

Local and national groups help organize gays who like to commune with nature.
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From the practical to the fun, cars of all types can be found at affordable prices for any gay budget.
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Jim Brochu and Steve Schalchlin show theater audiences that anyone's 'Big Voice' can come from unexpected places.
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Lawmakers move DOMA forward

Texas versions of the anti-gay Defense of Marriage Act pass both House and Senate committees

By PENNY WEAVER

The Texas Senate was poised to vote Thursday on a state version of the Defense of Marriage Act, which would prohibit the state from recognizing same-sex civil unions, even though Texas already does not validate such "marriages."

In the last week, committees in both the Texas House and Senate approved DOMA legislation, which gay rights activists have called a "slap in the face" to gay Texans. Those moves send the issue to each chamber for a vote by all lawmakers.

"I think what the GLBT community in Texas should be aware of is it's very obvious in both the Senate and the House that they

are going to do what they want to do and are not engaging in a dialogue," said Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas. "Texans should be outraged at that. What's next?"

"We have to beg and plead" to be heard by lawmakers, Ellis added.

On Thursday, April 3, the Texas Senate Committee on State Affairs signed off on legislation that would ban the state from recognizing same-sex civil unions. The proposal, Senate Bill 7, is also known as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), and was scheduled before the full Senate on Thursday, April 10, for a vote.

"Clearly the point of the bill is to encourage and protect the institution that is fundamental to our whole society and that is traditional marriage" between one man and one woman, said bill sponsor, Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio.

"People talk about discrimination as though it were a bad thing," Wentworth said in defending the bill. "It is something we do all the time."

Please see TX DOMA on Page 8



Randall Ellis, executive director of the Lesbian/Gay Rights Lobby of Texas, said gay Texans should be 'outraged' that both state House and Senate committees have approved a Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). He said with the conservative Republican majority in the current Texas Legislature, gays have to 'beg and plead' to be heard by state representatives. (Photo by Penny Weaver)

Partners of gay troops wait alone

Couples face added worries under 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell'

By LOU CHIBBARO JR.

Lauren, the domestic partner of a senior Navy enlisted person, drove her partner to the California port last November so she could embark on the destroyer that would soon set sail for the Persian Gulf and the expected war in Iraq.

Hundreds of teary-eyed but enthusiastic spouses and family members waived to their loved ones in the military as the giant ship pulled away from the dock.

But "Lauren," a lesbian who asked to remain anonymous to protect the identities of the couple, was not among them.

"I dropped her off that day," Lauren said. "But I did not get out of the car. We said our good-byes at home. It was for her safety — of not being discovered."

Lauren's partner is among the thousands

Please see MILITARY GAYS on Page 10



The military offers programs for heterosexual spouses of service members serving in the Iraq war, including support groups and emergency assistance. But the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy forces gay partners to hide their relationships and miss out on opportunities for help. (Photo by Greg Bryan/AP. Photo illustration by John Nail)

RETROVIRUS AIDS Update



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local news

Health leaders warn of threat to gays

Syphilis on the rise particularly among gay men, while staph outbreak seen in general population as well

By PENNY WEAVER

Health officials are urging awareness of a sexually transmitted disease that appears among more gay men than the general population, while downplaying the increase of another potential health risk to gay Houstonians.

New statistics from the Houston Department of Health and Human Services show that infectious syphilis cases in 2002 in Houston and Harris County rose 7.5 percent overall and nearly doubled among gay and bisexual men, including those who don't identify as such, according to a health department press release.

This is a particular concern for men who have sex with men (MSM), health officials note, because early symptoms of syphilis, which can be cured with antibiotics, are genital sores, which also can help transmit HIV. The rise in reported cases also causes concern that it signals a rise in HIV because gay and bisexual men are increasingly practicing unsafe sex.

Officials urge men engaging in anonymous unprotected sex to get immediate testing for syphilis.

"Anonymous sexual encounters hamper intervention efforts," said John Paffel, STD Prevention Program manager with the department's Bureau of HIV/STD Prevention. "Without the ability to notify anonymous partners, we are unable to provide testing and treatment to sexual contacts of people with the disease."

New infectious cases of syphilis — known as primary, secondary and early latent, or hidden — rose last year to 245 from 228 in 2001. The total number of syphilis cases, including people who have progressed to the late latent stage of the disease, reached 969 in 2002 in this area. Some 899 cases were reported in 2001, according to the health department.

Among gay and bisexual men, the number of new infectious syphilis cases in 2002 increased to 116, nearly double the 59 reported in 2001. The total number of syphilis cases among MSMs was 227 last year, up from 107 in 2001.

The local increase mirrors that of other major U.S. cities. Last fall, federal health officials reported that a rise in syphilis cases among gay and bisexual men in a few large



Houstonian Tony Dodd is prepared for a blood test by a Houston health department worker during testing hours at All Star News bookstore. A recent rise in cases of syphilis among gay men sparked owners of the bookstore to offer the location for free testing each Thursday. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

cities that surfaced last year had spread into urban and rural areas nationwide.

The trend sparked prevention efforts aimed at sexually active gay men, despite a focus by the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention on abstinence as the main defense against sexually transmitted diseases, according to Ron Valdiserri, deputy director of the CDC's Program for HIV, STD & TB Prevention.

"The overall syphilis rate in the United States rose by 2 percent between 2000 and 2001," Valdiserri said. "The syphilis rate among men in the United States rose by 15 percent [in the same time period]."

Houston health officials urge medical providers, particularly those with many gay and bisexual men as clients, to conduct risk assessments, increase testing and provide prompt treatment.

Syphilis is easily treatable with antibiotics, health leaders note. Without adequate treatment, however, the disease progresses to the secondary stage when one or more areas of the skin break into a rash, usually non-itchy and typically on the palms and soles. Other second-stage symptoms include fever, swollen lymph glands, sore throat, patchy hair loss, headaches, weight loss, muscle aches and fatigue.

According to the health department, syphilis often goes undetected because the signs and symptoms are misinterpreted or unnoticed.

Houston staph infection outbreak under scrutiny

In late February, Houston health officials reported an outbreak among Houstonians of a skin infection that began surfacing late last year among gay men in

San Francisco and Los Angeles.

At the time, Mark Sanders, director of clinic services for Houston's Montrose Clinic, which treats a number of gay men, said it was too early to tell if the increase in incidences of the infection was primarily among gay men.

The skin condition is known as Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus, or MRSA, and also has been reported on the rise among gay men in Washington, D.C., and Atlanta.

Wayne Bockman, MD, a Montrose Clinic physician, said the rise in MRSA does not appear to be unique to gay men.

"We are seeing it. We've got several cases. Whether it's particular in gay men or not, it's too early to say," Bockman said. "What I think is happening is we're seeing MRSA in the general community. It's everybody's problem, not just gay folks."

Bockman said the STD portion of the clinic has about 50 percent gay clients, and not all new incidences of staph infections are among gays.

"Of the 10 cases I've got, I think three are in heterosexuals," he said.

Bockman noted that other doctors, whose clients are primarily heterosexual, also have treated more cases of MRSA lately.

"They tell me they're seeing the same thing in their patient population," he said. "It's here but I don't think it's just in the gay community."

Sanders said MRSA is treatable, even though it is more resistant to some antibiotics.

"We're still seeing [more staph infections]. Some of these are getting bad," he said. "We've got some good treatment protocols in place."

"It's heightening our awareness," Sanders added.

According to Kathy Barton, chief of public affairs for the Houston health department, health officials still are unsure how widespread the staph infection outbreak may be.

"We don't know how big the problem is," Barton said. "It's actually difficult to diagnose in many cases."

An epidemiologist with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said the cases appear to confirm earlier findings by CDC researchers that a new, undetermined factor is causing MRSA to flourish in a wider group of people, including gay men. Until the late 1990s, the pesky skin infection had been confined mostly to elderly patients in hospitals and nursing homes, CDC officials said.

Health officials said MRSA can be contracted easily through casual contact.

"It's a relatively easy-to-pass infection," Sanders said. "It can be spread sexually, but it can be spread in many ways."

inside

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AROUND TEXAS: El Paso gay activists praised that city's mayor, Raymond Caballero, after city officials added sexual orientation and gender identity to the Municipal Code on discrimination. Page 6.



CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR: Gay Marine reservist Stephen Funk seeks conscientious objector status, saying his sexual orientation influenced his morals and opposition to the U.S. war in Iraq. Page 10.



EDITORIAL: Writer Miles Christian Daniels chronicles personal and ideological changes between the 1991 Gulf War and the current conflict in Iraq. Page 12.

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MORE INFO

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Information Hotline • 713-794-9020

Fridays • 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack

10 p.m.-1 a.m. at EJ's and Midtowne Spa
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Thomas Street Clinic • 9 a.m.-1 p.m.
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Call for appointment • Sharon, 713-873-4157

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Sundays
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Testing done by Montrose Clinic workers

Mondays
Houston Area Community Services
9 a.m.-noon • Joseph-Hines Clinic
1710 West 25th St.

713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226

8 p.m.-midnight at Keys West
Testing done by Montrose Clinic workers

Tuesdays
Houston Area Community Services
10 a.m.-2 p.m. • Joseph-Hines Clinic

8 p.m.-midnight at Club Houston
4-8 p.m. at 611 Club
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Wednesdays
4-8 p.m. at Mary's
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Thursdays • 7-9 p.m. • All Star News
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Houston Area Community Services
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11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. • Gallery Medical Clinic
5900 North Freeway

and Club Toyz from 9 p.m.-midnight.
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around houston

Keynote speaker announced for transgender unity banquet

The 11th annual Houston Transgender Unity Banquet will be held on Sunday, April 26, and the keynote speaker for 2003 will be Lisa Mottet. A Washington, D.C., resident, Mottet is the legislative lawyer for the Transgender Civil Rights Project at the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force. Through her work at NGLTF, Mottet assists transgender activists and allies with passing anti-discrimination laws and ordinances that prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and expression at the local, state, and federal level. She graduated cum laude from Georgetown University Law Center in 2001 and magna cum laude from University of Washington in 1998. The master of ceremonies for this year's Houston Transgender Unity Banquet will be Don Gill of Don Gill Productions. The banquet also will feature live entertainment and a dance to follow in the grand ballroom of the Southwest Hilton. Tickets are available at unity_tickets@hotmail.com. Individual tickets \$40; Platinum Sponsors are \$600; Gold Sponsors are \$250; Silver Sponsors are \$125; and Friends Sponsors (a ticket for someone in your name) are \$60. On Saturday, Mottet has requested a round table discussion for all gay activists in the Houston area. This round table will be held at the hotel from noon until 2 p.m.

i MORE INFO

Houston Transgender Unity Banquet
Saturday, April 26 • Tickets: \$40
Hilton Houston Southwest
6780 Southwest Freeway
713-977-7911 • www.brendat.com/unity.htm

GLBT center to mark National Poetry Month

Local gay poet Howard Michael will be the featured poet at a Friday, April 11, reading at the Houston GLBT Community Center in Montrose. The reading, which is free and open to the public, will mark National Poetry Month. Other poets scheduled to read include Thomas Blanton, who organizes monthly poetry readings at the center; Aaron Coleman; and Hampton Burt. For more information, contact Blanton via e-mail at thomas@roadsidezoo.com. The Houston GLBT Community Center is home base for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals in the metropolitan area and southeast Texas, according to center leaders.

i MORE INFO

Poetry reading • 8 p.m. Friday, April 11
Houston GLBT Community Center
3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 207
www.houstonglbtcenter.org

Charity groups benefit from Black Tie Dinner

Houston Black Tie Dinner, Inc. has announced that proceeds from the fall event were distributed to the seven organizations selected as beneficiaries of the 2002 Houston Black Tie Dinner. Each of the following groups received \$8,000, for a total of \$56,000 donated: Bering Omega Community Services, H.A.T.C.H., Lesbian Health Initiative, Montrose Clinic, Montrose Counseling Center, People With AIDS Coalition of Houston and Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church. Dinner officials also announced new members elected to the board of directors for 2003: Rocky Atwood, Bill Lee, Mary Ann McBee, John Parker and William Tayar. The 2003 Black Tie Dinner will be held on Saturday, Nov. 15, at the Doubletree Hotel Post Oak, with entertainment by the comedienne and actress Kathy Najimi, best known for her roles in the movies "Sister Act," "Soapdish," and "The Wedding Planner," as well as for her co-starring role on the television comedy "Veronica's Closet."

i MORE INFO

Houston Black Tie Dinner Inc.
www.houstonblacktiedinner.org



Houston's Krewes of Olympus Texas, Inc. presented a total of \$35,000 to five non-profit organizations this month. The money was raised by the group through a number of fund-raisers over the course of several months. From left are Denise Martin of the Krewes; Matt Soileau of Montrose Clinic; Gary Tebeira of PFLAG/HATCH; Bob Hergenroeder of Houston Buyers Club; Krewes member Robert Brooks; and Annie Couch, Krewes president. (Photo by Dalton DeHart)

Krewes of Olympus presents \$35,000 to local charities

Krewes of Olympus Texas, Inc. ended its fiscal year by presenting checks to designated charities Sunday, March 30, at Santa Fe. A total of \$35,000 was donated. Presented with \$8,000 checks were the following: The Houston Buyer's Club; Woman's Initiative, Casa de Esperanza de los Ninos, PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation, and Montrose Clinic, Inc's Endowment Fund. Legacy Counseling Center in Dallas also received a check for \$3,000. Supporters and guests at Olympus Ball XXXIII "Colours" helped the group raise funds for the non-profit organizations. In addition, many people donated at various fund-raising activities that occurred throughout the year to assist the Krewes. The Krewes of Olympus - Texas, Inc. is a Mardi Gras Krewes, now based in Houston, that originated in New Orleans in 1970. This is one of the largest predominately gay Krewes in the United States, although membership is open to all. The organization's principal aims are to perpetuate and continue Mardi Gras traditions and to raise money for community charities. In the last six years, the Krewes has donated more than \$140,000 to Houston and Dallas charitable organizations.

PENNY WEAVER

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City council includes gays, transgenders in anti-bias code

EL PASO — LAMBDA GLBT Community Services praised the El Paso City Council on Tuesday for voting to add sexual orientation and gender identity to the city's Municipal Code on discrimination. "Today's vote is a major victory for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered El Pasoans and an important sign of progress for the entire city," said LAMBDA President Rob Knight in a press release from the group. "El Paso has affirmed its commitment to ending all forms of discrimination, and for the first time in this city's history, gay men and women, and transgendered persons, are no longer second-class citizens." Knight praised the efforts of Mayor Raymond Caballero and Jan Sumrall, District 1 representative for the City of El Paso, in passing the legislation. LAMBDA is El Paso's oldest and largest non-profit agency serving gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered residents. Since 1991, LAMBDA has provided services throughout the region aimed at eliminating inequality, mistreatment, and violence that result from anti-gay bias.



Gay activists praised El Paso Mayor Raymond Caballero after city officials this week added sexual orientation and gender identity to El Paso's Municipal Code on discrimination.

i MORE INFO

LAMBDA GLBT Community Services • 915-562-4297
e-mail: admin@lambda.org • www.lambda.org

Gay-rights group opposes promotion of former leader

SAN ANTONIO — A former Fort Campbell commander nominated for a lieutenant general promotion faced opposition from gay-rights advocates meeting in San Antonio last week, the Associated Press reported. Members of the American Veterans for Equal Rights contend that Maj. Gen. Robert T. Clark bears some responsibility for a 1999 hate crime at Fort Campbell, Ky. The San Antonio native, now a Fort Sam Houston general, was the post commander at Fort Campbell when Pfc. Barry Winchell, 21, was beaten to death in his sleep by a drunken soldier on July 5, 1999. Winchell's parents, who live in Kansas City, Mo., spoke April 3 to about 40 members of American Veterans for Equal Rights. Wally Kutteles, Winchell's stepfather, and his wife, Patricia, said they feel an anti-gay environment at Fort Campbell caused their son's death. The couple aren't sure if their son was gay because he dated young women, while openly befriending gays. Clark said in an interview that he began teaching values about respecting fellow soldiers in February 1998, when he became commander of Fort Campbell. After the killing, the post instituted specific policies to discourage anti-gay remarks and actions, Clark said. "We were very proactive" in discouraging a hostile environment for gay soldiers, he said. Clark was cleared of any wrongdoing after an Army investigation. A private named Calvin Glover, of Sulphur, Okla., received a life sentence in the murder.

Conroe librarian honored for defending banned books

A woman who helped fight efforts to ban two young adult sex education books from Montgomery County library shelves has been awarded this year's PEN/Newman's Own First Amendment Award, the Associated Press reported. Jerilynn Williams, director of the Montgomery County Library, will receive a \$25,000 prize at PEN's annual gala on April 22 in New York City. Last August, commissioners in Montgomery County, located north of Houston, agreed to temporarily remove two books, "It's Perfectly Normal" and "It's so Amazing," both by Robie H. Harris, after

complaints, particularly from the conservative Republican Leadership Council. The group objected to what it described as the books' pro-homosexual stance and explicit illustrations. Williams worked to convince a review committee looking into the books to put them back on library shelves. "Librarians like Jerilynn Williams are on the front lines of censorship battles every day, their commitment to intellectual freedom often the only thing standing between us and the book-burners," said Pat Schroeder, president and CEO of the Association of American Publishers and one of this year's judges for the PEN/Newman's Own Award.

Gay tolerance issue brings controversy to A&M faculty

COLLEGE STATION — A bitter controversy that erupted in February in the Texas A&M University College of Education regarding a proposed tolerance statement for gays has prompted faculty members to accuse each other of bigotry, the campus newspaper, the Battalion, reported late in March. Others question whether Texas A&M Dean Jane Conoley is imposing her political views on the college. The college's faculty advisory committee was to consider a final draft of a diversity statement it first proposed Feb. 4. Eight professors, including Stephen Crouse, associate dean of the college, signed a letter objecting to the statement, which says faculty must "celebrate and promote all forms of human diversity" and lists sexual orientation as a protected status, along with race, gender and other categories. The letter suggests the committee adopt a general non-discrimination statement similar to that of the university, and said Christian faculty should not have to "celebrate and promote" a lifestyle they believe is immoral. In a Feb. 26 memo, Conoley rebuked the arguments Crouse and others set forth in their letter. Conoley also instituted a new policy that states the college "celebrates and cherishes GLBT people." The statement, which is enforced as the college's policy and is separate from the faculty committee's statement, grants gays on the faculty "special access to protection and support" and states that any decision about promotion and tenure involving gays deserve "heightened scrutiny."

From staff and wire reports

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local news

TX House vote on DOMA could come any day

TX DOMA, continued from Page 1

Daniel Graney of San Antonio took offense to the bill. He said he and his partner of 29 years pay taxes and their bills, vote and live like any married couple, even though they can't get married.

"Now the Texas state Legislature wants to pass a law that tells me that my 29-year relationship with the one I love has no value whatsoever and I find that deeply offensive and hurtful," Graney said.

Ellis urged lawmakers to vote against the legislation, saying Texas law already prohibits gays and lesbians from obtaining a marriage license in Texas.

Ellis said he believed the legislation reinforces "the fact that gay and lesbian Texans are regarded as second class.

"We must stand up to state sponsored discrimination," he said. "Gays and lesbians are denied hundreds of rights and privileges that heterosexuals enjoy. Tax exemptions, legal protections, the right to make medical decisions for our partner — there are literally hundreds and hundreds of rights and benefits that we do not have.

"If we try to protect ourselves with legal documents, it can cost thousands of dollars," Ellis added. "The second-class status that has been cast upon gays and lesbians must come to an end."

Wentworth said the bill does not diminish "my feeling of respect and even love for friends and acquaintances and people that I know who are gay. I have great respect for those people," he said. "This bill has nothing to do with that."

The bill passed on a 7-1 vote. Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, voted against the bill.

"The Senate has decided to fuel the fires of discrimination," Ellis said. "This bill does nothing more than create a hostile environment toward lesbian and gay Texans. We have a budget crisis, an insurance crisis and a school finance crisis. Texas would be better served by our legislators making policy that supports Texas families."

On Monday, the House Committee on State Affairs approved legislation that would ban the state from recognizing same-sex civil unions — a House version of a state DOMA. That proposal now moves to the full House for a vote.

In the House, the act is known as House Bill 38 and is sponsored by Rep. Warren Chisum, R-Pampa. The bill passed committee 6-2, with Reps. Glenn Lewis, D-Fort Worth, and Mike Villarreal, D-San Antonio, casting the "no" votes.

Ellis said the Texas Legislature, led by a Republican majority, now is particularly unfriendly to gays, as evidenced by bills like these.

"It's not the same as it was the past 10 years," Ellis said. "We can no longer 'skate' in that we [no longer] have friends in high places anymore.

"Garnet Coleman and Jessica Farrar cannot carry the weight of the GLBT community on their shoulders," he added. "I really hope that this serves as a wake-up call."



Sen. Rodney Ellis, D-Houston, was the only member of the Senate Committee on State Affairs to vote against the anti-gay Senate Bill 7 last week, known as a Defense of Marriage Act.

Gay activists call state DOMA 'slap in the face'

Gay activists including the LGRL's Ellis have called the state DOMA proposals "redundant" and "a slap in the face" to gay Texans, pointing out that federal legislation already allows states to refuse to honor same-sex unions.

Congress approved and President Bill Clinton signed the federal Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 to prohibit federal recognition of gay marriages. DOMA also purports to grant states the right not to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states.

The federal law also creates a definition of marriage as a "legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife."

Vermont is the only state that recognizes same-sex civil unions. Since Vermont approved its bill in 2000, lawmakers in five states — California, Connecticut, Hawaii, Rhode Island and Washington — have introduced civil union legislation, according to the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force.

On the other hand, 36 states across the country have enacted laws in recent years that limit legal recognition of civil marriages to heterosexual couples.

Dozens of legislators have signed onto the Texas House DOMA proposal. Lawmakers who have signed as joint authors to the bill are Charlie Geren (R-River Oaks), Edmund Kuempel (R-Seguin), Scott Campbell (R-San Angelo) and Chuck Hopson (D-Jacksonville).

Among the Texas House members who signed as co-authors to the Chisum DOMA bill are several Harris County lawmakers: District 132 Rep. Bill Callegari (R-Houston), District 127 Rep. Joe Crabb (R-Kingwood), District 129 Rep. John Davis (R-Houston), District 133 Rep. Joe Nixon (R-Houston), and District 128 Rep. Wayne Smith (R-Baytown).



Sen. Jeff Wentworth, R-San Antonio, said his DOMA bill is designed to 'encourage and protect' traditional marriage between one man and one woman.

Last session, a Texas Defense of Marriage Act was passed out of the Senate, but failed to make it out of committee in the House, LGRL officials noted. Lobbyists contend that the shift in the balance of power in the House after the November elections increases the possibility of this session's bill passing both chambers of the Legislature.

Number of gay-focused bills are on Legislature's agenda

A number of measures related to gay Texans have been filed before the current legislature, in its 78th session. In addition to the House and Senate DOMA measures, those bills include:

- H.B. 194, filed on Nov. 15 by Rep. Robert Talton (R-Pasadena). This bill would disqualify gay men, lesbians and bisexuals in Texas from serving as foster parents.

- H.B. 194 was referred on Feb. 6 to the Juvenile Justice & Family Affairs Committee. Chair of that panel is Harold V. Dutton Jr. of Houston, a Democrat.

- Rep. Chisum and Rep. Fred Hill, R-Richardson, signed on as co-authors to Talton's bill as of March 6.

- H.B. 574, filed on Jan. 27 by Rep. Jessica Farrar (D-Houston). This measure would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity.

The pro-gay H.B. 574 was referred to the Business & Industry Committee on Feb. 11. Chair of that committee is Rep. Helen Giddings of DeSoto, a Democrat. A public hearing was held on March 25 on the bill, which remains pending in committee.

At the public hearing, Farrar explained that the measure is not revolutionary.

"Currently, 13 states and the District of Columbia offers similar protections to their citizens," Farrar said. "More than 300 of the Fortune 500 companies have policies in place that protect workers against discrimination in the work place.

It is good public policy, good for business and good for Texas."

State Rep. Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) signed on as a joint author to Farrar's bill.

- H.B. 862, filed by Coleman on Feb. 11. This measure, also known as the Dignity for All Students Act, would protect Texas students from discrimination based on characteristics including race, religion and sexual orientation.

H.B. 862 was referred to the Public Education Committee on Feb. 18. Chair of that committee is Rep. Kent Grusendorf of Arlington, a Republican. Members of the panel include Rep. Scott Hochberg of Houston, a Democrat.

Farrar signed on as a joint author to the Dignity for All Students Act about a week after it was filed.

- H.B. 916, filed on Feb. 12 by state Rep. Sid Miller (R-Stephenville). He calls the bill the Defense of Families Act; it would prevent two people of the same sex from filing a joint petition for adoption of a child.

H.B. 916 was referred to the Juvenile Justice & Family Affairs Committee, just as Talton's H.B. 194 was sent to that panel.

To date, no other lawmakers have signed on as sponsors, co-authors or joint authors to Miller's proposal.

- H.B. 1136, filed on Feb. 20 and referred to the State Affairs Committee on Feb. 26, was proposed by Democrat Villarreal.

The legislation that would ban discrimination in housing and employment based on sexual orientation. It defines sexual orientation as "having a preference for heterosexuality, homosexuality or bisexuality; having a history of such a preference; or being identified as having such a preference."

It also states: "This Act may not be construed to mean that this state condones homosexuality, bisexuality, or any equivalent lifestyle."

If passed, the legislation would prohibit employers from firing, refusing to hire, or otherwise discriminating against anyone based on sexual orientation.

The bill also would make it illegal to refuse to sell or rent property based on sexual orientation. The sexual orientation legislation proposal also lays out rules for hotel and motel operators, realtors, labor unions, employment agencies and advertising publishers.

- H.B. 1911, filed by Talton, would prevent unmarried Texans from serving as foster parents. It was referred to the State Affairs Committee on March 12 and has no other legislators signed on as co-authors to date.

The Associated Press contributed to this story.

MORE INFO

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around the nation

Fla. politician apologizes for comment linking gays, porn

HOLLYWOOD, Fla. — Hollywood Commissioner Sal Oliveri drew protests from gay residents when he spoke out April 2 against the city allowing an adult entertainment business, the South Florida Sun-Sentinel reported. "Wake up America ... otherwise you have a pervert or a homosexual living next to you," Oliveri said during a commission meeting. Almost a dozen protesters gathered outside of City Hall two days later to demand an apology. "I want you to know I'm offended for anyone to say my sexual category throws me into a pedophile category," Carol Hoehn, a pediatric nurse, told Oliveri after he came outside to meet with them. Oliveri, a 13-year veteran of the commission, apologized for including gays in his criticism. "Everyone who is righteous has a right to live the way they do," he said.



Sal Oliveri, a commissioner in Hollywood, Fla., apologized after being criticized for anti-gay comments he made during a recent commission meeting.

ACLU sues on behalf of gay Ark. student

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — A federal lawsuit filed by the ACLU on April 8 claims that the Pulaski County Special School District violated the constitutional guarantees of free speech, equal protection, privacy and separation of church and state in its treatment of gay student Thomas McLaughlin, 14. Over the course of 18 months, school officials at Jacksonville Junior High School allegedly told the teen's parents he is gay, forced him to keep quiet about his sexual orientation and suspended him for not doing so. "My school forced me out of the closet when I should have been allowed to come out to my family on my own terms and when I thought it was the right time," McLaughlin said earlier this month. "And now the school has been trying to shove me back into it ever since." The lawsuit seeks an injunction on further action against McLaughlin. "We're taking them to court to ensure that other lesbian and gay students in the district wouldn't face similar discrimination," said James Esseks, litigation director for the ACLU's Lesbian & Gay Rights Project.

S&M convention prompts protests in Okla. city

EDMOND, Okla. (AP) — A S&M leather convention last weekend, dubbed Tribal Fire 2003, raised the hackles of local religious leaders. Paul Klassen, president of the Edmond Ministerial Alliance, urged Christians to devote the weekend to prayer and fasting. "We ask God to deal, forgive and deliver all who are in bondage to a self-destructive life," the alliance said in a statement. The event, held April 4-6 at the Ramada Plaza Hotel Edmond, featured seminars and demonstrations by nationally recognized S&M leaders. "The hotels wouldn't invite us back if we were a problem," said Susan Wright, spokesperson for the National Coalition for Sexual Freedom. The NCSF spoke out last year when complaints from religious groups prompted Cendant Corporation, the hotel franchiser that includes Ramada and Howard Johnson, to issue a letter warning local hotels about booking "controversial guests." In a clarification letter sent to the coalition, Cendant promised to honor the rights of franchisees to sell rooms and meeting space to "the persons of their choice."

Colo. student suspends for calling referee 'gay'

GRAND JUNCTION, Colo. (AP) — A sixth-grader whose ball was called out of bounds during a playground game was suspended for two-days for saying the call of the student referee was "gay." West Middle School student Ben Madison, 12, said he thought the word meant "dumb" until his mother explained it. Principal Jody Mimmack said students are warned about such behaviors before they are suspended. "We work very hard to create a safe environment for students," Mimmack said. The principal said Madison also would have been suspended if he had referred to the playground call as "dumb" or if he had teased the other student about a hairstyle or ethnicity. But Madison's mother complained her son was being treated "as a test case."

Lesbian teacher in Utah wins effort to oust her from job

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The Utah Supreme Court on April 4 left it up to education officials whether to fire a lesbian high school teacher. The ruling was a victory for psychology teacher Wendy Weaver, who came under attack from parents and students at Spanish Fork High School in a heavily Mormon part of Utah. Teachers are required by law to be moral models for their students. A lawsuit accused Weaver of failing to be a good role model because her sexual orientation conflicted with state laws prohibiting sodomy. Weaver, who now uses her unmarried name Wendy Chandler, said the court's decision was a relief. "What they were going after was not really within their right as citizens to do," Weaver said of her critics. Weaver disclosed her sexual orientation when asked by curious students in 1997. Shortly thereafter, the high school barred her from talking about it, and Weaver later won a federal lawsuit against the Nebo School District for that requirement. Parents and students tried to remove Weaver by complaining to the local school board, but the district did not fire the award-winning, 20-year teacher.

From staff and wire reports

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national news

Little support for partners of military gays

MILITARY GAYS, continued from Page 1

of gays in the military deployed to the war in Iraq, while Lauren is among the partners left behind who must conceal the true nature of their relationships.

Gays deployed to Iraq and other locations in the Persian Gulf region must endure the same fears and family disruption associated with war as their heterosexual counterparts, according to officials with the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, a military watchdog group that assists gay service members.

But unlike their heterosexual compatriots, SLDN says, gay service members and their same-sex spouses must endure the added fear of being ensnared in the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which calls for the immediate discharge of gay service members who disclose their sexual orientation.

Although gays can secure a discharge under the policy whenever they wish by coming out of the closet, few chose to do so, said Steve Ralls, SLDN's communications director.

Ralls and Kathy Wescott, an SLDN attorney, said the organization is flooded with inquiries by gay service members seeking advice on communicating with loved ones at home without violating the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

Benefits missing in action

On top of the pain of saying goodbye to their loved ones, partners of gays in the military discover that they do not qualify for a wide range of military programs available to other service members' families. Among them are spouse support groups, emergency financial aid and regularly scheduled briefings on the status of the units to which service members are deployed.

The Metropolitan Community Churches, a Los Angeles-based network of gay-supportive Christian denominational congregations in cities throughout the U.S., has stepped in

to provide some support services to partners of gays in the military, said Rev. Marty Luna-Wolfe, pastor of the New Life Metropolitan Community Church of Hampton Roads, Va.

But Luna-Wolfe said congregations like hers, which ministers to gay service members stationed at the giant Norfolk, Va., Naval base, don't have the resources to match all of the services the military provides.

There is little the church can do to alter the military's rules on partner notification, where gay partners can only be classified as ordinary friends on a special military list of next of kin. The military uses that list to contact the families of service members killed or wounded in action.

"The military will contact everybody on the list," said Heather, the partner of an Iraq-bound Army reservist who was called into active duty last month. "But it will take longer for those who are not blood relative to be contacted."

'I'm going'

Heather, 26, who also asked to remain anonymous, has lived with her partner outside Philadelphia for more than eight years. The partner, 40, is an officer who has been in the Army reserves for more than 15 years and works full-time in a professional field in civilian life.

Heather described how she learned that her partner's Army reserve unit had been activated last month and was being shipped out with less than two weeks notice.

"One day she came back from drill," Heather recalls. "She just hugged me and would not let go. I said, 'What happened?' She said, 'I'm going.' So we had about a week to get our lives in order."

Heather drove her partner to the airport, where the partner flew on her own to join her unit at a military base in the U.S. The partner expects her unit to be transported to the Persian Gulf, most likely Kuwait, within a week or two, Heather said.

Military families are invited to see their service member loved ones depart for their overseas journey, but Heather isn't sure if she wants to go.

"She would like me to see her. We have to be careful about our usual way of talking to each other and touching each other," Heather said.

Like Lauren, Heather said she doesn't want to compound the stress and challenges her partner faces in the coming weeks by coming out as lesbians.

"I'm at a loss," Heather said. "I've been sending her mail. I sort of take things day by day. It's very hard."

Although she doesn't think her letters are being monitored, Heather said she tries her best not to write anything that would cause problems for her partner. "I try to keep them general, like someone who just cares about her, to make it sound like a family."

In doing this, she insisted, she is telling the truth. "I'm including our pets, a dog and four cats — a dog who is not happy his mom is gone."

Anonymous e-mails

Lauren, whose partner's ship is in the Persian Gulf, said the two consider themselves lucky because e-mail communication so far has been readily available, and the partner can sometimes call her on the ship's satellite phone.

"Her e-mail is monitored for security," Lauren said. "So I set up an e-mail account without my name. I never put my name anywhere on it. It's not fool proof, but it's safer than using my regular e-mail."

Within the confines of her anonymous e-mail messages, Lauren added, she feels free to express her true feelings.

"We feel we have to communicate with each other," she said. "I tell her I love her and I miss her. I tell her that all the time."

In describing her partner's job on the destroyer, Lauren said, "Her main duty is to sit at a console and watch a radar

screen," which she said "sees a picture" of the surface and the air, including all ships, planes, and missiles in the Gulf.

"If you want to know if the Gulf is dangerous, it is," she said. "The entire Gulf is considered a combat zone and a hot spot."

Luna-Wolfe of the MCC Church in Hampton Roads said gay service members and their partners have been members of her congregation for years. She said the sudden deployment of thousands of troops in the Norfolk area, which is home to eight separate military installations, placed a great strain on military families, especially partners and loved ones of gay service members.

"Like any denomination, our military members are coming to us for support," she said. "It's a place for partners and loved ones to talk and cry. It's a place where they know they're not alone."

Like family members of all service members, Luna-Wolfe said partners of gay troops engaged in combat in Iraq have been glued to their televisions, their emotions swinging from a sense of pride and joy to fear and horror. The gay service members, who mostly have adjusted to the task of having to conceal their sexual orientation, are sending back message of confidence, she said.

"When they get to a phone — it's not very often — they always say, 'We're going to be alright.' They say that all the time," Luna-Wolfe said.

Heather said the assistance that MCC churches plan to offer is sorely needed.

"The one thing I would like people to know is we are so disconnected," she said. "I have been left out of the loop of families of service members. ... I don't have access to any of this."

MORE INFO

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202-328-3244
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Gay Marine seeks conscientious objector status

Reservist says sexual orientation influenced his 'moral development'

By LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

SAN JOSE, Calif. — As an unknown number of gay soldiers serve in silence in the U.S. war against Iraq — banned from living openly by the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy — a gay Marine reservist came out earlier this month as part of his application for conscientious objector status.

Lance Cpl. Stephen Funk, 20, drew national media attention when he held a press conference April 1 outside of the 1st Beach Terminal Operations, 4th Landing Support Battalion in San Jose — much more press attention than the plight of gay soldiers serving in Iraq receives.

But Funk's case likely won't have much impact in the ongoing debate about gays in the military, according to Aaron Belkin, director of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military

at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

"Some opponents of inclusion could cite this case as evidence that gays and lesbians are not patriotic," Belkin said. "I do not think most people would find that argument compelling, however, since even the Pentagon has agreed that gays and lesbians are as patriotic as everybody else."

At the press conference, Funk said he didn't realize the full implications of military service when he enlisted last year.

"I refuse to kill," Funk said. "It is scary to confront the military, because the military teaches you to submit to orders even when you object."

As part of his application for conscientious objector status, Funk told military commanders that he is gay.

"My moral development has also been largely affected by the fact that I'm homosexual," Funk wrote. "I believe that as a gay man, someone who is misunderstood by much of the general population, I have a great deal of experience with hatred and oppression."



Flanked by his sister and mother, gay Marine reservist Stephen Funk spoke to reporters April 1 before turning himself in at his unit in San Jose, Calif. (Photo by Eric Risberg/AP)

To some critics — including conservative talk radio hosts Rush Limbaugh and Neal Boortz — the move smacked of someone willing to take any route to get out of the military.

"What we are seeing with what he is doing is obviously someone who doesn't want to

serve," said Maj. Carolyn Dysart, spokesperson for the Marine Forces Reserve.

Acknowledging his sexual orientation could make Funk eligible for discharge under the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which bans openly gay service members.

But triggering a possible DADT discharge isn't Funk's reason for saying he is gay, according to Amy Allison, a conscientious objector from the first Gulf War who is serving as an informal adviser to Funk as he seeks similar status.

"Stephen has never requested discharge for any other reason than being a conscientious objector — he is opposed to war," Allison said. "But there is a conflict between 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell,' which says people in the service shouldn't disclose their sexual orientation, and the regulations around applying for conscientious objector status, which require service members to be sincere and honest in outlining the influences on their moral development and why that is incompatible with military service."



police beat

Philly district attorney to investigate trans homicide

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham decided April 3 to investigate the killing of Nizah Morris, a transgendered woman bashed on the head in December, the Philadelphia Daily News reported. "If the district attorney can unearth something, we'll be happy with that," Homicide Capt. Thomas Lippo said. Gay activists accuse police of a sloppy investigation, but authorities say they have no clues and no witnesses. Morris, 47, was found lying in the street with a massive head wound on Dec. 22. The medical examiner's office said she was murdered, but police didn't rule it a homicide for weeks, fueling criticism that they were not taking the case seriously because Morris was transgendered. On the night of her attack, Morris collapsed drunk outside a gay bar and refused a ride home in a police car. Passing motorists found her lying in the street minutes later. Police won't release toxicology reports and did not file a report on offering Morris a ride.



Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham opened an investigation into the slaying of a transgendered woman after criticism that police weren't doing enough to find the killer. (Photo by Dan Loh/AP)

Three held over for trial in Calif. trans teen killing

HAYWARD, Calif. (AP) — Three men pleaded innocent to murder April 2 in the killing of transgendered teen Gwen Araujo, and their trials could start nine months to a year from now, said Gloria Allred, attorney for the victim's family. The killing took place Oct. 4 after Araujo was discovered to be biologically male at a party at the home of Jose Antonio Merel, 23. Araujo was beaten to death, and her body was buried in a shallow grave. Merel, along with Jason Michael Cazares and Michael William Magidson, both 22, face charges of murder in a hate crime. A fourth man, Jaron Chase Nabors, 20, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in return for testifying against his friends. Magidson was released on bail in February to undergo drug counseling, but was sent back to jail at the end of the preliminary hearing. No action has been taken on a motion by his lawyers to again grant bail.

Lesbian judge in Calif. held for trial in domestic dispute

SANTA MARIA, Calif. (AP) — A lesbian Santa Barbara County judge was ordered April 1 to stand trial on charges of battery, brandishing a gun and drunken driving, which could end her career on the bench if convicted. The trial date will likely be set at an April 18 hearing. Hall, 52, was arrested Dec. 21 after an argument with her domestic partner, Deidra Dykeman, who told officers Hall threatened to shoot one of their dogs. The confrontation came after Dykeman discovered that Hall took some Christmas wrappings that Dykeman purchased for herself. "I never saw her like that before," Dykeman said in a preliminary hearing. Hall brandished a loaded .38-caliber revolver and smashed the telephone before driving off, according to Dykeman. Hall was later arrested for drunken driving with a 0.18 blood-alcohol level, more than twice the legal limit. Using a gun to dissuade a witness and destroying a telephone to block calls to police are felonies.

Partner arrested in gay leader's stabbing death

WILKES-BARRE, Pa. (AP) — A man was arrested and charged with criminal homicide in the death of his lover April 3 after telling police the lover attacked him then fled. Kenneth Stephens, 21, told police he was stabbed by Michael Pierson, a 40-year-old gay activist and health educator, during a Jan. 28 domestic argument. Stephens was hospitalized, and police filed a warrant charging Pierson with assault. Pierson's body was found March 12 in a golf course lake near where the argument allegedly took place. An autopsy showed that Pierson suffered a single, fatal stab wound to the chest. "[Stephens] never indicated that Mr. Pierson had been stabbed or injured in any manner," said Trooper Chuck Sands. Stephens is being held without bail. Pierson's friends said the couple broke up a few days before he disappeared.

Accused gay LAPD deputy chief joined program to boost pension

LOS ANGELES — Two days after gay Los Angeles Police Department Deputy Chief David Kalish was suspended over allegations that he sexually abused male teens in a police-youth program in the '70s, he joined a deferred pension program that boosts his income more than 60 percent, according to the Los Angeles Times. The city program pays each month into an interest-earning account to be spent at retirement. Employees who sign up must retire within five years. "It appears that he qualifies for it," said Capt. Jim Tatreau, director of the Command Officers Assn. "But this is certainly not what the program was designed for." Whatever the outcome of the criminal investigation, which the district attorney is still considering turning over to a grand jury, Kalish will receive the extra payments that began accruing April 1. Six people, including three who contacted authorities after Kalish's suspension became public, allege that Kalish abused them.

From staff and wire reports

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Good Friday Service 10am |
| Saturday • April 12
Breakfast 9:30am | Sunday • April 20
Happy Easter |
| Monday • April 14
Scripture Study 6:30pm
"The Book of Jonah"
Eucharist 7:30pm | Monday • April 21
Eucharist 7:30pm |
| | Friday • April 25
Morning Prayer 10am
Movie Night 7pm
"Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets" |

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Issue 1172

Forum

guest editorial

A new war, a new me

Eleven years ago, when bombs fell on Baghdad,
I was singing the national anthem in support.
This time around, coming out has changed my view.

By MILES CHRISTIAN DANIELS

O WAS ON MY WAY HOME from 7-Eleven when a song was interrupted with news that America was bombing Iraq. A nervous reporter gave play-by-play commentary. Bombs and bullets exploded in the background.

I had just turned 14 and remember the sense of pride I felt that night. In some-what silly fashion, I joined a few of my friends in placing our right hands over our hearts and singing together, "Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we hailed?"

I was still in the closet in 1991. And I would stay that way for nine more years, both in terms of my sexual orientation and the way I thought things were supposed to be.

But a few details from Operation Desert Storm are still fresh. Peter Arnett and Bernard Shaw became household names. That ghostly green night-vision camera, which brought the bombing into our living rooms, still occasionally emerges in my dreams. And I fondly remember Mom hanging the American flag on our front porch post and tying a yellow ribbon around the rusted anchor in our front yard.

That war lasted less than two months, and Bush Sr. declared victory. Years later I would learn we didn't even come close to winning, and that hopeful Iraqi citizens, who had welcomed our troops with song and dance, were later slaughtered as they tried to finish what we had started. I also learned that all we did to help was toss stale bread from a moving aircraft.

THOUGH WANCHESE, OUR SMALL fishing village in coastal North Carolina, had sent no troops, the community rallied behind George Bush Sr., much like it's doing today with his son. And I stood

behind them — not only on the issue of war, but on other moral issues.

I believed abortion was murder, with no exceptions. I believed that gays went to Hell, even though I battled those "demons" myself. I believed Bush Sr. was seated next to the Father's right hand and that listening to liberals would poison my thoughts and hinder my walk with God.

I guess, in a way, being gay has been good for me. And being gay and from Wanchese even better. Though I'm still loved by many there, even more consider me a depraved sinner and an embarrassment.

Even in high school and early college, I held onto my beliefs. I wrote a newspaper column for the *Virginian-Pilot* in Norfolk about how wonderful Newt Gingrich's "Contract with America" would one day be for my generation.

I became a licensed minister in my denomination, and served for a year-and-a-half as a full-time youth minister. Life was on-track and Wanchesers, as they're known, couldn't have been more proud.

Until I came out.

AT FIRST, I WONDERED IF MY MORAL metamorphosis was a sort of inner revolt — a way of coping with the fact I was now deemed a sinner — an immoral enemy — in the eyes of those I had loved and grown up with. I started writing newspaper columns about gay issues and accepting and loving all people regardless of their differences. The beliefs I once held so dear

had seemingly deteriorated.

A few nights before our current president announced our invasion of Iraq, I stood in downtown Wilmington, N.C., holding a lit candle poked through a paper cup holder. Crowded around were a couple hundred people who — like me — did not think we were doing the right thing.

There were Catholics from the downtown parish, activists from the Green and Democratic parties, a handful of local college professors and students, and a healthy representation of gay men and lesbians.

We silently prayed for peace and then we went home.

Though I tried to conjure up the emotions I had felt during the first Persian Gulf War, they just weren't there. In fact, at that moment, I would have been lucky to stumble through that first line of the "Star Spangled Banner."

And, in addition to my prayer for our brave troops, I added a few others to the list, like those Iraqis whose lives would be lost in the line of erroneous bombs and bullets — those civilians who had asked for none of this.

I even offered a prayer for Saddam Hussein. After all, I was taught that Christ came for the most grave of sinners.

While standing silently at that vigil, I also thought about how my life has changed in these brief years since America's first war in Iraq. How only a few years ago, I would have been on the other side of the street waving our flag, holding high my sign proclaiming Hussein a devil, and shouting at those who were not being patriotic.

I guess, in a way, being gay has been good for me. And being gay and from Wanchese even better. Though I'm still loved by many there, even more consider me a depraved sinner and an embarrassment.

So, I've had to learn the hard way what it's like to be thrust on the other side of enemy lines. And I've felt the pain of those who are hated, spit upon and — for some — even murdered for simply being who they are.

@ Miles Christian Daniels is a freelance writer and documentary filmmaker in Wilmington, N.C. He can be reached at mcd5024@uncwil.edu.



viewpoint REV. JIM WEBB



Support for sodomy laws is built on a platform of religious fraud, taken out of context to repress gays and support a notion of public morality.

Sins of Sodom revisited again

TEXAS' BAN ON GAY SEX SHOULD BE overturned because it violates the constitutional right to privacy. I hope it will be overturned because it deprives Texans of equal protection under the law — the law applies only to gays. The Texas law against "homosexual conduct" is based on religious teachings, so it also constitutes a violation of the separation between church and state.

Conservative groups support the law because gays are not so popular among the religious right. But their attack of private acts on the basis of "public morality" is built on a platform of religious fraud.

Sodomy laws are based on Biblical teachings taken out of context, misunderstood and misinterpreted by time, translation and design. Most of us are woefully ignorant of its teachings, except for a few "just-so" stories from Sunday School, and the Hollywood Biblical epics.

In this case, our ignorance is used against us. The Biblical misunderstandings created sodomy laws that are used as a weapon against us. They are selectively enforced to ruin lives and terrorize.

THE SIN OF SODOMITES WAS NOT "THE

wickedness of homosexuality" as those on the religious right would have you believe — it was a lack of hospitality and their worship of pagan idols.

Sodom was a tiny fortress in the barren wasteland of the Dead Sea, according to biblical scholar Dr. Rembert Truluck. The only strangers that the people of Sodom ever came into contact with were enemies bent on destroying them, or on taking over valuable trade routes.

When word spread through this small enclave that Lot had visitors, Sodom's inhabitants naturally became curious and wanted "to know" them. It is illogical that they wanted "to know them in the Biblical sense," but simply that their fear of strangers fueled their curiosity.

As the crowd became larger, more fearful and more unruly, Lot sent out his daughters. If the male inhabitants of Sodom had been gay, it is illogical that Lot would have appeased them by sending out his daughters. When God destroyed this city, we believed that God did so as a result of homosexuality.

But this biblical passage's mistranslation of the phrase "to know" contributed to a religious, cultural, and legal bias against homosexuals. The



phrase "to know" is used 943 times in the Bible, according to Truluck, and is only interpreted to mean "to have sexual relations with" twice. In both places where it is used in this way, the traditional meaning of "to know" makes more sense.

Other biblical passages that reference Sodom and Gomorrah actually refute the premise that God destroyed these cities due to homosexuality. For example, Ezekiel 16: 48-50 clearly indicates that God destroyed Sodom due to its inhabitants' lack of hospitality. Deuteronomy 29: 21-28 adds idolatry to the list of "sins" that caused this city to be destroyed. Neither passage mentions homosexuality.

THE CONCEPT OF SODOMY DIDN'T EVEN really exist until the 11th century, when Christian reformer and hermit Peter Damian coined the term to categorize an abstract set of homoerotic acts, elevating them to the level preoccupying sin, according to Mark D. Jordan in his book "The Invention of Sodomy in Christian Theology."

This categorization was based on the same misinterpretations of Sodom and Gomorrah,

and fueled by the early church fathers' continued discomfort with human sexuality, which had been evolving for centuries. In this example, the truth became distorted not only because of translation differences — translating Aramaic speech into Greek writings — but also when the early church fathers' discomfort with sexuality and pleasure influenced the interpretation of the ancient teachings.

This distortion has been the basis of religious intolerance, social oppression and legalized victimization of gays through sodomy laws that are still enforced today. Sodomy laws not only violate our right to privacy and equal protection under the law, the laws also violate the separation and church and state when it is held up to the scrutiny of the truth.

This is a case where the truth can literally set us free.

@ Rev. Jim Webb is an ordained interfaith minister and author living in Washington, and can be reached at revjimwebb@aol.com.

The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of ETHAN GREEN

by Eric Orner



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on the record



"Sexual preference? Jesus, no, it means nothing to me. [One of my mentors] is as gay as Christmas, and so's my brother. I've been around gay guys since I was, oh, 16. They're just good pals. From Day One we got on, made jokes, and I thought nothing of it."

Irish actor Colin Farrell (Washington Post, April 9)

"How do I handle a gay proposition? 'Not interested, thanks.' You know, it's amazing the changes in people. ... These same people who would've freaked a few years ago — well, they're not on their knees [bawdy slang], don't get me wrong — but they know that a good person is a good person."

Farrell, on changes in attitudes toward homosexuality (Washington Post, April 9)

"I never thought I'd be sitting around talking about oral sex in front of my mother. That just got to me."

Gay Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.), whispering to Congresswoman Maxine Waters (D-Calif.) during testimony in the Clinton impeachment hearings, in which Frank's 86-year-old mother, Elsie, was present; all captured in the newly released documentary "Let's Get Frank" (Washington Post, March 27)

"[San Francisco] awarded a man who had a sex change as its Woman of the Year. When 'he' accepted the award, 'he' said there was a part of 'him' that didn't want to accept it — but that's gone now."

"Tonight Show" host Jay Leno, on the male-to-female transsexual honored by gay California Assemblyman Mark Leno (D-S.F.); Leno's monologue prompted protests from transgender rights activists (NBC's "Tonight Show," March 31)

"World's highest-paid female impersonator. ... [She] sports the face of Jimmy Cagney on the body of Mayor McCheese and lugs around the personality of George Wallace. The only good thing about Leona Helmsley is she's so mean, stupid and ugly that you honestly can't even envy her riches."

Naming Leona Helmsley, one of the "50 Most Loathsome New Yorkers" (New York Press, March 25)

"Homosexuals can and do serve honorably in the Marine Corps. Homosexuals can and do make some of the best Marines. Homosexuals are capable of military service and can and do perform as well as anyone else in the military. We hesitate to discharge Marines solely based on a statement they make about their sexual orientation."

A private memo written by Marine Corps Captain Darrell Allen, of the Twenty-Nine Palms Marine Corps base in California, subsequently leaked to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network

"While people were requesting we get involved, it was not a role I felt our station should take. We have a very wide audience, and a lot of our listeners are people who have children. People see our DJs as role models in some ways."

Doug Gillen, general manager of KISS 105.3 FM, the most popular radio station on the University of Florida campus, on why the station declined to participate in a college Pride Fest, prompting boycotts against the station from campus student groups (365gay.com, March 31)



"[The oral argument in Lawrence vs. Texas] proved to be a mismatch of advocates to a degree rarely seen at the court."

Longtime correspondent Linda Greenhouse, describing the quality of presentations by gay Washington attorney Paul Smith and Harris County, Tex., District Attorney Charles A. Rosenthal before the U.S. Supreme Court on March 26 in the Texas sodomy case (New York Times, March 27)

"Once sodomy is made legal, what's next? How about polygamy? As we have been reminded in the case of Utah's Elizabeth Smart and her abduction by a practicing polygamist, there are people who believe they have a right to that sexual and relational preference."

Conservative syndicated columnist Cal Thomas, on the Texas sodomy case (Tribune Media Services, March 28)



APPOINTMENTS: Montrose Softball League hosts its first golf tournament as a charity fund-raiser this weekend. Page 19.

THEATER: 'Big Voice' shows that a delightful theater experience can include a little bit of religion. Page 18.



HOUSTON VOICE
APRIL 11, 2003
PAGE 15

Out on the Bayou

Reclaiming the great outdoors

Spiritual, psychological renewal leads nature lovers to hit the trail this season

By MIKE FLEMING
and PENNY WEAVER

THERE ARE NEARLY AS MANY "TYPES" OF gays as there are gay people. Social and support organizations abound for gays of every ilk based on a wide variety of interests and demographic factors.

And that includes gays who love getting together for "back to basics" outdoor activities that not only engender camaraderie, but for many, an overt or indirect renewal of their personal spirituality.

The gay men's spiritual group for outdoor enthusiasts that springs to mind for many is the Pagan-based Radical Faeries, founded in 1979 by gay rights pioneer and Matachine Society founder Harry Hay, who died last year.

"The Radical Faerie Fellowship is a diverse and unorganized group of gay men who center their spiritual lives around various and sundry pagan doctrines," according to the group's Web site. "While no particular doctrine predominates, the movement is deeply rooted in the precepts of Native American spirituality. There are also Druids, Wiccans, Taoists, Shamans, Hindus and any number of other recognized and unrecognized beliefs present among Radical Faeries."

"Basically, it's a bunch of guys who get together in the '70s spirit of free love," says Ian Schmitz, a longtime participant in outdoor Radical Faerie "gatherings" like the one scheduled this month in Tennessee.

"We aren't afraid of, and in fact celebrate, our sexuality through guileless acts of appreciation for each other," Schmitz says. "Woodsy retreats are perfect settings to be back in touch with Mother Earth and with our feelings for our fellow faggots."

Some Faeries have reclaimed the word "faggot" as a rebuttal to negative use of the term in the same way some gays embrace the word "queer," he says.

The only aspect of the group that every Radical Faerie seems to agree on is that there is no one philosophy that governs their activities.

"We are self-defining," says the group's Web site. "We choose to be who we are, and there is no authority but our hearts. We gather together, get naked and beautiful in oh-so-many different ways, drop the world and open to each other — unless we don't feel like it, in which case we do something else."

GROWING TO INCLUDE MEMBERSHIP NATIONWIDE, GAY Spirit Visions is "committed to creating safe, sacred space for loving gay men to explore and strengthen our spiritual identity that is open to all spiritual paths," according to the group's Web site.

The Atlanta-based group accomplishes its goal to create a healing, spiritual community and help its members live with integrity by supporting each other and by sharing experiences and insights.

Gay Spirit Visions considers itself tribal in nature to provide escape, community and solace to its members.

"We at GSV use this tradition to provide a safe place for men who love men to speak from their hearts," the Web site states.



Members of the Radical Faeries get in touch with nature with a variety of activities at their 'gatherings,' including a retreat to Tennessee this month. (Photo courtesy Ian Schmitz)

Gay outdoor groups from the specifically spiritual to the more activity-focused concentrate on escaping the city and enjoying the region's rich natural wonders. Members of groups such as Gay Spirit Visions offer new activities for spring. (Photo courtesy gayspiritvisions.com)

THE LOCALLY FOCUSED HOUSTON OUTDOOR GROUP brings together gay Bayou City residents for a number of activities based on enjoying nature.

HOG is defined in its monthly newsletter as "a social group for gay men, lesbian women and gay-friendly persons who enjoy the outdoors." The group sponsors events ranging from sports activities to social activities.

This month, HOG members plan an outing for bird watching on High Island. Known as one of the best bird-watching spots in the world, the island is home to Boy Scout Woods and Smith Woods.

According to HOG's newsletter, April is the best month to see North America's most colorful songbirds here, including Scarlet Tanagers, Blue Grosbeaks, Baltimore Orioles and more as they migrate from South America across the Gulf of Mexico to the Texas coast. During the April 19 HOG trip, members also will visit a nearby rookery to see Roseate Spoonbills, Great Blue Herons and other birds raising their hatchlings.

Cost for the trip is \$5, which benefits the Houston Audubon Society, and the group will leave from the House of Pies on Kirby at 10 a.m. For more information, contact Jeff at 713-729-5072.

During the weekend of April 25-27, HOG members will hold an Enchanted Rock campout at the state natural area about 70 miles west of Austin. Reservations must be made. Pets are welcome; vaccination papers must be shown at the park gate and pets must be on a six-foot leash.

The group plans a pre-camp meeting at 7 p.m. Monday, April 21, at Café Express on Kirby between Alabama and Richmond. For more information, contact Howard K. at 713-528-6174.

Future events for the Houston Outdoor Group include Guadalupe River rafting from June 6-8.

ALSO FOCUSED ON GAY HOUSTONIANS IS THE Rainbow Fishing Club, which frequently sponsors deep-sea fishing in addition to other fishing trips.

Upcoming deep-sea fishing trips include an eight-hour tour on Saturday, April 26; a 12-hour trip on Sunday, May 11; a 12-hour trip on Saturday, May 31; a 12-hour trip on Sunday, June 15; an eight-hour trip on Sunday, June 15; and a 12-hour trip on Saturday, June 28.

f MORE INFO

Houston Outdoor Group • 713-KAMP-OUT
Bird watching on High Island • April 19
Enchanted Rock Weekend • April 25-27
Rainbow Fishing Club • 713-523-6381
e-mail: rainbowfishingclub@hotmail.com
Radical Faeries • www.radfae.org

Gay Spirit Visions • www.gayspiritvisions.org
Spring Retreat • April 18-20
Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers
Highland, NC • 828-526-5838
gayspirit@mindspring.com

Summer Camp • June 18-22
Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers
Fall Conference • Sept. 17-21
Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers

For eight-hour trips, cost is \$60 with a deposit of \$20 required. Cost includes the use of rod, reel, bait and tackle. The eight-hour trips depart at 7 a.m. and return at 3 p.m. For 12-hour trips, cost is \$75.

The group also invites experienced and novice anglers alike for fishing at the Galveston Pier. This event will be held Saturday, May 17, at the pier at 89th and Seawall Boulevard. Cost of admission to the pier is \$8 per person, or \$4 for children age 12 and under, or \$6 for senior citizens over age 60.

'Womyn' festivals celebrate great outdoors with music, camaraderie

By MIKE FLEMING

A love of the outdoors inspires live music festivals that begin as soon as outside temperatures rise and continue through the fall.

The Gulf Coast Womyn's Festival and the huge Southern Womyn's Festival kick off the season with popular performers and camping under the stars with a distinct lesbian bent.

First up, the 15th Annual Gulf Coast Womyn's Festival takes place at lesbian-owned Camp Sister Spirit in Overt, Miss., over Easter Weekend, April 17-20.

"This festival creates a community of sisters of many ages, many races and many walks of life for empowerment, encouragement and entertainment," says Brenda Henson, who founded the Camp Sister Spirit site with her partner, Wanda Henson.

The couple faced adversity from neighboring residents when they decided to found the site. After years of harassment, deliberately set fires and failed legal attempts to shut down the site based on moral objections, the Hensons haven't experienced any such actions in more than four years and now co-exist peacefully with neighbors, they say.

This year's lineup at the festival includes vegetarian and meat dishes, a craft show, 12-step meetings for those who desire them, games, booths and workshops. Musicians scheduled to perform include such lesbian favorites as Lucie Blue, Dorothy Hirsch, Trish Williams, Shelley Graff and Flash SilverMoon. Pre-registration is required, and men and accompanied children are welcome, Henson says.

As the homier Gulf Coast Festival attracts hundreds of visitors from around the region, Southern Womyn's Festival books big name lesbian acts that draw national crowds of thousands to its women-only festivities.

The May 8-12 event this year features godmothers of lesbian folk Holly Near and Cris Williamson. Other big-name performers, including Ember Swift, lesbian duo Halcyon, comedians Vickie Shaw and Marga Gomez and spoken word artists Robin G. White and C.C. Carter, are set to appear. "There's something for everyone, no matter what your musical preference," says Linda Jackson, co-producer of the event.

Gulf Coast Womyn's Festival • April 17-20 • Camp Sister Spirit • Overt, MS
• www.campsisterspirit.com • Southern Womyn's Festival • May 8-12 •
www.gaywomyn.org • Dragon Hills • Bowdon, Georgia 30108



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- Holy Wednesday Service
April 16 - 7pm
- Maunder Thursday Service
April 17 - 7pm
- Good Friday Service
April 18 - 7pm
- Noche Espiritual Service
April 19 - 7pm
- Easter Sunrise Service
April 20 - 6:30am
- Easter Sunday Services
April 20 - 9am & 11am

Noche Espiritual Worship Celebration

Saturday, April 26 - 7pm
 Rev. David Pettitt (Pastor of ICM Monterrey Mexico) will offer the Spiritual Encouragement at the 7pm service.
Special music: The Noche Espiritual Music Team and The Anointing!

Scramble Golf Tournament

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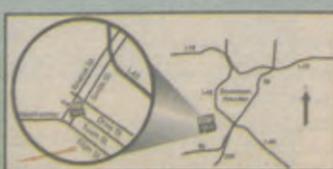
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autos JOE PHILLIPS



How to play the numbers on affordable but cool cars and come out a winner

Five under 25

SUCH A MAGICAL NUMBER, 25. A silver anniversary. The sum of the first five odd numbers (1,3,5,7,9). And five years to the big three-O. Ah, the lure of Botox injections.

It's also the limit (at \$25,000) that many gay guy or gal needs to go cruisin' — in a car, that is.

Whatever the criteria — practical, fun, cutting-edge, stylish, versatile — there's no need to spend a penny, or a quarter, more.

PRACTICAL

Ford Taurus sedan • \$19,415-\$23,730

Tired of the club scene? Need something sensible to offset your party-animal aura? Then look no further than the stable Taurus.

For 18 years, consumers have been bullish on Ford's bread-and-butter sedan. Practical. Roomy. And loaded as in standard features, not the sobriety status of your last circuit party playmate.

Thanks to high crash-test scores, it's also safe and secure. If only that were true of some blind dates, as well. But we digress.

Side air bags and antilock brakes are optional. Best of all, automaker rebates and dealer incentives mean thousands off the sticker. All the better to jet off on a cruise.

A possible downside: Such rebates/incentives may mean a poor resale price later. All the better to stay home and watch "Will & Grace" reruns instead.

STYLISH

Mazda 6 sport sedan • \$19,050-\$21,620

If macho is more your style, then jump in the athletic Mazda 6. Available in manual or automatic transmission, the V6 engine easily outruns the base model's pokey 4 cylinder.

The ride is firm yet smooth. The handling is taut but compliant. Fit and finish are highly toned with sleek trim inside and a muscular, head-turning body.

Damn, it's one of the few cars that force you to the gym so you can look as buff as it does. A tight rear — not a good thing in this



Ford Taurus

case — means lots of knee-knocking for back-seat passengers. But the 60/40 split folding rear seat expands an already generous trunk.

Anti-whiplash front seats are a plus, as are optional side and head-curtain airbags. And as if there weren't enough creature comforts throughout, lighted audio/cruise-control switches are available on the steering wheel. A 10 for looks. Ditto for driving pleasure.

FUN

Toyota Echo compact coupe/sedan • \$10,105-\$10,695

Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't. With Toyota's Echo, it's easy to have fun either way. Nutty details include the speedometer, which is in the top center of the dash (instead of on the left, in front of the steering wheel). Then there's the funky, egg-shaped body — for high driving position, easy access, and, oops, some sway when cornering. But think of this as another way of groovin' to the music.

More traditional features include tons of storage nooks. A spirited four-cylinder — in either manual or automatic — gets an impressive 38 mpg. And inside, it's as quiet as the live audience dozing through Bette Midler's failed sitcom.

Perhaps the only sour note: Most features aren't standard, they're options — even the clock. Still, even at \$19,500 with all bells and



Toyota Echo

whistles included, this automotive bit of whimsy is way below our \$25,000 limit.

CUTTING EDGE

Pontiac Vibe sport wagon • \$16,435-\$19,735 • MPG: 26

Lord knows many gays can't see themselves in a station wagon. But a gas-guzzling SUV seems so politically incorrect these days. And last time I checked, minivans were strictly for breeders and FTD deliveries.

But back to the point: How to get the usefulness of a wagon/SUV/minivan without sacrificing every hip tip Martha taught us before that nasty stock-manipulation scandal?

Just check out Pontiac's all-new sport wagon, which blends the usefulness of a 5-door hatchback with the handling and comfort of a small sedan. Based on the popular Toyota Matrix, the Vibe is boxy-chic, nimble and spacious — no small feat considering it's slightly shorter than the Honda Civic sedan.

Backseats fold down for a large, flat floor. Power comes from a so-so 4-cylinder or a peppy V6. Side airbags and ABS are options on some models. And at 26 mpg, this trendy car makes both a fashion and political statement.

VERSATILE

Subaru Forester SUV • \$20,545-\$22,895

Introduced five years ago, Subaru's Forester was fully redesigned for 2003. It's fresher, larger and has an all-new body for better handling. Best of all, the "Martina-mobile" is full of standard features, including power windows, locks and mirrors, cruise control, tilt steering, AM/FM/weatherband/CD audio, side airbags, ABS, daytime running lights and remote keyless entry.

Other plusses include better brakes, high crash-test results and two option packages. It still offers high, firm seating, a car-like ride and full-time/all-wheel drive. So Forester still retains all the original qualities that made it appealing in the first place.



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theater DON MOSER



'Big Voice' shows that deity abounds in some of the most unexpected places

Theater can be divine

THE QUESTION ASKED AND THEN answered by both Steve Schalchlin and Jim Brochu in "The Big Voice: God or Merman?" is: Where does someone find direction in life? Throughout their separate and combined journeys on stage, the two talented performers share with the audience their travels on the road to understanding their place and God's role in the world.

It's fortunate, though, that the two are Merman queens and not Judy ones; otherwise, according to Jim's thinking, their travels together would have been doomed.

The above brand of humor is part and parcel to this autobiographical production of wit and music by two long-time partners: Jim, a Brooklyn-born Catholic, and Steve, a Southern Baptist from Texas. At an early age, both men were called to the service of God within in those very different denominations, but the "big" voice never would arrive for them, even in the most sacred and devout of settings.

ACCORDING TO JIM, IT WAS ALWAYS the little voice in their heads that prevailed, and his practicing of papal blessings at the Vatican and Jim's studies at a Bible college were to no avail. However hard they would seek, their efforts came up comically short. Many moments and songs performed by the duo, about their careers and marriage, have that bittersweet edge to finding some sort of purpose in life.

"Our original concept was to write a play about God, but we found we were writing a play about each other," says Brochu. "We change the course of each other's lives all the time, and we never know it — that's what the play is about."

BROCHU, A 30-YEAR VETERAN OF stage and screen, has his epiphany of career direction in musical theater, when he gets to meet Ethyl Merman. From that moment, he understands that God can be found in the theater. His tale of that discovery, with its subtle humor and tested compassion, includes times when the public's hate for his homosexuality is not understood. The question of where God is during those times remains an underlying concern in his career.

As for Schalchlin, a composer/lyricist best known for his semi-autobiographical, award-winning work "The Last Session," his darkest but most miraculous moment comes upon being diagnosed with AIDS. Of the many



Real-life partners Jim Brochu (left) and Steve Schalchlin wrote and star in "The Big Voice: God or Merman?" The production is showing now at Stages Repertory Theatre and is directed by Anthony Barnao. A portion of proceeds from the play's Houston run goes to PFLAG-Houston and the PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Fund. (Photo by Bruce Bennett)

poignant and comical numbers in "The Big Voice: God or Merman?", the one concerning Steve's coping with that disease is the most remarkable. At a time when there was little known about the illness, Steve, along with Jim's tremendous faith, conquered it literally through hope, the "impossible" hope of performing his work on Broadway. Not only did he overcome the disease, but also his show played on Broadway for nine months.

If you are in the mood, then, to hear personal testimony of the power of theater to change lives, go see "The Big Voice: God or Merman?" By way of Jim Brochu's and Steve Schalchlin's humor and catchy tunes, you will leave with a lighter heart and a little more "religion."

i MORE INFO

"The Big Voice: God or Merman?"
Through April 19
7:30 p.m. Tues., Wed., Thurs. and Sunday
8 p.m. Fri. and Sat.
4 p.m. Sat. matinee, April 19
Tickets: \$30
Stages Repertory Theatre
3201 Allen Parkway
713-527-0123
www.stagestheatre.com
www.thebigvoice.com

community calendar

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

G.L.O.B.O. Baile kick-off party. G.L.O.B.O. is Gays & Lesbians Organized by Orgullo, a newly formed non-profit organization serving the Latino/a community in Houston. Baile is an annual formal gala featuring live music celebrating gay pride for Latinos. Noon-9 p.m. E.J.'s, 6501 Ralph St. Food, raffles and entertainment are planned. Tickets: \$30 pre-sale or \$35 at the door. 713-642-9797.

Gulf Coast Transgender Committee. Meeting. 713-780-4282.

Houston Buyers Club. Free BIA (Bioelectrical Impedance Analysis) the first two Saturdays of the month. Hours: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Houston Buyers Club, 3400 Montrose Blvd., Suite 604. 713-520-5288. http://www.houstonbuyersclub.com/bia_testing.html

Houston Gay & Lesbian Parents. Field Day/Play Day at Meyer Park. www.hgjp.org.
Men's Gathering of Houston. Dialogue meeting. 6:30-9:30 p.m. "The Miseducation of the Transgender Community." Facilitators will include Brenda Thomas, First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston, 5200 Fannin. Church phone: 713-526-5200. Men's Gathering of Houston: 713-528-4461.

Pink Pistols of Houston. Field trip to gun range, 2 p.m. Location to be determined. Pink Pistols of Houston, 7826 Marinette, Houston, TX 77074. 713-272-8265. www.pinkpistols.com/local/houston.

EVERY SATURDAY

All-Spanish Worship Service/Noche Espiritual. 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-3409 or 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.

Q-Patrol. Volunteers walk the streets to help prevent hate crimes. 9:30 p.m. Convene at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrol@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. • Texas Association for Transsexual Support (TATS), 3 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13

Classic Chassis Car Club. Spring car show, noon-5 p.m. at South Beach, 800 Pacific St. CCCC. 713-797-8615. www.classicchassisclub.org.

EVERY SUNDAY

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. 409-831-2055. E-mail: cksv3@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.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 9 p.m.-midnight at Club Inergy. 713-830-3000.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 7 p.m. Palace Lanes, 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@bayou.uh.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.

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. Come 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. 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: PoznBuff@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.tuac.org.

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 10:10-10:45 a.m., worship 11 a.m. www.geocities.com/glbtc • LOAF (Lesbians Over Age Fifty), 2 p.m. • SISTERS of Houston, support group for African-American lesbians, 3:30 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

EVERY MONDAY

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. 9 a.m.-noon 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. Keys West. 713-830-3000.

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

Gay Bowling Leagues. 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 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. • Montrose Writers' Project, 7 p.m. • Human Rights Campaign Political Action Committee, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

Center for AIDS. Men's mixer, 7 p.m. 1407 Hawthorne. 713-527-8210.

EVERY TUESDAY

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.

Gay youth. New program for young gay males, ages 18-29. 7 p.m. 614 Avondale. 713-533-9786.

GLBT Pentecostals. Bible study, prayer, 7 p.m. in the Heights. For info: 936-931-3761; e-mail: www.WoB1947@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 Rangers. 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.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at E.J.'s; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon. 713-873-4157.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, 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, 7-9 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-528-4379.

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, 6-9 p.m. • S&M Night (Snacks and Movies), 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

Gulf Coast Archives & Museum. Meeting, 7 p.m. 713-227-5973.

EVERY THURSDAY

BiNet Houston. Group for bisexuals; everyone welcome. 7:30 p.m. Hobbit Café, 2240 Portsmith. www.flash.net/~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.

Free HIV Testing. Houston Area Community Services. 10 a.m.-2 p.m. at Joseph-Hines Clinic, 1710 West 25th St. Also 11 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at Gallery Medical Clinic, 5900 North Freeway, and Club Toyz from 9 p.m.-midnight. 713-526-0555, ext. 231, 227 or 226.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at The Outpost; 8 p.m.-midnight at Brazos River Bottom and Cousins; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. 7-9 p.m. at All Star News, 3415 Katy Freeway. Health clinic with free testing for HIV and syphilis. 713-869-7878.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021. Web site: <http://home.swbell.net/latarthon/houfr.htm>. E-mail: latarthon@swbell.net.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 9 p.m. Palace Lanes, Bellaire Blvd. 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 Rangers. 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/RFA7235/. E-mail: rfaworkservice@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. • GLBT Center Board of Directors meeting, 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 10 p.m.-2 a.m. at The Meatrack; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at E.J.'s and at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon. 713-873-4157.

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

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals (H.A.T.C.H.) Meeting. 7-10 p.m. 713-942-7002.

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 Altim. 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 Altim, 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: qpatrol@aol.com

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

Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 4-8 p.m. at Mary's; 9 p.m.-midnight at Ripcord; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at E.J.'s; 10 p.m.-1 a.m. at Midtowne Spa. 713-830-3000.

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. OraSure method. Call for appointment. Sharon. 713-873-4157.

Gay Bowling Leagues. 6:30 p.m. Palace Lanes, 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, 7-9 p.m. 1307 Yale. 713-528-4379.

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Houston GLBT Community Center. Drop-in, 2-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • S&M Night (Snacks and Movies), 7 p.m. • 3400 Montrose, Suite 207. 713-524-3818. www.houstonglbtcenter.org.

appts

a weekly guide to arts & entertainment activities for gay Houstonians

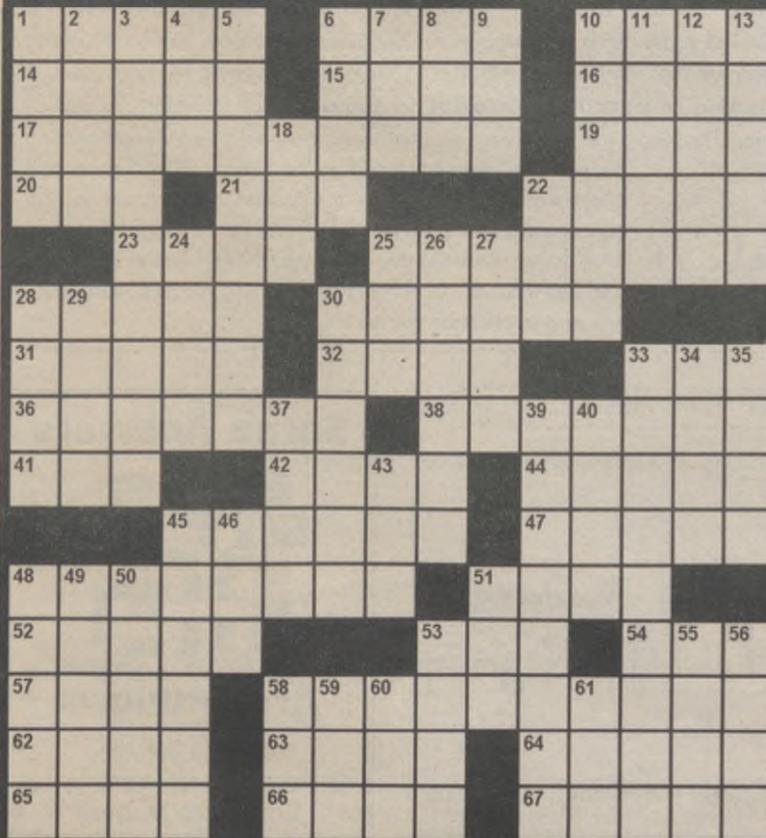
SPECIAL FRIDAY, APRIL 11

Spring Fling, the annual PFLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation (PHYSF) dinner, is the group's major annual fund-raiser. PFLAG Houston and H.A.T.C.H. (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals) jointly created PHYSF, which offers a scholarship program to assist worthy youth in the Houston area in pursuing a college education. The scholarship program is for lesbian, gay bisexual or transgendered students who have demonstrated outstanding achievement while in high school or college. Tickets: \$100 per person, or \$150 for VIP tickets. 6:30 p.m. Warwick Hotel, 5701 Main St. 713-864-3135.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

Authors Dean James and Greg Herren will participate in book signings. James is manager of *Murder By the Book* and a Rice University graduate, in addition to being a novelist. He is presenting his new murder-mystery, "Faked to Death." Herren is a former Houston resident who now calls New Orleans home. His novel is "Bourbon Street Blues," also a

Q Puzzle



"Friends of Dorothy"

Across

1. Sign in Frasier's booth, perhaps
6. Pleasured in bed
10. Merit badge locale for the "morally straight"
14. Type of triangle
15. Ingrid's role in "Casablanca"
16. Muppet pal of Rosie
17. Character whose first wife left him for a woman
19. Drag queen's leg need
20. Robert Reed's "___"; Death Flight
21. Sexual ending
22. Coin toss preference for tops?
23. Places for Sue Wicks' nets
25. Actress Cox who's the sister-in-law of Alexis Arquette
28. Rubberneck
30. Sarah Jessica's "Sex and the City" role
31. Faith in music
32. What you shake when you come quickly
33. He had a threesome with Larry and a bald guy
36. Jennifer of "Object of My Affection"
38. Matt of "All the Queen's Men"
41. Org. that uses ball-washers
42. Peter and more
44. Like some Greek columns
45. Plain in Nureyev's country

47. Tennessee, for one
48. Character Bing whose father is a drag queen
51. TV portrayer of Robin's older partner
52. Protection
53. Hottie
54. Very hairy swinger
57. Bitch
58. Actress who starred in "The Opposite of Sex"
62. Family diagram
63. "American Beauty" screenwriter
64. Singing Man
65. Date for Nero
66. Gets hard
67. Stays hard

Down

1. They move your dinghy
2. Sgts., e.g.
3. Peter Allen's country
4. "___ De-Lovely"
5. Privates standing at attention, perhaps
6. "Celluloid Closet" narrator Tomlin
7. "I Could Have Danced ___ Night"
8. Verb suffix for Rupert Everett
9. Folksinger Williams
10. Where they stuck it in Caesar
11. Philosopher Locke
12. Word from Tom Bianchi, perhaps
13. Well-hung, e.g.
18. They could come from Uranus
22. Pink angle front
24. Concerns of gfn.com
25. James Dean's "East of Eden" role
26. Threat finale
27. Sexual desire, e.g.
28. Kirk Reed's "How I Learned to ___"
29. Half of a pair for grabbing
30. Party tidbit
33. The guy you're hugging?
34. Kool & the Gang's "Get Down ___"
35. Latin homo leader?
37. Artist Robert
39. Swinging either way
40. Where they yell "Cut!"
43. David Sedaris' home on the air
45. Wesley of "To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything! Julie Newmar"
46. Scores by David Kopay
48. Pricks cover them
49. Like phone sex
50. Come to terms
51. Moo goo gai pan pan
53. Lots of lesbians, to k.d. lang
55. Langston Hughes or Denise Levertov
56. Praps for frat hazing
58. Sixth notes in "Do-Re-Mi"
59. Island in gay Paree
60. Posed for Catherine Opie
61. Arts center in NYC's Chelsea neighborhood

Answers on Page 20

AN EVENING WITH ANNIE LENNOX SOLO



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My Stars!

April 11 — 17



ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

This looks like a festive week for you, Aries dearest. The Sun is in your sign, and the full moon falls in your house of love on April 16, which suggests that you can switch from top to bottom and back again quite smoothly. A Gemini is just as versatile as you are.



TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

All in all it looks like a jolly week for you, Taurus. Eat, drink, and get wild with the Sagittarius of your choice. Choose joy over guilt, but make sure you live your life with integrity, sweetie. If you can balance decadence with diligence, you'll be on par with your greatest heroes and heroines.



GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Romantic relationships are super intense this week, Gemini. You could come to a realization about yourself as a lover. Perhaps you are finally ready for a change — or a total transformation. You've coasted by, always giving other people what they want. Now it's time to listen to your own libido. A Leo is all ears.



CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

This is a sweet and significant week for you, dearie. Mars in your opposite sign of Capricorn may be making you feel a bit oppressed, as if the world is ganging up on you. It's not. But the full moon on April 16 could make you feel both powerful and paranoid. Express your every feeling in bed with a Virgo.



LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Mars is making an intense transit through the health and fitness sector of your chart, so you may suddenly feel very in touch with your body. Don't get scared — get active. It's a good time to get a Virgo to touch your body, sweetie. Your nerve endings are screaming out for constant attention.



VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

Mars is sitting pretty in your passionate fifth house. This means you might experience a breakthrough in your love life, which begins in your bedroom. Another Virgo could have a deep and important effect on your soul. The shallow and the deep come together in the days ahead. And you two may come together, too.



LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

The key to happiness this week is to surround yourself with people you can trust. You know how to charm all sorts of dangerous types, but I'd recommend sticking close to folks (especially of the same sex) who are pure of heart. An Aries wants to spend the full moon (April 16) with you. You're in for a howl.



SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

Spread joy wherever you go, and don't forget to turn your flirt-o-meter to over-drive. A Pisces will be lured by your not-so-subtle charm. You're able to get what you want by being yourself to the highest degree. Even your family is easy to deal with this week. Your enthusiasm really is infectious, sweetie.



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

This is a sexy, sassy, and psychotic week for you, Sag. The pressure is on for you to be all that you can be — and do all that you can do — with many suitors or just one. Let the full moon on April 16 completely pass before you decide whether to be completely monogamous or completely a whore. A Pisces may convince you to do both.



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Your power time is beginning, Capricorn. Get over your melancholy ways and start acting out, sweetie ... preferably in a constructive way. Focus on the one work project that means the most to you. And make sure that you set time aside for your friends and family and your love life (an Aquarius loves to love you, baby). In other words, start acting like a normal person, and soon you'll be one!



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

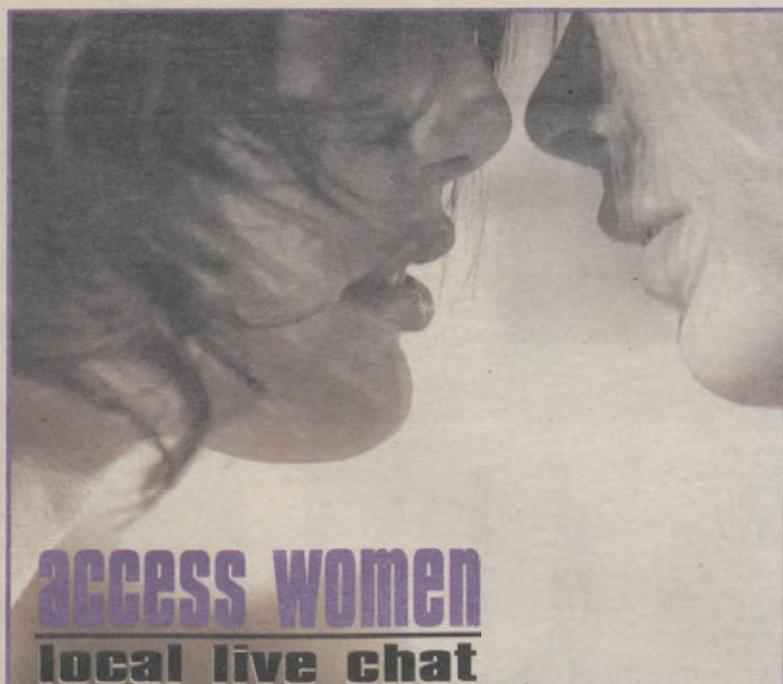
This is an intense full-moon week for you, dear. The moon peaks in your house of adventure, so get adventurous about love — please! Another Aquarius is moved by your deep feelings but may be terrified, too. Sound familiar? Be careful what illicit substances you put into your bod. You're super sensitive now, honey.



PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

You could receive public recognition for your hard work early in the week, lovey. Take advantage of your five minutes of respectability and promote your new projects. A Scorpio wants to promote the idea that you two are soul mates — now and forever. Make sure you control the spin on your love life, baby.

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.

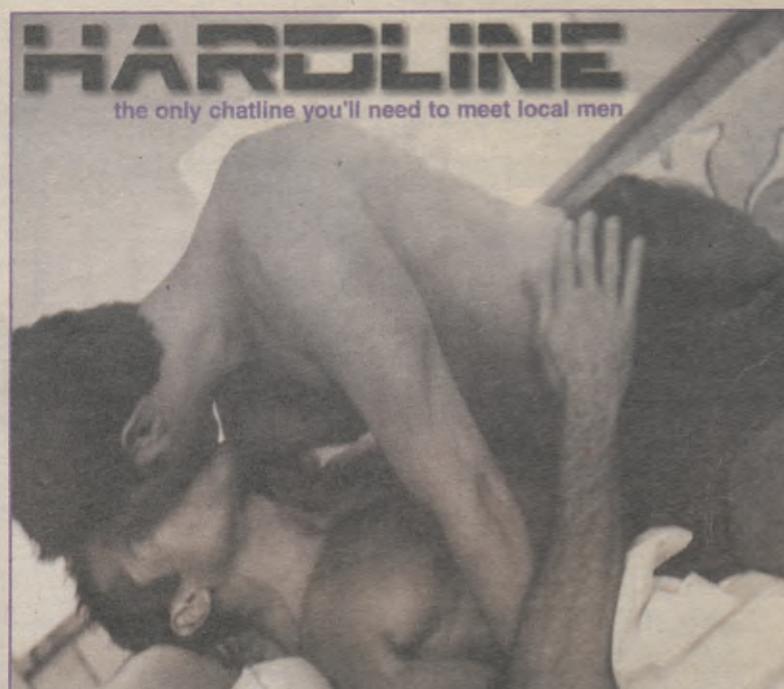


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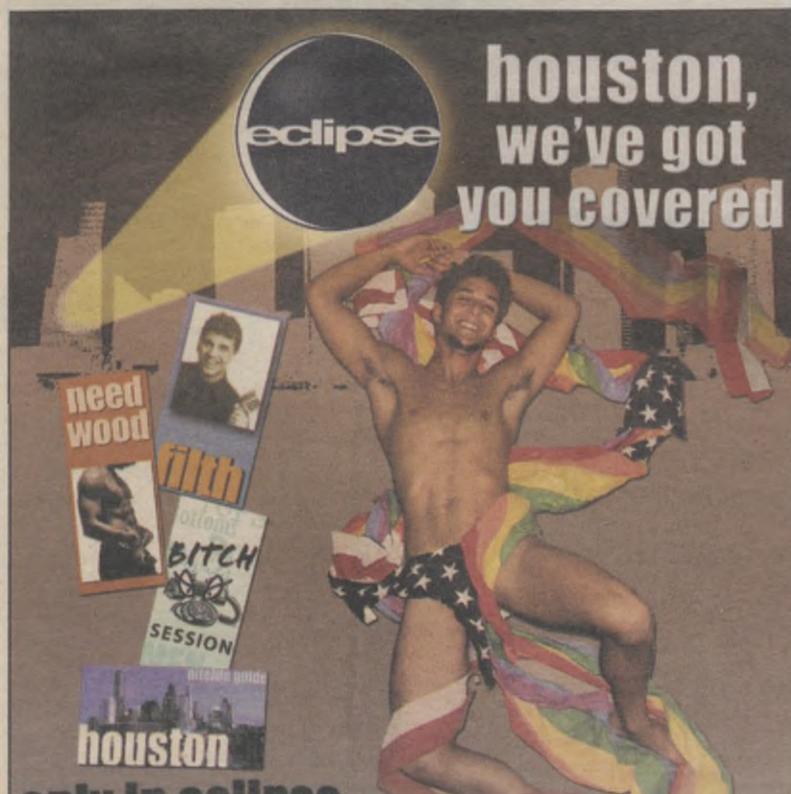
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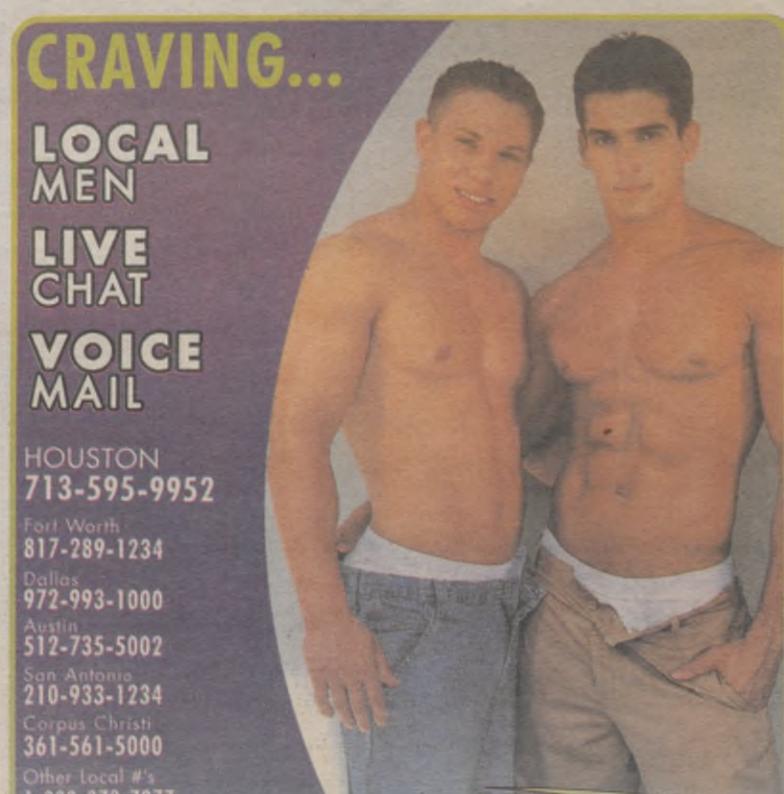
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