. Do not share this medicine with other people.

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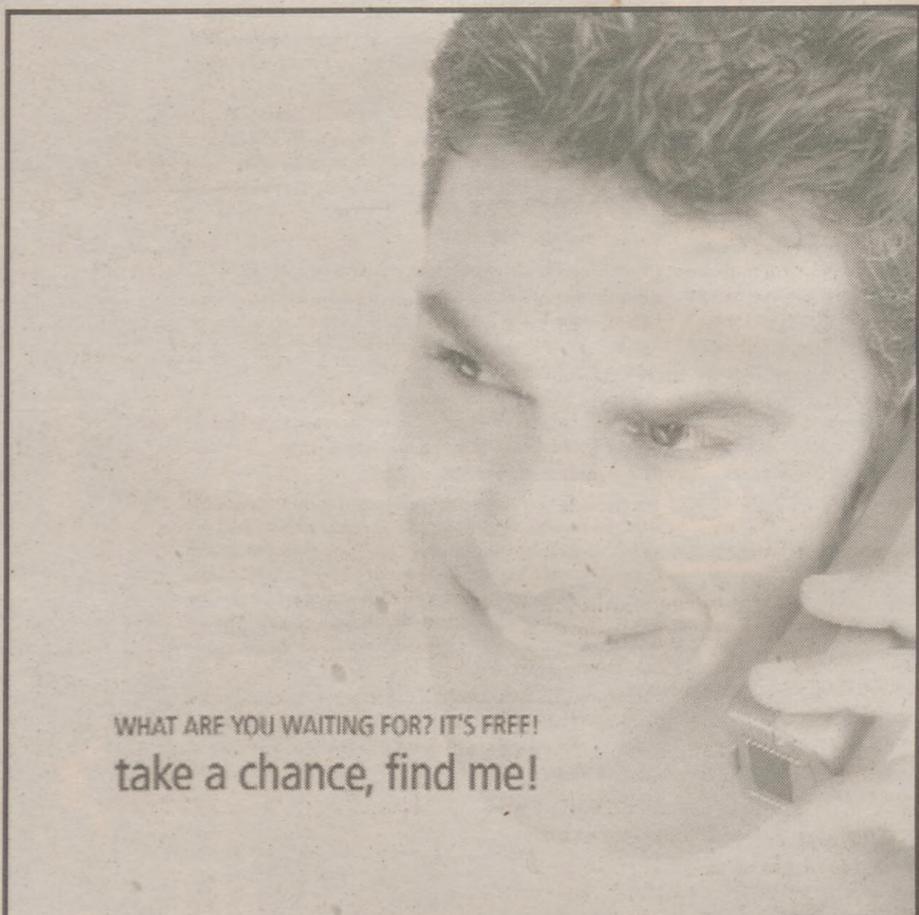
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local news

Houston Congressman sponsors immigration bill for gay partners

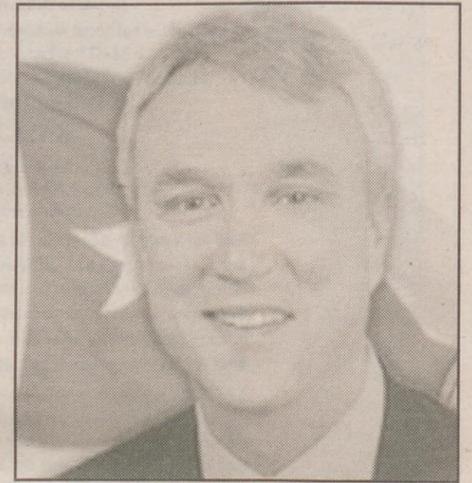
Immigration Act an effort to "do the right thing" for gay U.S. citizens and their foreign partners

WASHINGTON — Former Houston City Council member and current gay-friendly U.S. Rep. Chris Bell (D-Houston) joined Houston Congress member Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-Houston) and more than 100 other House members last month by signing on as a co-sponsor of the Permanent Partners Immigration Act.

The bill seeks to offer residency to immigrant same-sex partners of U.S. citizens, such as citizens of other countries who marry Americans are allowed to stay in the country. Proponents of the bill laud the bill's assertion that gay couples in committed relationships should be allowed to live together in the United States, but conservatives see the proposed law as a backdoor effort to legalize gay marriage.

Bell, who appeared in Houston's Gay Pride Parade in June and actively sought the gay vote when he ran for his post, faces a GOP-led redistricting push that could turn him out of office in the next election, perhaps delaying any controversial stances.

The Congressman waffled publicly for months as to whether he would support the immigration bill. But he told reporters



U.S. Rep. **Chris Bell** signed on last month to the Permanent Partners Immigration Act in an effort to "do the right thing" for gay U.S. citizens and their foreign partners.

last month that since the bill was new to him, he needed to closely analyze the issue. Ultimately, his conscience made him "do the right thing," he said.

The Lesbian & Gay Immigration Rights Task Force and John Nechman, a gay Houston immigration attorney who has pushed the bill with legislators, applauded Bell and said his support could convince other Congress members to sign on to the bill.

Bell's chief of staff told the Associated Press that the Congressman "has always been there for the gay community."

around houston

Fund-raising events earmark support for Montrose Clinic

HOUSTON — Bartenders and wait staff from local gay establishments come together Aug. 17 at Rich's Houston to raise funds for the Montrose Clinic at the Miss Mint Julep Contest. The contestants are raising money now from their clientele and supporters to benefit the clinic, which was established more than 20 years ago as an STD resource by gay doctors. In 2002, the agency served more than 15,000 clients in more than 35,000 visits, according to clinic statistics. Many of the Miss Mint Julep contestants are donning drag — men as women and vice versa — for the first time to compete and raise money. 100 percent of proceeds from pre-show pledges and performance tips go to the clinic's programs, and the person who raises the most money receives the crown.

The event also features a silent auction to benefit the clinic. Local favorites who emcee the show and perform include Clay Howell, Robert Harwood, Nancy Ford, Eric Roland, Shy Anne and Dennis Deville. "The clinic has always been there for the Houston LGBT Community, and I felt it was time to be there for the clinic," said Howell, also the event chair. "So many friends have received quality health care here, and I want to help see that continue.

Community organizations including the Krewe of Olympus and Space City Empire are set to provide group performances, and well-

known drag acts Selena St. John, Kaye Sedilla and the Debris Sisters are also scheduled.

Later this month, the clinic also is scheduled to reap benefits from the Aug. 24 production of Don Gill LIVE! at Brazos River Bottom, which specifically benefits HIV/AIDS care for gay men. The clinic lost a government grant that specifies care for gay men, so Gill wants to earmark funds for that group, he said. A long list of performers are slated for the gospel-themed show. Look for more details next week.

i MORE INFO

Miss Mint Julep Contest
Aug. 17, 5 p.m.
Rich's Houston
2401 San Jacinto St.
713-759-9606

Don Gill LIVE!
Aug. 24, 7 p.m.
Brazos River Bottom
2400 Brazos St.
713-528-9192

Montrose Clinic
215 Westheimer Road
713-830-3000

regional news

Newspaper union announcements gain acceptance

Dallas paper follows Chronicle in 'doing the right thing'

By JOSEF MOLNAR

The growing inclusion of same-sex announcements in Texas newspapers underscores the changing attitudes toward same-sex unions, but a national gay equality group says some stragglers remain.

After meeting with members of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation last year, the Dallas Morning News recently joined more than 200 papers around the country by changing its advertising policy to include same-sex announcements. The paper will print same-sex commitment ceremony and civil union announcements in its Sunday Texas Living section.

The Morning News follows in the footsteps of papers like the Houston Chronicle to bring the total number of Texas newspapers publishing same-sex announcements to 11 and raises the national total to 211, according to GLAAD research.

Eddie Gutierrez, GLAAD southwestern regional media director, said its Announcing Equality Initiative more than tripled the number of papers that accept same-sex union announcements since it began last year. The original list began with 44 papers in the U.S., but after GLAAD announced the project, 25 more papers, including larger, more respected papers like the New York Times, signed on within months.

Creating a list of papers with this policy helped other publications to join, Gutierrez said.

"My hunch would be that the reason the 60 signed on is because they were already doing it," said Gutierrez. "But I think that's what helped other papers to join."

A list of 211 sounds like a large number, but it is only a fraction of the thousands of newspapers printed across the country. One of the largest papers in Texas, the Fort Worth Star Telegram, continues to hold out on a policy change.

Gutierrez says the Star Telegram continues to justify its decision not to run same-sex union announcements based on Texas law. Since the Supreme Court struck down the homosexual sodomy statute in June, the paper modified its rationale by pointing to the fact that marriages are illegal in Texas, thanks to the recent passage of the state's Defense of Marriage Act.

Gutierrez says this decision places them behind major papers like the Dallas Morning News. He also points out the disparity between the Star Telegram's editorial and advertising judgement.

"It seems a little contradictory that they're running fair and inclusive coverage of the gay community in the front of their paper," he said. "And yet they won't run same-sex announcements in their back pages."

Each paper justified its decision in different ways, but all of them cited social acceptance of gay relationships as a primary factor.

Ressie Pate, the director of advertising

at the Houston Chronicle, said the paper changed its policy last September as a way of moving with the times. The Chronicle runs announcements in its Celebrations section every Sunday.

"If our paper doesn't change and open our mind to these things, we're going to be a dinosaur," she said.

The Chronicle certainly didn't make the decision for financial reasons. An average announcement in the paper costs about \$500. That amount doesn't register with the millions in classified revenue it receives annually, and although the option is available, Pate said the paper has not run many.

"I would love to say that we've run hundreds, because we would make more money," she said. "But we've only run one or two."

The Chronicle officially changed its policy, but the 100-year-old paper was really just lining its policy up with its practice. Cathy Martin, an advertising sales manager with the Chronicle, said the paper has run same-sex announcements for several years now.

Martin admits some people may be offended by the change, but the paper will not change its policy, she said.

"People have issues with everything we put in the paper," she said. "It doesn't matter. Some people are going to have a problem with everything."

Pate agreed, saying positive responses to the policy outweigh the negative ones.

"We caught some flack," she said. "But we had some people who said, 'Finally, you're doing the right thing.'"



The Montrose Clinic welcomed 15 ladies from ExxonMobil's Human Resources Department July 25 to give a much-needed facelift to the interior of the agency. "It's been over 5 years since the Clinic was last painted, and the walls were definitely showing the wear and tear of over 35,000 patient visits per year," said Sonna Alton, Montrose Clinic's Director of Communication & Events. "Many of the individuals seeking services at the Clinic are living with HIV and AIDS. Coming to a freshly painted health care facility will hopefully brighten their visit."

Texas gay high school puts programs on hold

DALLAS — On the heels of a New York City high school becoming the first public gay school in the country last month, the non-accredited Walt Whitman Community School here shuttered operations as of the upcoming fall semester, officials announced Aug. 6.

Just as proponents rallied around the decision to give the Harvey Milk School in New York a full program for gay students, officials at the struggling Whitman decided to spend the next 10 months seeking accreditation, board member Karen McCrocklin told the Associated Press.

Whitman, which saw enrollment drop to as few as seven students in 2002, offered a stunted course load that approximated a regular high school education, but without accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, a Whitman diploma held little value.

Whitman graduates still had to apply for a General Equivalency Diploma after completing their course load at the school.

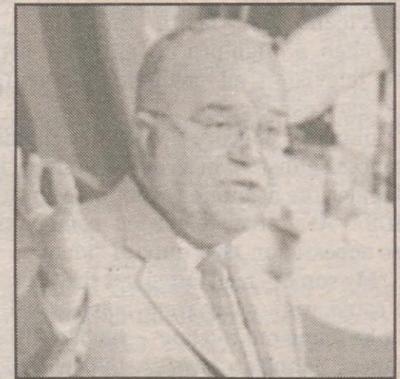
Advocates say that Milk, Whitman and the country's few other schools specifically for gay students are needed because the harassment faced in traditional high schools hinders education of gay students. Opponents say that such schools do an injustice to gay students by ostracizing them.

"They are not learning how to deal with the real world," said Shaun Marie Levine, a spokesperson with the Conservative Party of New York State. "They're mean to chubby kids too. Do we start a school for chubby kids, Russian kids, Haitian kids?"

inside

ISSUE 1189

LOCAL NEWS.....	5
NATIONAL NEWS.....	8
FORUM.....	12
OUT ON THE BAYOU.....	15
COMMUNITY CALENDAR.....	21
APPOINTMENTS.....	21
CLASSIFIEDS.....	22
Q PUZZLE.....	23
HOROSCOPES.....	26



FOLLOW THE LEADER: The short list to replace exiting Human Rights Campaign Executive Director Elizabeth Birch includes Robert Chase, the gay former president of the National Teachers Association. **Page 8**



CATHOLIC GUILT: Politicians who practice Catholicism are split on the Vatican's stance against gay marriage. Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) said the church should butt out of politics. **Page 10**



SUBLIME SAGE: Bisexual singer Rachel Sage mixes thought-provoking complexity and intelligence with pop-inspired toe-tappers on latest CD. **Page 17**

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national news

Ex-gay movement suffers high-profile setback

EX-EX-GAY, continued from Page 1

fessional parting of ways" prior to Johnston's fall.

"Many people are still behind him, and we think he did the responsible thing by closing the ministry down," LaBarbera added.

In 1998, a coalition of conservative religious groups — including Kerusso, Americans for Truth and AFA — launched a high-profile national print and television ad campaign preaching that gays can change.

Johnston appeared with his mother, Frances Johnston, in a controversial print ad under the headline "From innocence to AIDS." A similar television commercial also appeared in 1998, dubbed "Mom."

"My son Michael found out the truth — he could walk away from homosexuality. But he found out too late — he has AIDS," Frances Johnston says in the television commercial.

In the ad, Michael Johnston praises his mother for telling him "the truth that set me free."

"A decade ago, I walked away from homosexuality through the power of Jesus Christ," he claims.

Second ex-gay star to fall off wagon?

Johnston now apparently becomes the second star of the campaign known to have failed in maintaining his "ex-gay" status, and the scandal surrounding both ex-gay leaders was uncovered by the same enterprising gay activist.

John Paulk, who appeared in the 1998 ex-gay ads and on the cover of Newsweek with his "ex-lesbian" wife Anne Paulk, was spotted in a popular gay bar in Washington, D.C., in September 2000.

Wayne Besen, a former communications staffer with the Human Rights Campaign, photographed Paulk in the bar, Mr. P's.

Johnston's "fall" should be a final blow to discredit ex-gay ministries, said Besen, author of "Anything But Straight," a book aimed at debunking ex-gay ministries due for release in October by Harrington Park Press.

"This was their knockout punch, and now it is the punch line," he said.

Besen contacted this newspaper after interviewing two men who Besen said claimed to have had sex with Johnston in the last year after meeting him online.

"There has got to be a point where you can no longer say this is the exception," Besen said. "If you have exception after exception, you have to at some point say it is the rule."

Unsafe sex allegations

In his speeches as an ex-gay, Johnston acknowledged having sex with men without disclosing his HIV status.

"I continued to live as a homosexual for two years after I knew I was HIV-positive," Johnston said in a 1998 speech to a California church, reported in POZ magazine. "And I am ashamed to say that in

those two years not once did I ever tell any of my partners that I was carrying this deadly disease."

Johnston allegedly continued that behavior during his recent "moral fall," according to a Virginia man who says he had an ongoing sexual relationship with Johnston that included Johnston using drugs and having multiple male sex partners.

"What we did was unsafe," said the man, who spoke only on condition of anonymity over fears that he would lose his job because of his sexual orientation or HIV status.

"I brought it up all the time, but [Johnston] didn't seem to think it mattered," the man said. "He would have these parties, get a hotel room, get online and invite tons of people — he just wouldn't care."

The man said he met Johnston, who he said called himself Sean, in a gay Internet chat room. They began meeting in the late fall of 2001, and their sexual relationship lasted about six months.

"It wasn't all the time — he would just appear from time to time," the man said. "But we were friends for a year and a half."

"Sean" only revealed his HIV status at the end of the men's friendship, claiming he had just found out, the man said. He learned Sean's true identity from a friend who also dated him.

The friend apparently learned that Sean's real name was Michael Johnston from his driver's license. An Internet search revealed Johnston's work with ex-gay ministries.

"I was shocked, and I felt betrayed," the man said. After seeing photos from the ex-gay Web sites and television ad, "I have absolutely no doubt Sean is Michael Johnston," he said.

After discussing the issue with friends, the man contacted Michael Hamar, a Virginia attorney.

Virginia law makes it a felony to knowingly expose someone to HIV, but Hamar said his client hasn't pursued either a civil lawsuit or a criminal complaint against Johnston.

"At this point, he is sort of overwhelmed by it all," Hamar said. "But he felt at minimum he needed to get the word out, so that if nothing else, others who may have been exposed would go get tested."

Hamar learned of Besen's book on the Internet and contacted him. Besen then traveled to Virginia where he said he interviewed Hamar's client and his friend who also said he had unprotected sex with Johnston.

One of the men told him Johnston had said he was entering Pure Life Ministries, Besen said. The facility in rural Kentucky requires a minimum stay of six months and "helps Christian men achieve lasting freedom

from sexual sin," according to its Web site.

When Besen called Pure Life and asked for Johnston, he said the person who answered the phone confirmed that Johnston was there by saying he could not come to the phone, but offered to take a message.

Two Pure Life staff members contacted for this article declined to confirm the presence of any individual "student."

Johnston did not respond to a message left there.

Pattern of falls

While ex-gay ministries continue to claim that gays can change their sexual orientation through prayer or therapy, Johnston is the latest in a series of fallen "ex-gay" leaders.

When Paulk was seen in the gay bar, he initially claimed he only entered Mr. P's to use the restroom. But Paulk later said he was seeking the "easy camaraderie" of his former stomping grounds because of the "great deal" of stress in his life.

After Paulk's gay bar visit three years ago, Exodus International, a leading ex-gay organization where Paulk served as board chair, placed him on probation and removed his voting rights. Six months later, Exodus restored Paulk to the board, although not as chair.

At the time of his fall, Paulk also served as manager of the Homosexuality & Gender Department at Focus on the Family, a Colorado-based group that opposes gay rights.

Focus founder James Dobson stood by Paulk, who stepped down from his job with the group in April 2003 to move to the Pacific Northwest "to be closer to extended family," according to a press release from the group.

Paulk wasn't the ex-gay movement's first brush with scandal. Gary Cooper and Michael Bussee organized the 1976 conference of ex-gays out of which Exodus International was formed. But Cooper and Bussee later fell in love with each other and left their wives to live together as a couple, becoming frequent talk show guests in the 1990s.

And Wade Richards, an "ex-gay" featured in a 2000 press conference by anti-gay groups, came out as gay again in an interview with the Advocate several months later.

The series of scandals proves that ex-gay ministries and groups that support them are "dishonest," Besen said.

"They told America, 'You can change. Why? Because Michael Johnston did,'" he said. "But when he fails, and in spectacular fashion, they sweep it under the rug. They owe America an apology."

LaBarbera, however, said using Johnston's behavior to discredit all ex-gay programs "makes about as much sense as saying Alcoholics Anonymous should close down because one person started drinking again."

But Besen noted that other ex-gays, including Cooper and Bussee, later denounced the programs.

"The argument that this is someone who fell off the wagon is discredited when

you realize the people who built the wagon say it doesn't work," he said.

Conservative ties

In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from its official list of mental disorders the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. The American Psychological Association later endorsed the other APA's decision.

In the three decades since, many major medical organizations have spoken out against "reparative" or "conversion" therapy aimed at changing an individual's sexual orientation, including the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Medical Association.

But "ex-gay" programs like Exodus continue, propped up in recent years by support from conservative religious groups including the AFA, the Family Research Council, Coral Ridge Ministries and Concerned Women for America.

"By elevating the ex-gay movement, the Christian Right has shifted its message to a model of preaching personal salvation for homosexuals," researcher Surina Kahn wrote in "Calculated Compassion," a 1998 report on ex-gay ministries.

"But behind this mask of compassion, the anti-gay and authoritarian agenda of the right remains unchanged," Kahn concluded in the study, released by Political Research Associates, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute and Equal Partners in Faith.

Johnston's Kerusso Ministries had ties to many of nation's highest-profile religious right groups, joining with the AFA, Family Research Council and Rev. Jerry Falwell's Falwell Ministries to host National Coming Out of Homosexuality Day events.

An Oct. 11, 1999, press conference sponsored by the groups in San Francisco drew national headlines after two gay counter-protesters threw blueberry pies at Johnston, a featured speaker.

Johnston was back in the spotlight with Falwell just two weeks later, speaking at a press conference and a morning worship service when members of Falwell's Thomas Road Baptist Church held a historic meeting with Soulforce, a group dedicated to ending spiritual violence against gays.

In 2000, LaBarbera, an outspoken gay rights opponent, merged his Americans for Truth About Homosexuality into Johnston's Kerusso Ministries, creating a new outreach of Kerusso called the Americans for Truth Project.

LaBarbera worked part-time for the project at Kerusso, but said the relationship "didn't work out" after LaBarbera took his present job as senior policy analyst at the Washington-based Culture & Family Institute, an affiliate of Concerned Women for America.

"Michael remains a close personal friend of mine, even though I haven't talked with him since he closed down the ministry," LaBarbera said. "Obviously, we are very saddened by it."



Michael Johnston



national news

Episcopalian Church split over election of gay bishop

GAY BISHOP, continued from Page 1

arm and back in a crowded room.

According to a friend, Lewis, who declined to pursue a formal, written complaint, never meant for the e-mail to be made public, the AP reported.

Robinson came under additional fire for his connection to the Web site of Outright, a secular program for gay and bisexual youth. Robinson had started a local chapter in New Hampshire. A representative for the conservative American Anglican Council, which opposed Robinson's election, urged the bishops to investigate the Web site, which had a link to another site, which had a link to a pornographic site.

Robinson, a 56-year-old divorced father of two, who has been living with his male partner for 13 years, said he disassociated himself with the Outreach chapter in 1998.

Debating divisive issues

Rev. Daniel B. England, director of communications for the Episcopal Church Center, said the mood at the convention has been "dignified and graceful" despite the fact that some are "troubled" by the recent decision.

"There was no wailing and gnashing of the teeth about it," England said. "The bishops who rejected the election read a simple statement about it and a few deputies walked out in a more symbolic way than a dramatic way."

Opponents said Robinson's election

amounted to a "pastoral emergency that has overtaken" the church and leaders in the Anglican Communion must intervene.

"The bishops who stand before you are filled with sorrow," Bishop Robert W. Duncan of the Pittsburgh Diocese said in a prepared statement delivered after the vote. "This body has divided itself for millions of Anglican Christians around the world, brothers and sisters who have pleaded with us to maintain the church's traditional teaching on marriage and sexuality."

Anglican leaders in Asia and Africa, where churches are more conservative than in Western countries, roundly denounced the confirmation. Rev. Peter Karanja, provost of the All Saints Cathedral, in Nairobi, Kenya urged the council to reconsider its decision.

"We cannot be in fellowship with them when they violate the explicit scripture that the Anglican Church subscribes to," the AP reported.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Rowan Williams, had hoped to avoid the controversy, but urged both sides on Wednesday to refrain from any action that would threaten Anglican unity. But he did acknowledge that the confirmation would have a "significant impact" on the church.

Williams appointed Canon Jeffrey John, a celibate gay priest bishop of Reading, England but came under pressure from opponents to force John to resign. John withdrew his name from consideration, saying he did not want to cause a split in the church.

Robinson's supporters say that unlike John, the new bishop of New Hampshire will not be forced to resign as Episcopalians from the Diocese of Manchester, N.H. elected — not appointed — him on June 7. He will become the state's ninth bishop.

Rev. John David van Dooren, of All Souls Memorial Episcopal Church in Woodley Park in Washington, D.C., said that, historically, opponents of change in the Anglican Church have threatened to split the denominations but that has never happened.

"People said similar things in 1979 when women were ordained," said van Dooren, who is gay.

Same-sex unions?

Delegates to the convention will vote, as late as Friday, on the divisive issue of looking into liturgies that might be acceptable for same-sex unions, England said.

"The proposal is not to approve of same-sex blessings, but to merely have groups explore what liturgies might be used if such unions were approved of," England said.

But some predict that since Robinson has become bishop, the price of that victory might be the refusal of delegates to deal with the issue of same-sex union blessings. Such refusal would delay the issue until the next convention, in 2006.

"That could very well be the compromise," said James Solheim, director of the Episcopal News Service.

The issue of same-sex union blessings has

been hotly debated over the past decade by Episcopalians and while some bishops, on an individual diocese level, have allowed their priests to bless same-sex relationships, there is no liturgical right to do so, Solheim said. A motion to debate same-sex blessings was rejected during the last convention in 2000.

The U.S. Episcopal Church boasts 2.3 million members and is a part of the worldwide, 77 million-member Anglican Communion. The convention in Minnesota, which consists of 800 lay members appointed by their dioceses and a separate chamber with 300 bishops, began on July 30 and ends on Aug. 8.

Despite the orderly conduct of the bishops during Robinson's confirmation, some protesters demonstrated outside the convention hall.

The Guardian reported that Dan Holman of Keokuk, Iowa held a bullhorn and called for the execution of all gays and lesbians while shouting, "There are no sodomite bishops in the Bible."

Robinson's spokesperson, Mike Barwell, and Rev. Michael Hopkins, president of Integrity USA, did not respond to phone calls by press time.



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national news

HRC mum on who will replace Birch

Search for new director enters final phase

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

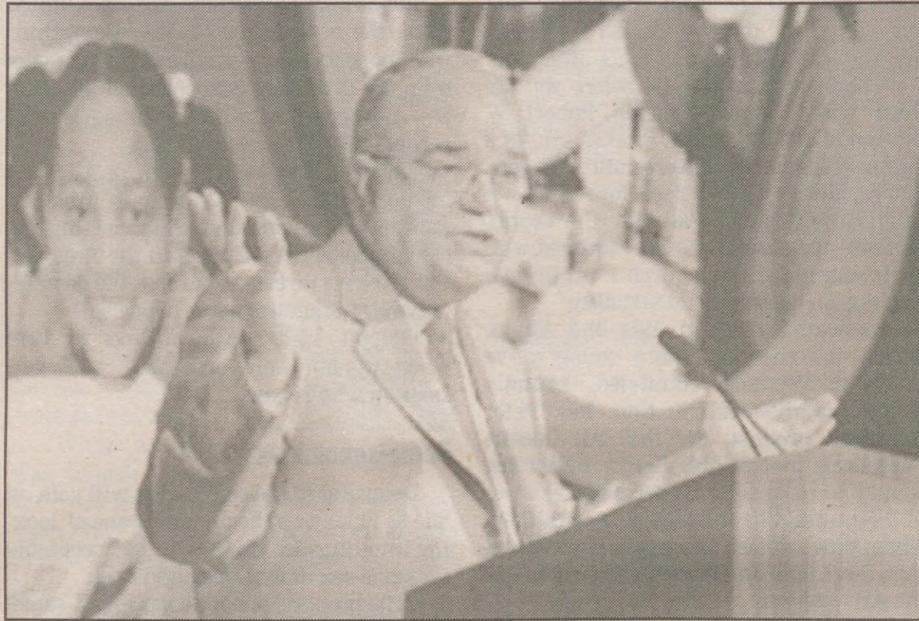
WASHINGTON — With Elizabeth Birch, the Human Rights Campaign's president and executive director, scheduled to step down at the end of the year, the nation's largest and most prosperous gay political group has given no hint of whom it may select to replace her.

"We have identified some intriguing candidates," said Aly Kassam Remtulla, an official with the Boston executive search firm Isaacson Miller, which HRC hired to coordinate the search process.

But Remtulla said that under procedures established with HRC's board of directors, which will make the final decision on a new HRC leader, his firm could not reveal the identities of those who have applied for the post.

Since its founding in 1980, HRC has grown from a fledgling group with a tiny staff to one of the most prominent gay civil rights lobbies and political action committees in the nation's capital. It includes a staff of 113 and a budget of more than \$20 million.

In 1986 the group established the HRC Foundation, which conducts education and



Robert Chase, the gay former president of the National Teachers Association, is one of very few names rumored to be in the running to replace Elizabeth Birch as executive director of the Human Rights Campaign next. (Photo courtesy of National Teachers Association)

research on behalf of gay civil rights issues. The executive director also serves as head of the foundation.

While HRC engages in a wide range of fund-raising activities to support its budget, it is best known for its trademark black tie

political dinners. Prominent politicians, including President Clinton and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, are among those who have attended and delivered speeches at HRC dinners.

Earlier this year, the group moved into

its new \$25 million, 80,000 square foot headquarters building, becoming the first national gay rights group to own a facility of that size.

Birch has been credited with playing a key role in the group's growth since she became HRC's fourth executive director in January 1995. Prior to coming to HRC, Birch, an attorney, served as director of litigation for Apple Computer, Inc., and general counsel to the Claris Corp., Apple's software subsidiary.

Remtulla said the initial phase of the search identified a large and "impressive" list of applicants and potential candidates for the position. Within the next few weeks, Remtulla said, the search committee will review the applicants and begin to conduct interviews with those deemed to be the most suitable for the job.

Gay activists said HRC is keeping a tight lid on information about possible candidates. One name that has surfaced in activist circles is Robert Chase, the gay former president of the National Teachers Association.

"That's a name that has come to us from a number of sources," Remtulla said. "But I can neither confirm nor deny the names of any candidates."

Chase could not be reached for comment by press time.

ENDA won't include transgender protections

Gay groups ponder new legislation to replace decade-old bill

By BRYAN ANDERTON

WASHINGTON — When gay rights groups lobbied members of Congress to resubmit the Employment Non-Discrimination Act this session, for the first time almost all of the groups advocated adding language to the bill that would expand its protections to include transgendered people.

But despite the apparent sudden solidarity on the issue of trans inclusion in ENDA, sponsors of the measure plan to reintroduce the bill without specific protections for transgendered people, leading to speculation that new legislation might be created to update and eventually overtake ENDA by broadening its scope and adding gender identity protections.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, ENDA — which would ban job discrimination based on sexual orientation — will most likely be reintroduced in the House after the summer recess, with Reps. Christopher Shays (R-Conn.), Barney Frank (D-Mass.), James Greenwood (R-Pa.) and Ellen Tauscher (D-Calif.) signing on as lead co-sponsors.



Winnie Stachelberg, HRC's political director, said the group lobbied for gender identity to be added to the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and was 'disappointed' that it wouldn't be. (File photo by Clint Steib)

Sens. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and James Jeffords (D-Vt.) are likely co-sponsors of the bill's Senate version. But according to HRC officials, neither version is likely to include protections for transgendered people.

"The decision has been made by the lead sponsors that now is not the time to add gender identity to ENDA," said Winnie Stachelberg, HRC political director. "I listen to members of Congress and many of them — not all of them, but many

— have said [adding transgender protections] will slow passage of this bill down."

Frank, one of only three openly gay members of Congress and a co-sponsor of the bill, confirmed Stachelberg's analysis.

"ENDA will not [include gender identity] because there would have been a very significant fall-off, especially among Republicans," Frank said. "We had talked about that ... but my sense is that, particularly among Republicans, it's a problem."

So now an effort is underway between HRC and other gay rights groups to develop a new piece of legislation that will address the needs of transgendered people. In addition to being transgender-inclusive, the new legislation could also have a broader scope than ENDA by addressing discrimination in areas such as housing and public accommodations as well as employment.

"What's become obvious over the last couple of years is that ENDA is inadequate in a lot of ways," said Mara Keisling, executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality. "The new effort is aimed at addressing some of those inadequacies, only one of which is gender identity and inclusion."

"It's an idea we've been talking about for a long time," said Matt Coles, director of the American Civil Liberties Union's Lesbian & Gay Rights Project. "I think the question is about drafting a

more inclusive civil rights bill. I don't think the initial thinking is to do a transgender-inclusive version of ENDA; I think the thinking is about cleaning the slate and saying, 'What do we think a good civil rights bill should look like?'"

First introduced in 1994, ENDA has retained much of its original scope and purpose over the last nine years. In 1996, it came within one vote of passing the Senate, but has not had that same amount of support since.

For years, transgender rights activists have sought to have gender identity and expression protections added to the bill, but it wasn't until this year that they received support from more than 20 of the nation's largest gay rights groups.

Perhaps the biggest change came from HRC, which officially changed its stance last December, when its board of directors voted to support transgender inclusion in the bill for the first time. The organization added gender identity to its mission statement in March 2001.

MORE INFO

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national news

Philly Boy Scout council 'devastated' by United Way cuts

PHILADELPHIA — The board chair of a regional Boy Scouts council said the group was distraught over the loss of funding from the United Way, the Philadelphia Inquirer reported. Last week, the United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania voted to cancel grants for the Cradle of Liberty Council and the Boy Scouts' Chester County Council, both because of policies allowing discrimination against gays. "We're absolutely devastated by this," David H. Lipson Jr., Cradle of Liberty's board chair said. The United Way has a policy of nondiscrimination based on sexual orientation and will not fund organizations that discriminate. The Boy Scouts of America won a U.S. Supreme Court decision in 2000 that upheld the group's decision to fire an openly gay scout leader. The Cradle of Liberty Council in May adopted an anti-discrimination policy inclusive of sexual orientation, but the national Boy Scouts then threatened to revoke the local group's charter. The local council succumbed to the pressure and ousted a South Philadelphia Life Scout, Gregory Lattera, who announced he is gay. Also, in San Diego last week a federal judge ruled that the city acted improperly when it leased city land to the Boy Scouts for a token fee, saying the organization's policies on gays and religion disqualified it from preferential treatment, the Associated Press reported.



Leaders for the regional Boy Scouts of America council that ousted South Philadelphia Life Scout Gregory Lattera because he is gay said they are 'devastated' that the United Way now has withdrawn its funding from the group because of discrimination against gays.

Lawmakers brace for fight over gay marriage in Wisc.

MILWAUKEE (AP) — Wisconsin lawmakers say they're ready for the looming political fight over whether to grant legal status to gay unions, in light of a Vatican request to legislators to oppose approving them. Rep. Frank Boyle (D-Superior) said he plans to reintroduce a bill next week that would create a state domestic partnership registry. Under his proposal, any domestic partnership would have the benefits of a marriage, such as property rights and parenting responsibilities. But state Sen. Scott Fitzgerald (R-Juneau) said the legislature is more likely to pass a defense of marriage act that excludes same-sex unions from the definition of marriage. That legislation was introduced in January with 41 sponsors in the Assembly and nine in the Senate, including Fitzgerald, a Catholic.

South Carolinians clash on issue of gay adoption

CHARLESTON, S.C. — Gays in South Carolina currently are free to adopt children, but one state lawmaker continues to try to change that, the Charleston Post & Courier reported last week. Sen. Mike Fair (R-Greenville) said he has a bill in the Senate Judiciary Committee that would outlaw placing a child in any home where the child would be exposed to sexual practices outside of marriage. Fair agrees with the Vatican that children in homes with same-sex parents are at a developmental disadvantage. "This isn't rocket science," said Fair, a Baptist. "People who try to defend that are concerned about political correctness." Veronica Mancy, the clinical director of behavioral health for Family Services in Charleston, disagrees. "Sexual preference does not determine whether you're a good or bad parent," said Mancy, whose clients include gay couples.

Gay teen allegedly abducted, raped after Ohio gay center

CLEVELAND — A gay teenager said he was abducted and raped by three men after leaving a program at the Cleveland Lesbian & Gay Center on July 11, the Gay People's Chronicle reported last week. The alleged victim, 15, told police that while waiting for a bus near the center, three men approached him, calling him "faggot" and telling him they were "going to fuck him." The teen told police that the men kidnapped him, drove him around in a Ford Explorer, and then stopped at a house "with an abandoned look." All three men then raped him, the alleged victim told police, and he was forced at knifepoint to give oral sex to all three. The next day, late in the afternoon, the youth was dropped off in a Cleveland suburb, after the men reportedly argued about what to do with him and threatened to kill him, according to police. The teen was treated and examined for rape at Lutheran Medical Center.

Iowa police search for motive in gay man's killing

COUNCIL BLUFFS, Iowa — Police are investigating the fatal stabbing July 31 of an Omaha man, Detective Todd Weddum told the Council Bluffs Nonpareil. Nelson Alvarez, 33, was found stabbed several times and unconscious on the lawn of a house. He was pronounced dead a short time later at Creighton University Hospital. Reports indicate that Alvarez was gay. Weddum said police have discovered that Alvarez sometimes dressed as a woman and would refer to himself as "Selena." There is no indication, however, that Alvarez's killing was the result of a hate crime because of his sexual orientation, police said. He was wearing a T-shirt and jeans when found by officers. "No one reported hearing anything about comments made to indicate it's a hate crime," Weddum said.

From staff and wire reports

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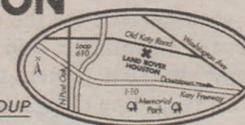
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around the nation

Catholics divided over Vatican stance on gay marriage

Some say the church overstepped its authority, others welcome guidance

By JOE CREA

WASHINGTON — The Vatican issued a document last week reiterating its position that “homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon,” and announced that Catholic politicians are “obliged to oppose” same-sex unions for the “common good.” Politicians who support gay marriage rights were labeled “gravely immoral.”

The Vatican — the body responsible for policing Roman Catholic orthodoxy — said legal recognition of same-sex unions “would obscure certain basic moral values and cause a devaluation of the institution of marriage.”

The 12-page document, titled “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Couples,” also says that children adopted by gay parents would be exposed to “violence ... in the sense that their condition of dependency would be used to place them in an environment that is not conducive to their full human development.”

Marianne Duddy, executive director of Dignity/USA, the nation’s largest group of gay Catholics, called the document “vicious” and “unfounded.”

“Two things bother me the most about the document,” Duddy said. “One is the absolute arrogance that the Vatican has the right to impose their own moral value system on the entire citizenry of democratic countries. And then, of course, is that same-sex couples expose children to violence.”

“How can the Vatican, with the mess that they made, dare to make such unfounded and vicious claims against gay and lesbian couples who are providing homes to children in society that no one else wants?” she said.

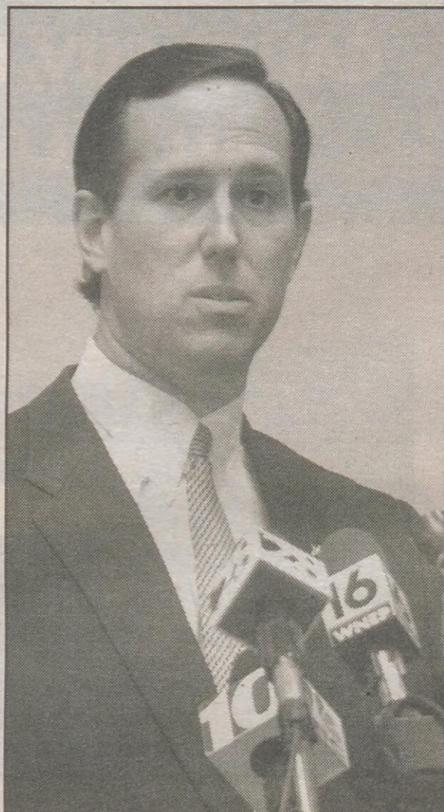
A spokesperson for the Catholic Archdiocese of Washington said there is “nothing new” in the document released by the Vatican regarding church teaching on the issue of same-sex unions. The church will continue to teach all to love everyone and instruct, in a “positive way,” the church’s understanding of marriage, the spokesperson said.

Pressuring Catholic politicians?

The Vatican’s position regarding gay marriage and adoption was not new to many Catholics, but gay activists and proponents of Catholic Church reform said that the language in the document was more vitriolic than that in other position papers. Many were upset at the suggestion that Catholic politicians should take “marching orders” from the Vatican.

Democrat presidential hopeful Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) rebuked the Vatican for the suggestion that Catholic politicians have a “moral duty” to oppose same-sex unions.

“I believe in the church and I care about



U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) (left) said his Catholic beliefs are part of who he is as a politician. But critics pointed out that Santorum’s positions at times contradict church doctrine. Democratic presidential candidate Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) said the Catholic Church has no business instructing politicians on how to vote. (Santorum photo by Ralph Wilson/AP. Kerry photo by Luis Gomez)

it enormously,” Kerry, a Catholic, told the Associated Press. “But I think that it’s important to not have the church instructing politicians. That is an inappropriate crossing of the line in America.”

Kerry opposes gay marriage, but said same-sex couples should have the same legal recognition as married couples.

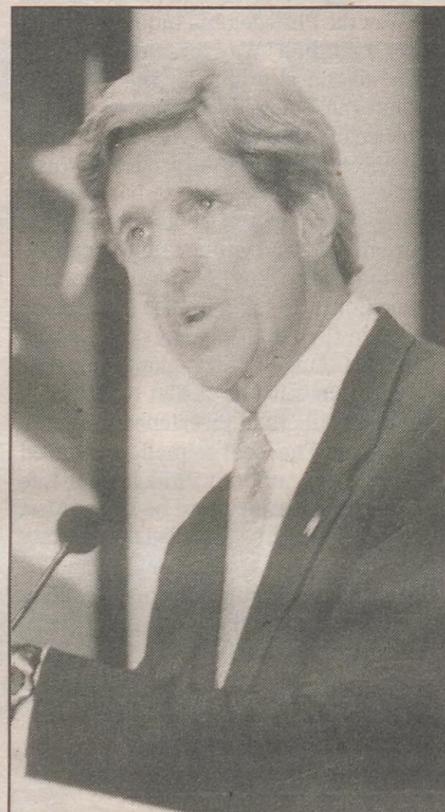
Sen. Rick Santorum (R-Pa.) said on Fox News Sunday that he disagrees “dramatically” with Kerry’s statement and said that it is his “right as a Catholic politician to uphold the values that I believe are important to me, and important, that I believe, for this country.”

Prominent Catholic Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) said in a statement that while the church is free to determine what marriage is, it is the job of the government, not the church, “to say who can be married in a civil sense.”

The Vatican document was harshly condemned in Massachusetts, one of the largest bastions of practicing Catholics in the country. The Boston Globe blasted the proposal as “needlessly hurtful” and suggested that the church had its own internal issues to deal with, notably the child sex abuse cases that surfaced in January 2002.

“When it comes to doing violence to children, it seems obvious that the church has lost its moral authority, since it ignored, condoned and covered up a generation of sexual assault — which was not consensual and not loving — of children by American parish priests,” the editorial said.

This is the second time this year that the Vatican has attempted to influence Catholic politicians. In January, Pope John Paul II signed a “doctrinal note” sent to political



leaders that discussed how much leeway Catholic politicians have when making decisions on moral issues.

Praise from the right

Social conservatives praised the Vatican document. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops “welcomed” the considerations and said the purpose was to protect the “common good” and “preservation of the family.”

Pia de Solenni, a moral theologian and fellow at the conservative Family Research Council, wrote in a recent article that Catholic politicians, “can’t hide behind the veil of so-called ‘personal belief’ and not articulate opposition to laws supporting same-sex unions.”

“Politicians who wish to publicly identify themselves as Catholic must be accordingly open about their Catholic beliefs, and they have to vote accordingly. Being Catholic carries with it a responsibility to reflect one’s faith.”

Duddy said it was ironic that the religious right often accuses gays of being “cafeteria Catholics” — those who selectively choose which doctrines of faith to follow — while others like Santorum have been selective themselves when it comes to which Catholic orthodoxy to support. Santorum, for example, strongly backed the war in Iraq and is a proponent of the death penalty, which contradicts the Vatican’s stance.

Francis Kissling, president of Catholics for a Free Choice, a non-profit advocacy organization for gender equality and reproductive freedom, called the Vatican document “propaganda” used to “continue the bashing of politicians who support gay right.”

“No public policy position has been inspired by the Holy Ghost that says Catholics need to follow this,” Kissling said. “If you look at the example of abortion, there has not been a single pro-abortion rights politician ex-communicated from the Catholic Church because there is no effective enforcement of Catholic orthodoxy. In the end, in terms of church authority, they are providing a suggestion.”

Kissling and Duddy also questioned why “such venom and such rigidity” from the Vatican are often reserved for questions related to homosexuality, abortion and women’s rights, when the Vatican often does not use such language or invective for other issues, namely the sex-abuse scandals.

“The only answer I have, as someone who has been deeply involved in these issues for 25 years, is that the Vatican feels their power is threatened when Catholics or civil society take a position on sexual morality that differs from the church,” Kissling said. “It doesn’t apply to priests having sex with kids. That’s not a direct threat to the church’s power.”

Worldwide reaction mixed

International reaction to the Vatican document was mixed.

Gay couples can already marry in Canada, following a June ruling by the Ontario high court. In the wake of the Vatican statement, a Roman Catholic bishop in Alberta angrily condemned Canada’s Catholic prime minister, Jean Chretien, for his support of gay marriage and suggested that he risks his “eternal salvation” for making gay marriage legal.

The Federal Government of Australia strongly backed the document, saying that it was in the best interest of children for politicians to reject same-sex unions. John Anderson, Australia’s deputy prime minister, said that by rejecting gay marriage, the interest of promoting a “stable family” would be preserved.

Many politicians in Ireland had strong reactions to the document. The Irish Council for Civil Liberties warned that clergy and bishops who distribute the Vatican’s publication could face prosecution under “incitement to hatred” legislation, the Irish Times reported.

Newspapers in Europe also responded with mixed opinions. France’s Le Figaro published an interview with a Catholic priest who supports the Pope’s stance, while the Roman daily newspaper, La Repubblica, announced that two-thirds of 11,000 participants in an online poll disagreed with the Vatican’s position.

In addition to Canada, only the Netherlands and Belgium allow gay marriage.

MORE INFO

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international news

Australia split on Vatican's denouncement of gay marriage

MELBOURNE, Australia — The federal government backs the Vatican's rejection of same-sex unions, saying it was in the best interests of children and the country to have only male-female marriages, The Age newspaper reported. Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson said he believed marriage should be between people of different sexes. Though it was not for the government to get involved in people's private lives, it was in the country's best interests to promote a stable family, he said. But the Australian Democrats' spokesman for sexuality issues, Brian Greig, said the Pope's call was "an appalling interference by the church into domestic politics" and "an abuse of power." Other Catholic politicians have responded to a papal directive to vote against any new legislation that recognizes gay unions by telling the church to mind its own business, the Australian reported. "MPs should decide issues strictly on their merits. The separation of church from state is fundamental to our system," Labor's Laurie Brereton, a Catholic, told the Australian.



Australian Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson said this week that he agrees with Catholic Church leaders who say marriage should be between a man and a woman only.

Liberal Canadians at odds over the issue of gay unions

OTTAWA — Jean Chrétien's own backbench is threatening to kill the prime minister's plan to rewrite the traditional definition of marriage to allow gays and lesbians to marry, the Toronto Star reported. Chrétien can expect to hear plenty from unhappy Liberals when they gather Aug. 18-21 in North Bay for a summer caucus meeting. "It's going to be very divisive," Lynn Myers (Waterloo-Wellington) told the Star. Chrétien's government has long resisted demands from gay rights activists for the right to marry, but recently gave up the fight after losing legal cases in British Columbia and Ontario. The draft bill would redefine marriage as the "union of two persons to the exclusion of all others." MPs say their offices have been flooded with calls and letters from Canadians furious about the plan to revamp marriage. Liberal Parliament members hinted at the baptism by fire Paul Martin will face as party leader, the Associated Press reported.

Gay couples set out to battle marriage law

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Same-sex couples are set to launch a class action in the Johannesburg High Court challenging the common law definition of marriage, which only recognizes a union between a man and a woman, Business Day reported. The move likely will affect labor law, insurance, inheritance, succession and tax issues, all influenced by the Marriage Act. This comes after the Constitutional Court's dismissal of a lesbian couple's application for leave to appeal against the Pretoria High Court's refusal to legalize their marriage. Evert Knoesen, coordinator of the Equal Rights Project of the Lesbian & Gay Equality Project, said the application itself was flawed as it did not challenge the Marriage Act itself. "Once the courts have ruled that the regulations of the Marriage Act must be amended to include same sex partners, then people can rush off and get married," Knoesen said.

Skinheads attack participants in Stockholm gay pride parade

STOCKHOLM — A group of about 30 skinheads attacked marchers in a gay pride parade in Stockholm with stones and bottles on Aug. 1, police and a Reuters witness said. A young man on the annual march was struck in the head and taken to a hospital, Reuters reported, but a police spokesman said his injuries were not life threatening. A Reuters cameraman at the scene said the attackers carried banners reading, "Lock up pedophiles" and "Crush pedophiles," referring to a recent advertising campaign by a gay rights group featuring pictures of young children. The campaign, aiming to show that gay orientation can start at an early age, drew protests from a child protection group that said the sexual depiction of children could encourage pedophiles, Reuters reported. Marc Abramsson, a leader of the youth organization of the right-wing National Democrats, said about 200 anti-gay protesters demonstrated peacefully until marchers threw bottles at them. But a police spokesperson said anti-gay activists started the brawl.

Hundreds kiss at gay rally in Brazil shopping mall

SAO PAULO, Brazil — Hundreds of gay Brazilians locked lips at a Sao Paulo shopping center on Sunday, rallying for gay rights after a security guard at the mall asked a gay couple to stop kissing, Reuters reported. Gay couples staged the "kiss-in" at the Frei Caneca shopping center's food court. A spokesperson for the center said as many as 3,000 people attended the rally, but not all joined in the kissing. Wilson Pelizaro, the shopping center's superintendent, told Reuters that the mall stood by the guard's decision to stop the couple, which he claimed had engaged in an excessively intimate kiss after leaving the mall's movie theater last month. The policy applies to both gay and straight couples, he said.

From staff and wire reports

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Issue 1189

Forum

HOUSTON VOICE

AUGUST 8, 2003

PAGE 12

editorial

Summer of Gay Love

When you get to San Francisco, be sure to wear ...
whatever the 'Fab 5' from 'Queer Eye' say is hip,
and that's one small sample of this season's progress.

By CHRIS CRAIN

IN THE SUMMER OF 1967, the sexual revolution and opposition to war was set to a theme of psychedelic rock and coalesced to create the legendary "Summer of

Love." After that season of hippies and "Sgt. Pepper," it was clear that society had taken an important step forward that would forever change the way we think about sex, marriage, women and a host of other subjects.

With the dog days of August only now upon us, a remarkable string over the last few weeks has created what we might call the "Summer of Gay Love," after which homosexuality will never be viewed the same way again.

Since Memorial Day '03, Canada has announced steps that will lead to full access to civil marriage for same-sex couples north of our border, putting new and useful pressure on state governments on this side of the border to recognize those gay marriages and perhaps adopt legal recognition for American gay couples.

In late June, only days after the official beginning of the summer season, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned an infamous precedent and threw out anti-gay sodomy laws. With sweeping language, the nation's highest court promised to respect our relationships and forever struck down moral disapproval of our lives as a legitimate basis for official discrimination.

Last month, seven of nine Democratic contenders for the White House met at a Human Rights Campaign forum and pledged their support for every plank in the gay rights agenda, including broad legal recognition for gay couples. Only gay marriage gave some of them pause.

Just this week, the Episcopal Church risked internal schism and a break with conservatives in the worldwide Anglican Communion to confirm its first ever openly gay bishop, turning back a last-minute campaign to smear Rev. V. Gene Robinson.

In a summer of ho-hum movies and TV re-runs, the surprise hit is Bravo's "Queer

Eye for the Straight Guy," which uses stereotypes about superior gay taste to make over the lives of hapless straight male style victims.

The "Fab 5" with the "queer eye" — on everything from interior design and fashion, to food, wine and grooming — may not be breaking down any barriers, but their straight male subjects most certainly are. At least in the episodes aired thus far, these "metrosexuals" have accepted the fey five's advice with an open mind and unchallenged masculinity.

OF COURSE, THE "SUMMER OF GAY Love" hasn't been without its backlash.

When Rev. Robinson won the vote of Episcopal lay delegates and appeared to have majority support from the denomination's bishops, conservative opponents mounted a last-minute smear campaign that included allegations of inappropriate sexual "touching" and links to pornography on a Web site for gay youth.

Episcopal Church officials properly delayed the vote to investigate the allegations, but dismissed them only one day later as totally unsubstantiated. The "sexual touching" involved Robinson putting his hand on the upper arm and back of another man in a public conversation, and the pornography was as many as seven hypertext links removed from a gay youth group with which Robinson had had no involvement for several years.

The smear campaign said far more about Rev. Robinson's opponents than it did about him; born out of desperation and mean-spiritedness, conservatives within the church reached for any available weapon to beat back the course of progress. They failed, and discredited themselves and their cause.

Along those same lines, the institution with probably the least credibility to speak out on issues of sexual morality — that would be the Roman Catholic Church — chose to respond to the growing momentum toward legal recognition for same-sex relationships by ordering Catholic politicians not to vote in favor of gay marriage and by

declaring that children would be subjected to "violence" if raised by gay adults.

The Vatican's audacity is breathtaking, of course. After revelation upon revelation that Catholic Church officials hid evidence of sexual abuse and forcible rape of children by priests, and then reassigned them where they could acquire a fresh supply of victims, this pope and his retinue of red-capped old men lacks all moral standing to pronounce anything to anyone about sexual ethics or protecting children from violence.

AND ALONG THOSE SAME LINES, President Bush last week offered an impromptu sermon on tolerance and against being judgmental when asked by a reporter at a Rose Garden press conference for his views on homosexuality.

The president responded with the biblical admonition that we are all sinners, but went on to suggest not so subtly that his own conservative supporters ought to remove the log from their own eyes before they focused too much on the speck in the eyes of homosexuals.

The president's Scripture lesson angered many gays because he seemed to suggest homosexuality was indeed a sin and because he announced plans to "codify" his longstanding opposition to same-sex marriage. But Bush's position on these issues is longstanding and should surprise no one.

What was new here was this Republican president's willingness to use his bully pulpit to call for tolerance toward gays.

Twenty-four hours later, the White House press secretary was pressed to explain the president's comments and for five minutes stumbled and dodged his way through an evasive non-answer that devoted far more effort to appear tolerant and compassionate toward gays than it did expressing disapproval for gay marriage.

The "Summer of Gay Love" may hold in store at least one more bombshell. The highest court in Massachusetts has yet to announce its ruling in a lawsuit challenging the exclusion of gay couples from full civil marriage. Every state supreme court to address the issue in recent years — in Hawaii, Alaska and Vermont — has concluded that heterosexual-only civil marriage is unconstitutional. There is no reason to think the traditionally liberal court in Boston will rule otherwise.

The Gay Pride celebrations of 2003 may be largely behind us, but we may need to schedule our own Gay Woodstock to celebrate this remarkable summer of progress if that happy ruling comes down before Labor Day.

@ Chris Crain is executive editor of Houston Voice and can be reached at editor@houstonvoice.com.



viewpoint WAYNE BESEN



Rightwingers spend millions on ad campaigns with testimonials on 'curing' homosexuality, but the inevitable 'moral fall' brings silence.

Sex, lies and 'ex-ex-gays'

IN 1998, JANET FOLGER OF CORAL RIDGE Ministries, joined by 17 other right wing political groups, declared war on gays. Their secret weapon was an unprecedented million-dollar print and television ad campaign featuring so called "ex-gays."

"We're asking you to reexamine the truth of homosexuality with *all* the facts in hand, apart from the half-truths and hostile name calling," implores one of the ads.

Fair enough. It has been five years since this inflammatory campaign trans-fixed America. What has happened in these five years?

An article in Southern Voice this week unmasks ex-gay poster boy Michael Johnston as a fraud. In a 1998 full-page Wall Street Journal ad, Johnston says, "If you love someone you'll tell them the truth."

Apparently this love and truth may not have been extended to Johnston's sexual liaisons. Johnston who is HIV-positive, allegedly had unsafe sex with several men in southern Virginia.

Johnston once called gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) a "pervert." He would do well to apologize to Frank and others for casting a gravel yard's worth of first stones.

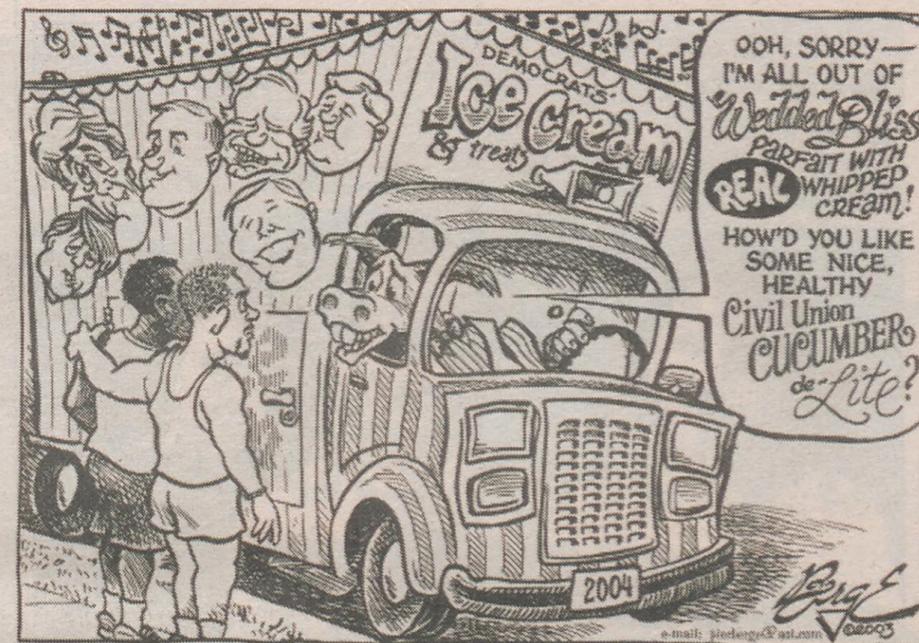
JOHN PAULK HAD BEEN THE KING OF the ex-gay ministries. During the 1998 assault he appeared in a full-page ad with a group of "former homosexuals" under the headline "We're Standing for the Truth that Homosexuals Can Change." He and his wife Anne also took this explosive message to "60 Minutes" and "Oprah."

The pinnacle of his career came when he appeared on the cover of Newsweek with his ex-lesbian wife under the bold headline, "Gay for Life?"

Apparently so. In September 2000, John Paulk was found imbibing at Mr. P's, a well-known Washington D.C., gay bar. He offered a cocktail to Daryl Herrschaft, a Human Rights Campaign colleague of mine, and proceeded to hit on him. Herrschaft called me from the bar, and I came by and photographed the "ex-gay."

Paulk was suspended as the leader of Exodus Ministries, the world's largest ex-gay organization.

IN A 1998 NEW YORK TIMES FULL-PAGE ad, John Paulk's "ex-lesbian" wife Anne proclaimed, "I'm living proof the truth can set you free." Unfortunately, Ms. Paulk was caught in a lie. In the huge ad she says,



"even though I had a lot of male friends, I just wasn't attracted to men sexually."

Yet, in "Love Won Out," a book she co-wrote with John, Anne acknowledges she felt sexual desire for a man named Mark. "He appealed to me sexually," Anne writes. "We were drawn together by sheer animal magnetism. ... I came to see I could be physically attracted to a male, but I just couldn't surrender my heart to him."

It is amazing that the right wing had so much trouble finding a real ex-lesbian that they had to recruit a straight or bisexual woman to lie in the ad about her past animal attraction toward men.

Finally, Wade Richards, an ex-gay spokesperson who worked with right winger Peter LaBarbera, has since come out of the closet since the ad campaign and denounced the ex-gay ministries.

of epic proportions and would be laughable if it had not hurt so many innocent victims.

The real story here is not that Johnston failed and put people at risk for contracting HIV. After all, he is just a pathetic pawn and a victim of the right's hate propaganda and homophobia.

The true scandal is that Revs. Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and their right wing friends remained silent after learning of Johnston's demise.

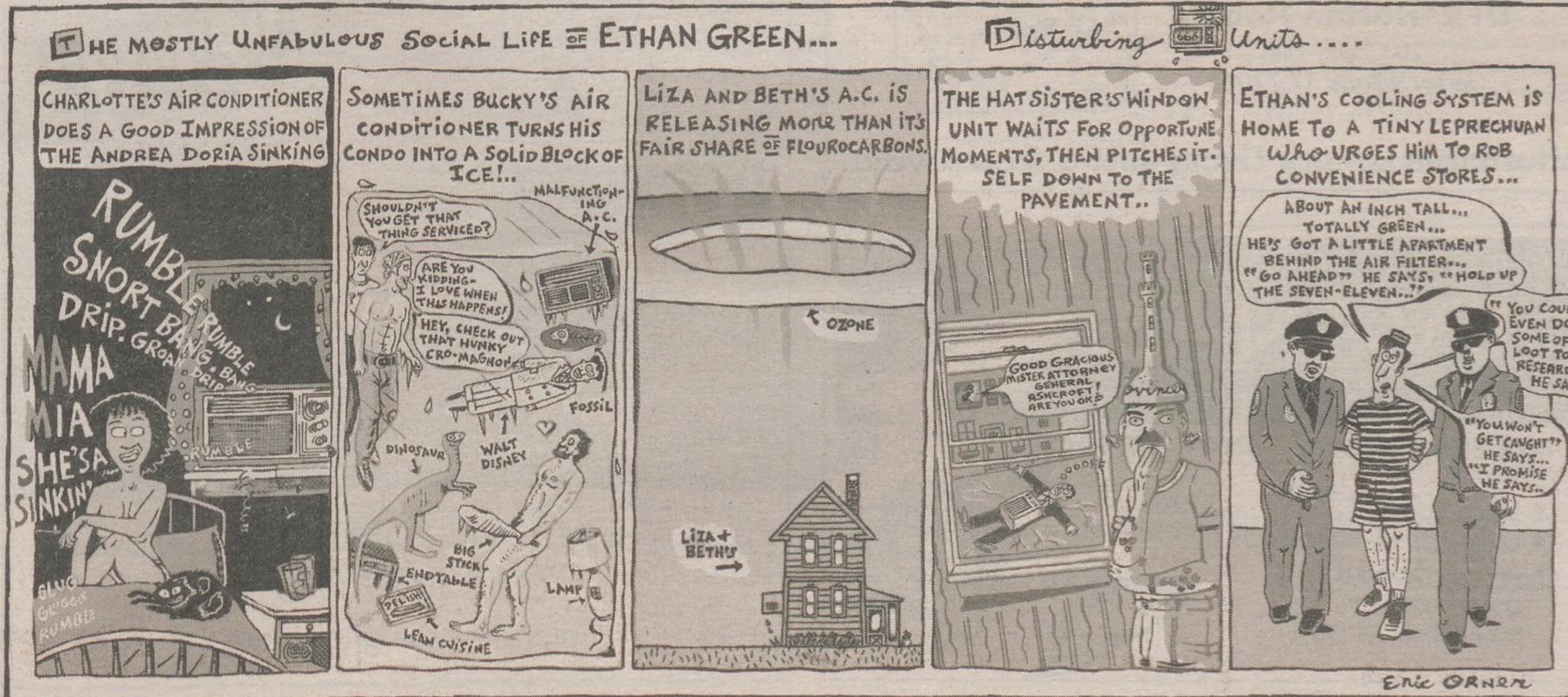
These groups allowed families to be torn apart because they had been sold the lie that sexual orientation is a casual choice and that heterosexuality can be achieved by following Michael Johnston's model of success.

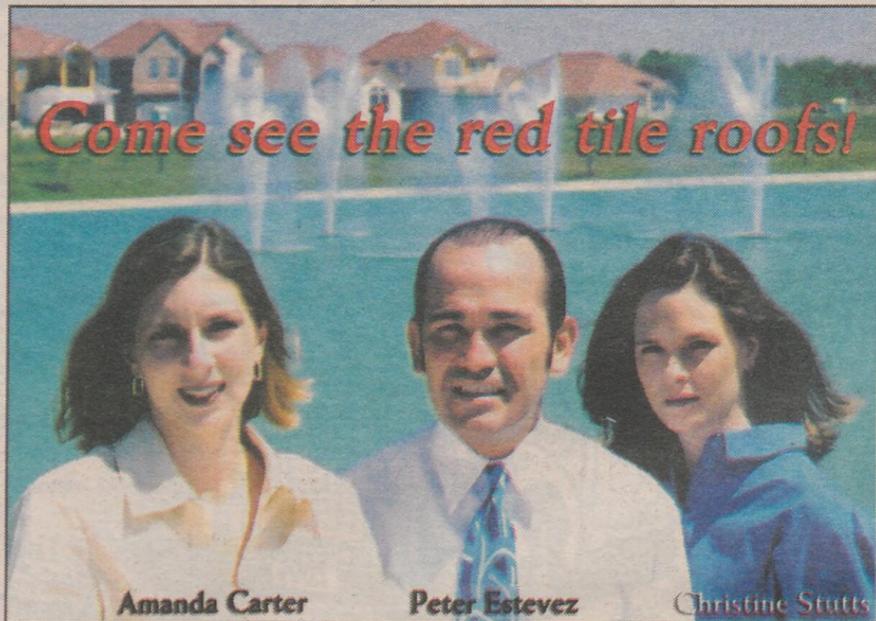
The only thing these right wing groups have the ability to make straight is the record — and it is clear they are unwilling to do so.

IF WE REEXAMINE THE ISSUE, AS THE right wing asked, the verdict is in.

The ex-gay ad campaign that was supposed to be a knockout punch for gay rights has instead become a punchline. It is a bust

@ Wayne Besen is the author of "Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the 'Ex-Gay' Myth" (Haworth, October 2003). He can be reached at wbesen@aol.com.





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Out on the Bayou

Not quite a mile, but definitely a

Milestone

Gay community center moves to meet success with spacious new digs

By J.B. Black

ON A HISTORIC DAY IN JUNE, national media attention focused on Houston as the U.S. Supreme Court announced its decision in the sodomy case of Lawrence and Garner v. Texas. Journalists from across the nation clamored to talk to the local attorneys who won the case.

But first, reporters had to find them. "We had media calling us from all over," says Clarence Burton Bagby, president of the Houston GLBT Community Center. "A reporter from Chicago was frantically asking me, 'How do I get to the community center from the airport?'"

As the site for the attorneys' important press conference, the center found itself playing host to a historic moment. It was a fitting occasion for an agency whose mission is to "empower, educate and nurture individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities."

For many organizations, it can be a long road from past to present. For the Houston GLBT Community Center, it was actually a few blocks.

Founded in 1996, the center existed quaintly in a two-story house on Hawthorne Avenue. In February 2003, the center moved to its current location on the second floor of 3400 Montrose Blvd., less than a mile from its former base of operations.

The move was small in distance,

but it was enormous in its impact.

"Moving to our new location was a huge milestone," Bagby says. "The prior location was charming, but there was practically no space. The meeting room was so small. We were having to turn some groups away, because we didn't have enough space to accommodate them."

But now the community center has spacious, inviting quarters. The center's main meeting room easily seats more than 100 people, and the site also includes a conference room, lounge, welcome center and offices for the center's non-profit tenants. High profile tenants include the Houston Gay & Lesbian Political Caucus, the Black LGBT Coalition of Houston, the Texas Human Rights Foundation and the Houston chapter of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays.

IN FACT, THE CENTER'S ROOTS developed to answer one recurring question in gay circles: Where can we meet?

"That's one of many things we do, simply providing a space for people of similar interests to meet," Bagby says. "Groups prosper and grow when they have a central place in which to organize. Activists and people in the community get that. They understand how important it is to have that central hub and that main resource to rely on."

Many groups, before the center was established, had nearly disbanded

Please see **Community Center** on Page 16



The new Houston GLBT Community Center location provides meeting spaces, events for a variety of local gay organizations, including New Covenant Christian Church's 'Mending and Stitching' that brings back old-style quilting circles. (Building photo by Kimberly Thompson. Quilting photo courtesy Todd Williams)

out on the bayou

Community Center offers programs for varied needs

Community Center, continued from Page 15

for lack of affordable, safe meeting space in Houston, Bagby notes.

Lacking funds to pay for meeting venues, some groups opted to gather in members' homes. But that proved to be a deterrent to potential members who were uncomfortable or intimidated visiting a group for the first time at a private residence.

The center resolved both issues by providing an affordable, safe and centralized space. Current fees for meeting space range from \$10 to \$35 per hour and are due in advance of the organizations' scheduled events. For an additional small fee, the center supplies use of audio-visual equipment, including a sound and light system, TV, VCR, slide projector, overhead projector and projection screen.

As a result, the all-volunteer, non-profit agency has seen the number of participating groups and their attendance flourish.

"It's quite interesting to see the diversity of what's going on in our community and the diversity of our groups," Bagby says.

Nearly 100 groups now meet at the center. Among the agency's many regular groups are a bisexual social group, a gay veteran's group, the University of

Houston's gay student organization and New Covenant Christian Church.

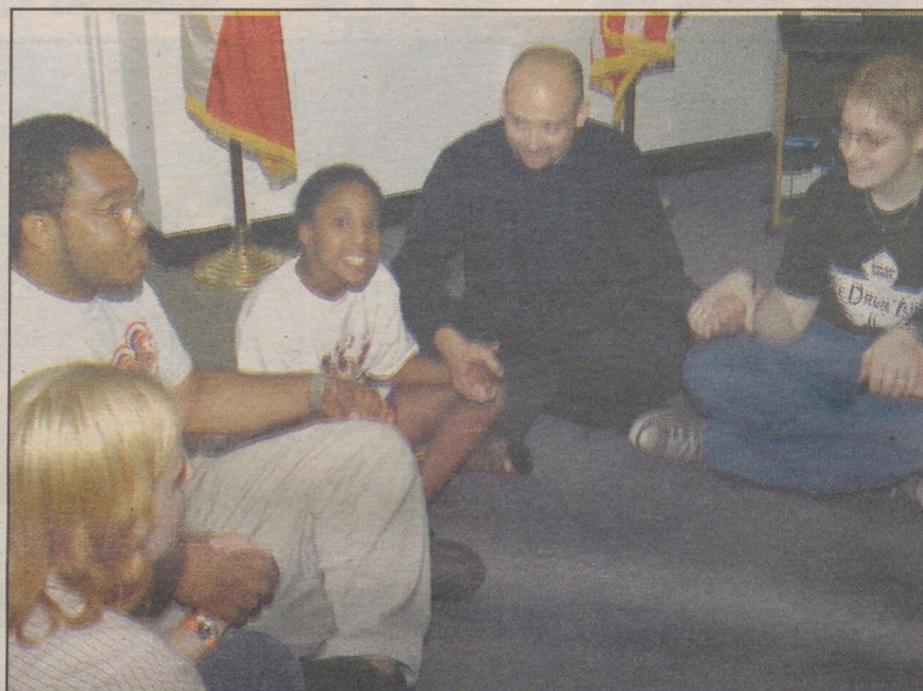
The center also promotes several health-related, civic and cultural programs. Each one was developed to meet needs that were not addressed anywhere in the Houston community.

New and previously missed groups that now thrive at the center include a monthly emerging writer series, Lesbian Cinema Arts, an alcohol and substance abuse prevention and intervention program, an AIDS bereavement program and the Center Library, Houston's largest GLBT lending library. There are also programs for gay youth and the largest gay voter registration program in the country.

The center also maintains an online community calendar, listing a wide range of GLBT events of interest throughout the Houston area. The calendar — as well as a comprehensive listing of the center's groups, programs and activities — are a valuable local resource.

DESPITE THE MANY ADVANCES AND huge steps it has made in the past seven years, the community center still has more avenues and goals to eagerly pursue, Bagby says.

"Our biggest challenge is projecting our image as a resource to the entire Houston GLBT community," he says. "We



The revitalized schedule at Houston GLBT Community Center includes weekly sessions for the New Covenant Christian Church. (Photo by Kimberly Thompson)

consider our universe as the greater Houston area. We aren't limited to just what's inside the beltway.

"We want people to see us as a central point of connection with Houston's GLBT community," he adds. "We want to be the main resource that they can come to."



MORE INFO

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Latest CD from bisexual songstress focuses on dangers posed by romantic love — same-sex or otherwise.

Sage's songs soothe

NEW YORK CITY ARTIST RACHAEL Sage thanks her "lucky scars" on "Too Many Women," one of her new songs. Sustaining the injuries may not have been easy, but the scars are lucky, indeed.

Out of the confusion of self-analysis and romantic love's inevitable tensions comes "Public Record," a noteworthy release well worth the emotional journey.

The lyrics and emotional texture of the CD sound deeply personal, but much of the material originates from outside the immediate world of this accomplished singer-songwriter, who is bisexual.

"I needed to take a big fat vacation from myself after my last record," Sage, 30, says with equal parts seriousness and humor.

Writing songs for the CD, she says she "had a huge desire to have fun ... to express gratitude to people in New York" who have helped her through in many ways.

The result is a collection of stories, mostly from other people's experiences, sung by someone who seems well acquainted with introspection as well as observation.

"PUBLIC RECORD" IS DRIVEN EQUALLY by literate, interesting language and skillful musical composition. It is Sage's fifth release on Mpress Records, following "Morbid Romantic" (1996), "Smashing The Serene" (1998), "Painting of a Painting" (2001), and "Illusion's Carnival" (2002).

Sage has performed at Lilith Fair, dubbed by organizers as a celebration of women in music, and toured with Ani DiFranco, Eric Burdon and Melissa Ferrick. She won the John Lennon Songwriting Contest in 2001 and the Billboard Songwriting Contest in 2002.

In July, Sage was named a finalist in the new artist search for the Newport Folk Festival.

Her piano style is one that owes much to classic balladeers. But she adds a jazz influence, and her rock 'n' roll-touched vocals flourish with additional keyboard overtones, innovative arrangements, and edgy guitars.

The result is a modern rock CD that hums as if Carole King and Sarah McLachlan absorbed the sounds of PJ Harvey. Indeed, Sage cites King as an influence, along with Kate Bush, Elvis Costello and David Bowie, among others.

On the moody tune "Child," Sage poses difficult questions and looks into personal history to understand current pain. "Bravedancing" is set in a pop-rock style well poised to please a wide audience. The slow, soulful song "Beauty Fades" begins with brutal wisdom: "Beauty fades then



'Public Record' offers a collection of stories sung by Rachael Sage, a bisexual singer who seems well acquainted with introspection and observation. (Photo by Vanessa Rogers)

what have you got left/fatal mistake to let your surface be your compass."

MUCH OF THE ALBUM CENTERS ON the dangers posed by romantic love.

"When I recount the stories, I've never really been as interested in the psychology of what works as much as in pulling apart what's challenging," Sage says.

The opening track, "What If," rearranges traditional Judeo-Christian imagery to produce a Goddess who "builds an ark and she fills it with all the animals that she can possibly find," a metaphor, Sage says, for serial monogamy and the attempt to reconstitute oneself.

"Back To Freedom" is set to jazzy, sexy, funky music that could be a backdrop to a Beat poetry reading. In it, Sage sings and speaks, "How dangerous is your cruelest kiss/I wish I knew the answer/ 'Cause I'm paralyzed and I can't see/ And I suspect that I'll be the last to know/ this woman who's in front of me/ and how it feels to melt like snow."

Some songs have a radio-ready pop cadence that may convince listeners to sing along, a refreshing change in the midst of dense and challenging material.

At the same time, Sage writes freely about love experiences of all types. On "Chasing The Girl," she sings, "I wanna be the boy with the most cake/ Chasing the girl with the most ice cream."

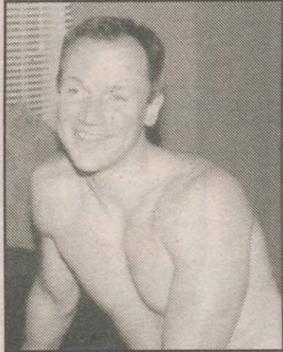
MORE INFO

Rachael Sage
'Public Record'
Mpress Records, August 2003
www.rachelsage.com

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film STEVE WARREN



Focus groups may be to blame for the apparent de-gaying of Lopez flick, latest slice of 'American Pie' series.

Ready for Gay.Lo

FOCUS GROUPS SHOULD FORM A UNION and demand screen credit. They often have more to do with a movie's screenplay than the so-called writers.

It was rumored that because focus groups couldn't accept Jennifer Lopez as a lesbian, Sony was re-editing "Gigli" to remove that aspect.

If they had done that, the movie would only be about half an hour long (not that that would be a bad thing). The optional ending that's tacked on was probably a bone thrown to focus groups.

On the other hand, I never heard any rumors about focus groups causing "American Wedding" to be re-edited for de-gaying purposes. But the evidence is on the screen.

One character seems on the verge of coming out early in the picture and he never hooks up with anyone after that. And even though there are fewer characters than in the first two "American Pie" movies, he isn't given his own subplot.

FOR BETTER OR WORSE, "GIGLI" brought Ben Affleck and J.Lo together, offscreen and on. This incompetently scripted gangster comedy ranks with the worst of its genre. The performers are like a bunch of high school drama geeks trying to play tough guys.

That includes Affleck, who is pumped up and dressed in what looks like Travolta's hand-me-downs. He stars as Larry Gigli (pronounced "G.Lee"), a low-level L.A. thug who's given an important job, the kidnapping of Brian (Justin Bartha), a mentally-challenged teenager whose big brother is a federal prosecutor.

Ricki (Lopez) is sent to keep an eye on Larry, but they spend more time looking at each other than their victim.

But the plot is just an excuse to bring the stars together for the love story. Larry puts the moves on Ricki, who tells him, "I'm gay. I'm a lesbian."

She means it too, but B.A.f got to practice his conversion technique in "Chasing Amy," so it's just a matter of time.

While waiting, the two have a cute conversation in which Ricki's Vagina Monologue trumps Larry's rant about the Power of the Penis. Ricki teases Larry about his own sexual orientation and makes him question whether he can compete with the women she's known.

If you love the stars enough to forgive them anything, you may be able to tolerate "Gigli."

"AMERICAN WEDDING" IS THE WEAKEST part of the "American Pie" trilogy.



Jennifer Lopez and Ben Affleck star in 'Gigli,' a gangster movie only true fans of the pair will love. (Photo courtesy Columbia Pictures)

Nearly half the cast bailed. Mena Suvari, Natasha Lyonne, Tara Reid and Shannon Elizabeth's characters might have moved on, but Oz (Chris Klein), an integral part of the quintet of guys who made the original pact to get laid by prom night, at least deserves a mention.

The gang is out of college and Jim (Jason Biggs) proposes to Michelle (Alyson Hannigan), the band geek who's been his only piece of, um, human pastry.

Jim, Finch (Eddie Kaye Thomas) and Kevin (Thomas Ian Nicholas) plan to leave Stifler (Seann William Scott) out of the wedding. But no way, dudes!

Cruder than ever, Stifler gets over some of his homophobia when, on an accidental visit to a gay bar, he realizes the only thing that bothers him more than being desired by a man is not being desired by a man who desires other men.

At the end of that scene, Kevin seems about to come out, but anything that might confirm or deny that is left out.

Curse you, focus groups.

i MORE INFO

'Gigli'

3 1/2

Directed by Martin Brest

Starring Ben Affleck, Jennifer Lopez, Justin Bartha

Queer Quotient: Among those confirming the sexual orientation of J.Lo's character is her suicidal ex-lover (Missy Crider). Ben's mother (Lainie Kazan) is totally understanding: "I used to be quite experimental."

'American Wedding'

3 1/2

Queer Quotient: Bear (Eric Allen Kramer), who gets into a challenge dance with Stifler in a gay bar, manages to stick around for the rest of the picture and dance with a man at the wedding reception. It's OK to be gay if you're not a continuing character.

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out on the town JOHNNY HOOKS



Culture Wars hit television screens, some cool new venues help locals beat the doldrums of summer swelter.

Heating up in Houston

NOT ONLY IS THE LOCAL WEATHER following that familiar sweltering path, but the political climate is heating up as well.

In recent Out on the Towns, we've covered the wave of new gay characters and TV shows hitting the airwaves. On the evening news recently, all three major networks did stories on the "Coming out of America," including the runaway success of Bravo network's "Gay programming," the recent Supreme Court victory and now the gay marriage debate.

So here's a heads up. The legality of gay marriage is going to become one of the most important issues in the 2004 Presidential election. If you are old enough to remember Vice President Dan Quayle's comments regarding CBS TV's Murphy Brown, the upcoming Culture War will make that look like a schoolyard skirmish.

New shows like Showtime's lesbian dating show "The L Word" and the new ABC sit-com "It's All Relative" are sure to add fuel to his fire.

Maybe we should have the "Fab Five" from "Queer Eye" makeover Dubya!

SPEAKING OF TV, FOR THE RECORD "Boy meets Boy" is a blast — not as much fun as "Queer Eye," but fun nevertheless. I think James the leading man is a bit of a wimp, but my partner thinks he's dreamy.

Elsewhere, the Amazing Race IV is winding down, but you still have a few more weeks to catch Super-couple Richen and Chip as they race to the finish.

I was crying like a baby during last week's episode over the loving way each man describes the other and how their mutual support helped them stay in the race.

A U.S. Senator was heard remarking on Larry King about Gay TV characters: "They only show you the funny, light-hearted side of their lifestyle... where's the substance, the truth?"

Richen and Chip answer the senator's question on Thursday nights at 7pm on CBS.

LAST WEEK, I SAW THE OPENING OF Chicago at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. The venue is perfection, a glittering jewel of a building, inside and out.

The huge three-story, glass-walled lobby, crowned with a painting by Sol Le Witt, is magnificent, instantly transporting visitors to the land of make-believe. Entering the fabulous Sarofim Hall, eyes are immediately drawn up — way up!

Perched atop the blue and red hall is a smattering of twinkling stars (OK. They're LED lights, but go with it!)



The Hobby Center for the Performing Arts is a beautiful new addition to the Houston arts scene, offering upcoming tours of the best of the Great White Way.

Complete with a huge red velvet curtain, I felt like I was in "The Easter Parade" or "Moulin Rouge."

There simply is no better place to experience a splashy Broadway show than at the Hobby Center. Luckily for us, "The Graduate," "42nd Street" and the mega-hit "The Producers" are on their way.

LET'S EAT. I HAVE TWO REALLY terrific new spots to try. Late Night Pie at 502 Elgin, where Elgin becomes Westheimer is really top notch, offering the most authentic New York-style pizza I've had in Houston.

Not only do they serve slices, hot and cold sandwiches, salads, sides and desserts, they deliver (even to the Heights) buckets of cold beer (must be 21 with id). Late Night Pie is a great addition to Montrose. Call 713.529.5522.

Or get yourself over to Onion Creek Coffee House & Bar at 3106 White Oak to check out the Farmers Market. The market was originally planned for July only, but the overwhelming response convinced the merchants and management to keep it going.

Every Saturday from 8 a.m. to noon, help yourself to fresh vegetables, flowers and even a few homemade surprises. Monica Pope is one of the familiar faces seen there recently, and the market is full of family members. Remember, the Heights is the new Montrose.

The Onion Creek is a darling little coffeehouse that also sells beer, wine and delicious sandwiches, salads and yummy hot dogs (cheap too!) Call their uber-cool General Manager Shatki at 713-880-0706 or visit onioncreek.org for more details.

reasons? WHY?

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—Mary Ann McBee
Fitness Exchange



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theater J.B. BLACK

Latest two-act play at gay theater company fails to breathe life into local playwright's intriguing premise involving two gay icons.

Great expectations unmet

FRIENDS OF DOROTHY MAY NOT BE impressed with "Judy's Friend & Marilyn's Boy."

Currently playing at Theatre New West, "Judy's Friend & Marilyn's Boy" fails to fully realize what seems like an interesting premise. The odd coupling of a friend of Judy Garland and the son of a Hollywood sex symbol seems rich with artistic and creative possibilities, but few spring to life in this outing.

Performed as monologues in two acts, the first act, "Judy's Friend," centers on Sean Joseph Casey (Adam Bires), formerly a Munchkin extra and currently an elderly, bitter misanthrope who wanders absently around his dilapidated, soon-to-be-demolished bookstore.

The second act, "Marilyn's Boy," features Jack Baker (Marion Bryant), a preening "demolition debris specialist" sent inside to inspect the shabby bookstore before its imminent destruction. Baker may or may not be the illegitimate son of Marilyn Monroe.

The gimmick in both acts is that each character is fully aware of and interacts with the audience seated around the stage — and, supposedly, throughout the crumbling bookstore.

THIS HIGHLIGHTS ONE OF THE production's opening-night problems: its staging. Director Roy Hamlin fashioned his stage platform in the middle of the theater, with seating on all four sides. From the audience's viewpoint (or lack thereof), the setup is frustrating.

Frequently, an actor stands at one edge of the stage, addressing the audience on that side, leaving the rest to either stare at his back or his profile, straining to hear what is said. During one extended and misdirected sequence in "Marilyn's Boy," the actor sits on a box in one corner, delivering his lines off-stage to three audience members seated directly in front of him. The rest of the theater completely misses the dialogue.

In the middle of the stage are also two benches and a couple of boxes set in a tight U-formation. At one point in the second act, Baker tells the audience to look at something within this formation, but only one side of the audience can see into it. The remaining three-quarters of the audience are left staring curiously at boxes or benches.

AS CASEY, BIRES FAILS TO BELIEVABLY convey the age or scale of his character. Occasionally, in an effort to show Casey's age, Bires holds his back or groans as he stoops.

But the rest of the time, he walks spryly around the stage. At one point, he youthfully jumps up as he recalls catching



As a former friend of Judy Garland, Adam Bires frequently misses the mark in 'Judy's Friend & Marilyn's Boy,' though the uneven script doesn't give him or the play's other actor much to work with.

a kiss from Garland.

Bryant fares better in his role as Baker. The play seems to perk up as Bryant provides some much-needed comic relief at the beginning of Act Two.

With a great deal of energy and enthusiastic body language, Bryant expertly throws himself into the role, sporadically channeling Marilyn Monroe — although the wig he dons looks more Harpo than Marilyn.

This is Bryant's first foray into the Houston theater scene, and he is a welcome and talented addition.

Unfortunately, Bryant and Bires are saddled with an uneven script by Houston playwright Diana Howie. At times, the clumsy dialogue provokes unintentional laughs.

Baker starts out as a flirty, flamboyant and amusing character. But midway through the second act, he turns heartless, cold and brutal. By the end of the act, the character changes personalities again to become caring and sympathetic.

Likewise, the first act ends in a contrived way that's supposed to be shocking and perhaps evoke sympathy for Casey. But nothing he says or does up to that point makes the audience sympathize with him and his plight.

If it was perhaps played with a sense of dark humor or campiness, "Judy's Friend & Marilyn's Boy" might be entertaining. As it is, there's little to recommend outside of Bryant's performance early in the second act.

i FOR MORE INFO

'Judy's Friend & Marilyn's Boy'
Through Sept. 20
Theatre New West
1415 California St.
713-522-2204

community calendar

SATURDAY AUG. 9

All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual 7 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-861-9149.

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 1-4 a.m.

Dignity mass. 7:30 p.m. for gay Catholics. 713-880-2872.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 11 p.m.-2 a.m. at Viviana's. 713-830-3000.

Gay & Lesbian Breakfast Club. 9:30 a.m. 281-437-0636.

Houston Wrestling Club. Practice. 1:30 p.m. 713-453-7406.

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 11:30 a.m. Eye Opener Group, 8 p.m. Saturday Night Live, 9:30 p.m. Willing Ones Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Montrose Soccer Club. 10 a.m. practice. Woodrow Wilson School, Fairview and Yupon. New players welcome, but beginners not currently being admitted. 713-862-9491. http://geocities.com/montrosesoccer. E-mail: montrosesoccer@yahoo.com.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Rosary 8 a.m. 1805 W. Alabama. 713-528-6665.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, noon-5 p.m. • CATS (Community Awareness for Transgender Support) board meeting, 2 p.m. • TATS (Texas Association for Transsexual Support) meeting, 6 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

SUNDAY AUG. 10

Lesbians Over Age Fifty. LOAF is a social group for gay women of a certain age to network and support each other from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org

S.I.S.T.E.R.S. Sharing Inner Strength Through Encouragement & Realistic Support is an African-American lesbian support group meeting from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org

GLOBAL. The gay student group for the University of Houston meets from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Services at 8:30 & 10:50 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Center for Spiritual Living. Services at 11 a.m. for children at 10:50 a.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808. The center also has commitment ceremonies, metaphysical bookstore and classes.

Community Gospel. Service at 11 a.m. & 7 p.m. Sunday School for children 10 a.m. 713-880-9235 or www.communitygospel.org.

Community of Kindred Spirits in Beaumont. Worship at 6 p.m. 1575 Spindletop Ave., Beaumont, Texas. 409-813-2055. E-mail: cksrev3@netzero.net

Covenant Church, Ecumenical, Liberal Baptist. Service 9:30 a.m. & education hour 11 a.m. 713-668-8830.

Emerson Unitarian Church. Adult education, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. Lunch at noon. www.emersonhou.org.

First Congregational Church (Memorial). Service at 10 a.m. Christian Education, 11:30 a.m. 713-468-9543 or fcc-houston.org.

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch at 10:30 a.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 7 p.m. Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Gay Catholics of St. Anne's-Houston. 5 p.m. worship service. Dinner and social. alexcam@wt.net. 713-623-0930.

GLOBAL. Gay Lesbian Or Bisexual Alliance. University of Houston GLBT student group meeting. 2 p.m. at the Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center, 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.uh.edu/~global. E-mail: global@bayouuh.edu.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 11 a.m. service. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Grace Lutheran Church. Sunday school for all ages 9 a.m. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-528-3269.

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 6-9 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590. www.hatchyouth.org.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 4-6 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m.-noon. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 9:30 a.m. Came to Believe Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. 10 a.m. service. 3333 Fannin, Suite 106. 713-528-6756.

Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:45 & 11:15 a.m. Sunday school 9:45 a.m. 281-298-2780.

Resurrection MCC. Services, 9 and 11 a.m. Children and Youth Sunday School, 10 a.m. Children's service, 11 a.m. 713-861-9149.

St. Patrick's Reformed Catholic Mission. Sunday Mass at noon. Holy Unions available. Group meets at the Hair Express, 3310 Delaware, Beaumont, Texas 77703. 409-781-8152. E-mail: watson1@gt.rr.com.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church. Holy Eucharist, Rite I, 7:45 a.m.; Holy Eucharist, Rite II, 8:55 a.m.; Education hour, 10 a.m.; Choral Eucharist, 11 a.m. 713-528-6665.

Sunday Brunch. For HIV-positive men. 11 a.m. Riva's, 1117 Missouri St.

Paul, 713-880-0690. e-mail: PozziBuff@aol.com

The Women's Group. Meeting and discussion. 10:45 a.m. 713-529-8571.

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9 a.m. Service, 11:15 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuu.org.

Unitarian Fellowship of Galveston County. 502 Church St. Service, 10:30 a.m. 409-765-8330.

Unitarian Fellowship of Houston. Adult forum, 10 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 713-686-5876.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-6 p.m. • GLBT Community Church with Rev. Melissa Wood: Bible study, 10-10:45 a.m., worship 11 a.m. www.geocities.com/glbtc • GLOBAL meeting, 6 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

MONDAY AUG. 11

Human Rights Campaign PAC. HRC's Political action committee is an advocacy group working for gay equality meeting from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Gay Bowling Leagues. Women's league. 6:45 p.m. Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarnef Drive. 713-861-1187.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Tom, 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/gaydadshouston/

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Grief & Divorce Support Groups. 7 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, ext. 208.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Kolbe Project. Eucharist 7:30 p.m. 713-861-1800.

Lambda Center. Alcoholics Anonymous. 8 p.m. Beginners' Group. 1201 W. Clay. 713-521-1243 or 713-528-9772. www.lambdahouston.org.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. Spanish speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer. 713-830-3050. Grupo de Apoyo para Latinos gay y bisexuales VIH positivos. Lunes 6:30. Para mas informacion llama al 713-830-3025.

Queer Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

TUESDAY AUG. 12

Pride Committee of Houston. General public monthly meeting for next year's parade and events from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray Ave.

Bering Support Network. Lunch Bunch Gang, 11 a.m. 713-526-1017.

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m.-midnight at Club Houston. Also 4-8 p.m. at 611 Club, 611 Hyde Park. 713-830-3000.

GLBT Pentecostals. Bible study, prayer, 7 p.m. in the Heights. For info: 936-931-3761; e-mail: www.Wgbl947@cs.com.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

Introduction to Buddhism. All welcome at 634 W. Temple in the Heights. 7 p.m. Carlton, 713-862-8129.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. Brazos River Bottom. No partner needed. Beginner 2 Step, Waltz, Shuffle & Swing. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • Lesbian Coming Out Group, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

WEDNESDAY AUG. 13

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; SOM Discussion & Exploration, 7 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Crystal Meth Anonymous (CMA). 8:15 p.m. meeting. Montrose Counseling Center, 701 Richmond Ave., Room 15.

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church. Support Network Pot Luck Dinner, 6:30 p.m. Various support groups, 7 p.m. 713-526-1017.

Bible Study. Noon & 6:30 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal. 713-526-6665.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, 4191 Bellaire Blvd. 713-861-1187.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal, 7:30-9:30 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-862-1488.

Houston Roughnecks Rugby Club. Practice from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, log on to www.roughnecksrugby.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 7-9 p.m. • Houston Pride Band rehearsal, 7:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

THURSDAY AUG. 14

Montrose Writers' Project. Get support from other writers from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org

PFLAG Houston Board Meeting. Regular monthly board meeting from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. www.pflaghouston.org

BiNet Houston. Group for bisexuals; everyone welcome. 7:30 p.m. Hobbit Café, 2240 Portsmouth. www.flashnet/~bihouse. 713-467-4380.

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Community Gospel. Service. 7:30 p.m. 713-880-9235. www.communitygospel.org.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021. Web site: http://homeswbell.net/~larathon/houfr.htm. E-mail: larathon@swbell.net.

Gay Bowling Leagues. Luci Duos. 9 p.m. Dynamic Lanes, 6121 Tarnef Drive. 713-861-1187.

GLOBAL. Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Alliance at the University of Houston-Central Campus. Weekly meeting, 6 p.m. e-mail: nguyen0023@hotmail.com.

Hep C Recovery. Support group. 6:30 p.m. Bering. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Houston Women's Rugby Team. No experience necessary. Practice, 6:30-8:30. Westland YMCA. Kay, 713-208-1529.

Lake Livingston GLBT Support Group. 7 p.m. dinner and discussion. Grace Assembly Church, 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds Skating Rink. www.neosoft.com/~lrsc. 713-523-9620.

Montrose Clinic. Offers weekly peer support groups for gay and bisexual men with HIV. English speaking group meets, 6:30 p.m. 215 Westheimer 713-830-3050.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. No partner required. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

Recovery From Food Addiction (RFA). Meeting for 12-step program open to all. Noon-1 p.m. St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, 1805 W. Alabama St. RFA: 713-673-2848. www.geocities.com/rfa77235/. E-mail: rfaeworldservice@aol.com.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Café Agora, 7 p.m. E-mail: charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

Women's Clinic. Montrose Clinic. 713-830-3000.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • "Mending and Stitching," 2 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

FRIDAY AUG. 15

Center for Spiritual Living. Meditation (drop-in), 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. 6610 Harwin. 713-339-1808.

Frost Eye Clinic. Free eye exams for people with HIV. 713-830-3000.

Grace Assembly Church. Gay/gay-affirming congregation. 7 p.m. aerobics class. 567 Cedar Grove, Livingston, Texas, 77351. 936-646-7214. E-mail: leol@easttexas.net.

H.A.T.C.H. Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals meets 7-10 p.m. For meeting information, call 713-529-3590. www.hatchyouth.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:00-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub.org

Kolbe Project. Morning prayer, 10 a.m. 713-861-1800.

Mishpachot Alizim. GLBT Jewish congregation. Sabbath services at 8 p.m. on the second Friday of each month at Baby Barnabys, 602 Fairview. Monthly study groups with Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood. Mishpachot Alizim, P.O. Box 980136, Houston, TX 77098. 866-841-9139, ext. 1834.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in 2-9 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

VOLUNTEER/SELF-HELP

ECHOS. This non-profit ministry of the Episcopal Church of the Epiphany is dedicated to helping people access health and social service systems. Free medical services include HIV, STD and hepatitis testing. Call for dates and times of services. 9610 S. Gessner. 713-270-0369. E-mail: echos-houston@swbell.net.

Gay & Lesbian Switchboard Houston. Volunteers offer a friendly ear to callers in need of information, nonjudgmental support and anonymous counseling to the GLBT community. 713-529-3211. www.gayswitchboardhouston.org.

Houston GLBT Community Center. Volunteers perform a variety of critical tasks which include staffing the information desk during drop-in hours; helping with center programming and events; working on community outreach efforts, fund-raising and publicity. Card players, writers and artists in particular are needed. 713-524-3818.

appts

SUNDAY AUG. 10



Gay and gay-friendly entertainers including Keith Caldwell, Randall Jobe, Kofi, **Sharon Montgomery** and Marcy Raye come together to raise money for ailing JR's crooner **Marsha Carlton** from 3:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. at South Beach, 810 Pacific St. 713-529-7623.

TUESDAY AUG. 12

The monthly meetings for the **Pride Committee of Houston** are already underway for next year from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Metropolitan Multi-Service Center, 1475 W. Gray Ave. www.pridehouston.org

THURSDAY AUG. 14

Writers come together to help each other in their process at the **Montrose Writers' Project** from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Houston GLBT Center, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207. 713-524-3818. houstonglbtcenter.org



Local all-female rock band **FO** hosts open mic/cider night every Thursday with rockin' guest musicians and vocalists for jam sessions from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. at Chances, 1100 Westheimer. 713-523-7217. www.chancesbar.com.

FRIDAY AUG. 15

Space City Empire presents its final candidates show called **'We Have Contact'** with host candidates for Emperor and Empress Keith Vival and Jessica Van Shelton to raise money for AIDS Foundation Houston's Camp Hope and AssistHers. 8:30 p.m. at EJ's, 2517 Ralph St. 713-527-9071.

@ To list an event, call 713-529-8490, fax at 713-529-9531, or e-mail editor@houstonvoice.com. Deadline is Monday at 5 p.m.

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Answers to this week's Q puzzle on Page 23

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"Andy's 15 Minutes"

Across

- Madeline of "Young Frankenstein"
- Like Batman and Robin
- Made a hole in one, to Sheehan
- Early role for "A Beautiful Mind" director
- Barber's "Antony and Cleopatra", e.g.
- Out-of-this-world org.
- Warhol's hometown
- "___ Ordinary Man" ("My Fair Lady")
- State of polar bears
- Anna portrayer in "Tales of the City"
- To date
- They get lipstick lesbians started
- Gift of Caroline Rhea
- "Let's make it a threesome!"
- Like a "moment of silence"
- Word on a Broadway ticket
- Like the subject of "Gay and Gray"
- Reed, who walked on the wild side
- Climax time in a Gary Cooper film
- Hayes of "South Park"
- Family group, in the land of Barrie
- David Sedaris' home on the air
- Pumbaa's problem, in "The Lion King"
- Poles for your first mate?
- Ballets Russes founder Diaghilev
- Like phone sex
- "Got a Rainbow" lyricist Gershwin

Down

- David once of the NFL
- Loads, to Gomer?
- Billy Bean did this to balls
- They come between Mauresmo and opponents
- L.A.'s ___ Cantina
- "The Simpsons" storekeeper
- "Ad astra ___ aspera" (motto of Toto's home state)
- It comes before sum
- Oompa Loompa creator
- Lion, tiger, or bear
- Warhol's soup can
- Morales of "Resurrection Blvd."
- Carvey who cross-dressed as the

Church Lady

- Kinnear basher Ulrich in "As Good As It Gets"
- "Son of Frankenstein" shepherd
- Like Rita Mae Brown's lips?
- Warhol's lesbian assailant
- Maj. opposite, for Rorem
- Premature ejaculation meas.
- Ditch in some Flynn flicks
- Whoopi and others in "Sister Act"
- Bannon and Ferguson
- 411
- Warhol's film collaborator
- Bit spit out by a computer
- Here, to Colette
- James Dean's "East of Eden" role
- A gentleman might pull one out for his date
- It comes before Johnson
- Rosie's Broadway musical
- "Hail Mary" counter
- Barneys, e.g.
- Male partner of St. Bacchus
- Check out, in a fitting room
- Top
- Crooner of George and Lorenz tunes
- "Look ____, I'm Sandra Dee"
- Bone of the leg
- RBI to Glenn Burke
- Summer for Rimbaud
- Butch's gal

Answers on Page 22

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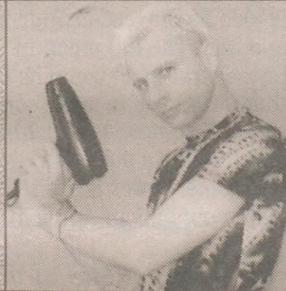


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This week holds drama for Aries, but sun in Leo begs out and proud Lions to tell truth, help a Gemini.

Be honest, Leo!

♈ Aries (March 21 to April 20): The old drama is back in your life, and you know how to use it. Jupiter is bringing you new allies left and right. Don't get too attached, but enjoy them while they're here for the next few weeks. You need some fresh faces in your world, since the old ones are getting stale. Make sure a Pisces remains close to you at all times.

♉ Taurus (April 21 to May 20): Instead of playing follow the leader, be the leader. Your time is here and now. The full moon in your career house on Aug. 11 could be the catalyst that forces you to make some key decisions. If someone is pushing your hand and inciting a power struggle, you shall overcome. Power is your middle name right now, and an Aquarius knows it.

♊ Gemini (May 21 to June 21): Mars is currently transiting the top of your chart, so consider applying for grants or loans. People want to invest in you. Romantically, this is a potent time. Your psychic abilities are strong, and you may actually will an ex-lover back into your life. Be careful what you wish for. Concentrate on a Leo who carries no baggage — or maybe just a little carry-on.

♋ Cancer (June 22 to July 22): During this full moon week, you should experience a renewed sense of empowerment. Finally, you can call the shots and get things done your way. Just don't overpower people as you rise to the top. Your personality is super strong, and you could affect people deeply without even realizing it. A Gemini is particularly swept away by your charisma.

♌ Leo (July 23 to Aug. 22): Assert your over-the-top, bigger-than-life personality. Your charisma returns with a bang during the week of Aug. 11 in your house of love. After months of stress, you are back and better than ever. The pressure in your love life is off. You don't have to make any big decisions, but be honest with everyone close to you, especially yourself. A Virgo has big, juicy expectations of you.

♍ Virgo (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Saturn in your friendship house makes you the heavy where your little buddies are concerned. Chill, and do what you know is right. If a Libra is having trouble understanding your boundaries, explain yourself in words, not just with your body.

♎ Libra (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): It's time to tell someone close to you how worried you are. If you've been swallowing your pain and fears for months, now's the time to let it all hang out. A Capricorn won't judge you, so stop judging yourself. It's okay to walk away from a relationship that is just too painful.

♏ Scorpio (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): A little more time spent on the home front surrounded by your most darling friends is just what the doctor ordered. Don't screw up the dosage. You really do need to put work aside and enjoy the social part of life. Another Scorpio will put your brain and your body on delicious overdrive.

♐ Sagittarius (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): This is a good time for you to put it all on the line for a new squeeze. A Scorpio is ready to woo you the way you want it. If the rest of your life has you feeling frazzled and overwhelmed, call on friends for support.

♑ Capricorn (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Let the games begin. Suddenly everybody wants to do lunch with you — and a Cancer may want to do you for dessert. It's a fab time to brainstorm with colleagues or business associates about your plans for the future. Your skills and savvy are really in demand now.

♒ Aquarius (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Mercury, your ruler, is currently transiting your house of permanent partnerships, so make an effort to get to know the people you're doing business with. This is also the right time to pull away from partners who are untrustworthy or sometimes unstable. In love, keep your standards high. A Pisces is waiting to worship you.

♓ Pisces (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a trippy time for you. You may have to choose between complicated, deceptive situations and easy, dreamy good times. Go with the latter and use a Taurus as your guide. Why torture yourself over "ruining" your love relationship? Please; it wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

@ Jill Dearman is the author of the best-selling *Queer Astrology for Men and Queer Astrology for Women* (both from St. Martin's Griffin). For information on charts and consultations, call 212-841-0177 or e-mail QScopes@aol.com.



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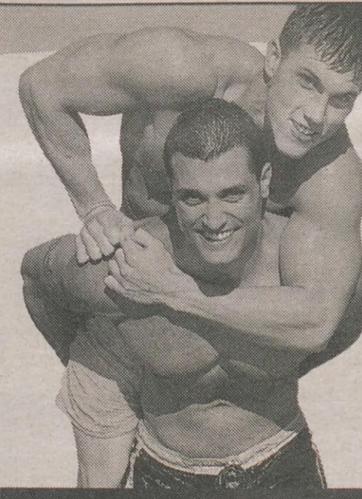
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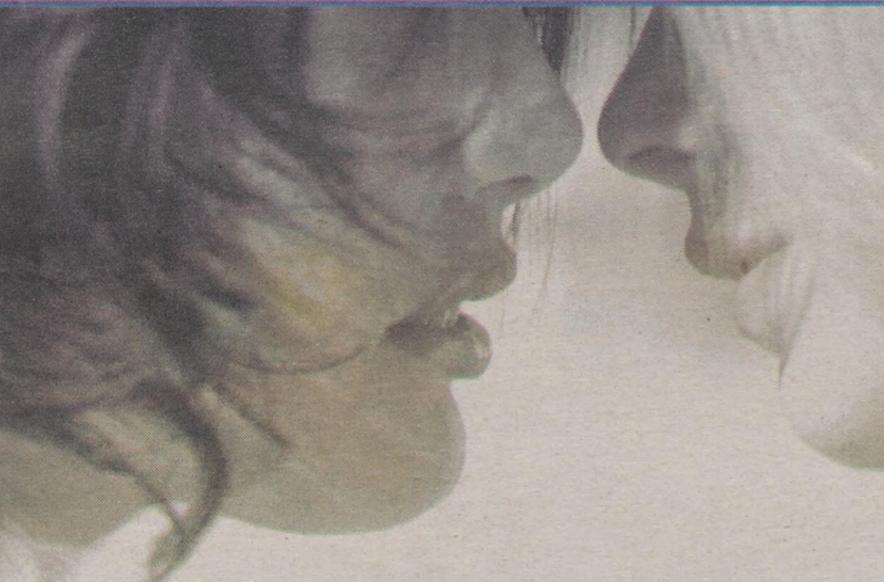
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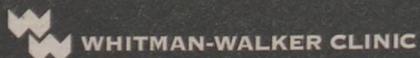
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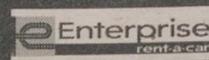
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