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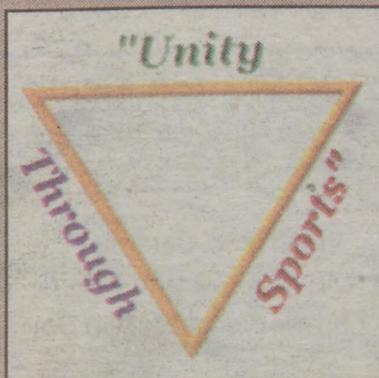
After a partial court hearing this week, lesbian Connie Danielson still has high hopes of regaining custody of her daughter.

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Fund-raisers for organizations that serve gay Houstonians had ups and downs in 2001.

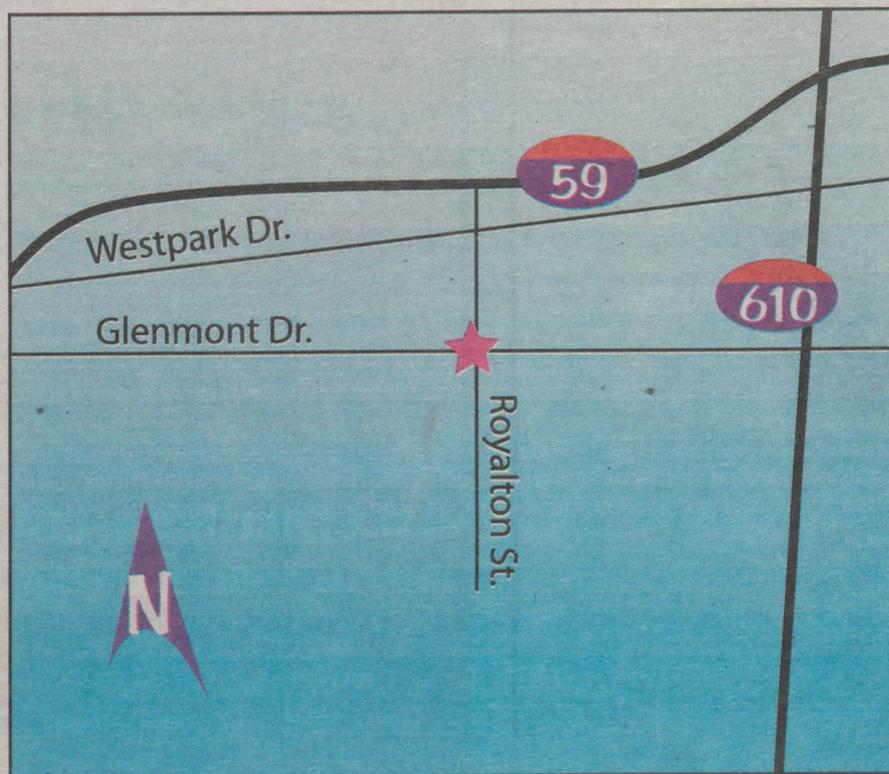
Page 4



Montrose Softball League prepares for a new season with its upcoming Recruitment Day.

Page 19

Transgender man found murdered



The body of a Hispanic male, clad in women's clothing, was found Saturday morning at 5300 Glenmont. He had been shot several times, Houston police said.

Police have no suspects in shooting of Hispanic male found dressed in female clothing

by PENNY WEAVER

Houston Police Department investigators have no witnesses or suspects so far in the murder of a man whose body was found clad in women's attire.

The victim, a Hispanic male, has been identified as Hugo Cesar Barajas, 27, of 2005 Vermont in Baytown. According to Houston police, Barajas' body was found at 5300 Glenmont around 9 a.m. Saturday. He had been shot several times.

Investigators responded to a call and discovered the body, dressed in female clothing, lying in the breezeway of a commercial business complex.

HPD spokesperson Sandra Aponte said that at this time, the motive is unknown and there are no witnesses or suspects in the case. Police did not speculate on whether or not Barajas' crossdressing might have been a factor in the murder.

Detectives directly involved in investigating the killing could not be reached for comment or further details by press time Thursday.

Civil unions aren't marriage, court says

In first test of Vt. law, appeals court rejects lesbian mom's claim that civil union should fulfill visitation decree

by LAURA DOUGLAS-BROWN

The first case in the country to test the weight of Vermont's civil unions dealt a loss last week to a lesbian mother who argued her union should count as a "marriage" to enable her to visit her three sons in the Atlanta home she shares with her female partner.

And while gay rights attorneys downplayed the broader impact, the case also dealt a serious blow to overall recognition of gay civil unions in Georgia or other states outside of Vermont, according to the conservative law group that represented the mother's ex-husband.

Civil union supporters "want to narrow the case because it is a major defeat for them," said Matthew Staver, director of Tampa-based Liberty Counsel. "This is a huge case because it is the first to say that Vermont civil unions are not the equivalent of marriage, and that applies to every other state in the union."

Georgia residents Susan and Debra Freer traveled to Vermont and joined in a civil union on July 4, 2000, just a few days after the

➤ Continued on Page 8



R.O. YOUNGBLOOD

Susan and Debra Freer (left) haven't been able to visit Susan's three sons for over a year, because Susan's ex-husband doesn't want them to spend time around the lesbian couple.



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Custody battle nears end

Partial hearing conducted, set to be finished next week for lesbian mom and her daughter

by PENNY WEAVER

A Houston judge continued a portion of this week's hearing in the case of a lesbian mother who has fought for several years to obtain full custody of her daughter.

Connie Danielson of Conroe raised her daughter, Chelsea, alone for five years before Chelsea's biological father, Sammy Magana, filed for custody and won. Danielson said Magana brought up the issue at that time because Danielson is a lesbian.

That was five years ago, and Danielson has continually fought to regain custody of Chelsea, now 10. Danielson and her partner of one year, Kim Gayheart, contend they can provide a good home environment for Chelsea and that she wants to live with them.

In a Jan. 29 hearing in Houston courts, a judge heard Danielson, Gayheart and Danielson's sister testify on behalf of Danielson, she said late this week. Magana also took the stand.

The hearing was continued to 10 a.m. Feb. 8, however, because the judge had a dentist's appointment and was unable to hear the rest of the evidence to be presented, according to Danielson.

The court did arrange for a child's representative to meet with Chelsea both at Danielson and Gayheart's home, at school and with Magana and his parents, who have helped take care of Chelsea.



Connie Danielson (left) and her partner, Kim Gayheart, hope to soon be reunited with Connie's daughter, Chelsea. Danielson has fought for several years to obtain full custody of Chelsea, 10.

Danielson said all the adults involved also will take a weekend class on parenting and helping children cope with stress.

Despite the delay, Danielson is hopeful about next week's court session.

"I think it's going to go really good," she said.

Magana's attorney did attempt to use Danielson and Gayheart's relationship as a factor in the case, Danielson added.

"They did try to bring up the gay thing," she said. "The judge didn't even seem to blink eye. She just kind of overlooked it."

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Charities report the pinch of Sept. 11

Fund-raisers for groups that assist gay Houstonians saw sharp drop in contributions after need created by terrorist attacks

by ELLA TYLER

"No wonder I shot 2,000 rolls of film last year!" exclaimed Houston photographer Dalton DeHart as he reviewed the fund-raising events he recorded in 2001.

Gay Houstonians who volunteered, contributed and participated in such benefits likely also have lost count of the many efforts to raise money for gay causes.

In spite of terrorist attacks, the shows and parties went on. So did an impressive amount of check writing, both from businesses and individuals. Indications are that money will continue to flow in 2002, although it might come from different sources.

"It wasn't just Sept. 11," said Gary Teixeira, who is involved in several community groups, about the need for benefit events. "It was the flood, the prospect of Compaq's moving, Continental's problems, the city election. And then Enron."

But one thing that most fall fund-raisers had in common was a dip in giving that they attribute to after affects of Sept. 11, which netted a huge nationwide surge in charitable giving to groups like the American Red Cross.

The PWA Coalition's sixth bowling tournament, Strikes Against AIDS, was held Sept. 9. According to Alice Sarmiento, attendance was the same as it has been previously, but donations were down somewhat. The event raised \$20,000 and spent \$4,000. Food was donated, Sarmiento said.

"This is a fun event - it's family oriented and involves all the communities in Houston," she said.

Sarmiento said that donations were down after Sept. 11. "An easy example is that someone who used to send us \$25 every month didn't send a check from September to December, and we noticed it. However, she sent us a check in January," she explained.

One of Montrose Clinic's fund-raising events, Dining Out For Life, was held Sept. 13.

"It was too far along to cancel," said Peggy Rhoads, the agency's development director. "That did not do well, because no one was going out. However, we began a direct mail gift campaign in December, and are pleased with the response we are getting. We are getting some new donors and some contributors who haven't given in a while are giving again."

Uncommon Legacy, which funds scholarships for lesbians, held its third golf tournament on Sept. 30. According to event organizer Janine Brunjes, the event attracted



Most annual fund-raisers for groups that serve gay Houstonians saw a drop in proceeds after Sept. 11. Organizers now are gearing up for 2002 events, including the annual AIDS Walk Houston, which netted about \$320,000 last year.

as many golfers as before but was not as successful in attracting major donors.

"Since we had less money from underwriters, we didn't net as much as in prior years," Brunjes noted. About 48 percent of tourney proceeds were spent on costs, she said, in contrast to previous years when costs have ranged from 26 to 35 percent of proceeds.

Another September event was the Third Annual Misfit Ball, held the 23rd. Robert Hammond, the group's 2001 president, reports that \$4,638 was raised to be split between the Buyers Club and PWA Coalition from the 277 attendees.

"It is more money than we have raised ever before, but nobody was feeling very festive, so we didn't raise as much money with the auctions," he noted.

The Assistance Fund, which pays COBRA payments so people may retain their health insurance and also pays for medication, held its major annual fund-raiser on Nov. 19.

"It is a unique event: a dinner in the Couture Department of Neiman Marcus," said Diane Creel. "This year we raised \$200,000 with overhead of about 25 percent. Last year, we raised \$300,000 but had twice as many people attending."

The Center For AIDS Holiday Schmooze, held Dec. 13, raised about \$47,000, more than twice as much as it did the previous year, according to Daniel Zorn, development director. Organizers worked to keep the attention of the public after the terrorist attacks, he noted.

"I think we conveyed our core message and people understood that there is still work to be done," Zorn said.

The final numbers for the last fund-raiser of 2001, the Houston Black Tie Dinner, aren't in. But Sandy Clough, vice-chair of the event, said the dinner raised less than it has in previous years.

Despite rough roads after givers re-routed their contributions for Sept. 11 causes, leaders of local charities that assist gay Houstonians already are looking ahead.

Organizing, sponsor recruitment and table sales for the 2002 series of fund-raisers is already under way.

Still, the charitable needs created by the terrorist attacks continue to affect local fund-raising.

The Human Rights Campaign's Gala is March 2. Dalia Stokes reports that 72 out of 82 tables are already sold, but, so far, there are not as many sponsors and underwriters as last year.

"People are saying the economy is slowing down generally, and citing Sept. 11 specifically," Stokes said.

However, Stokes thinks the event will be a sell-out, with between 800 and 900 guests.

"At our national semi-annual meeting in October, it was discussed that the aftermath of attacks reveals how many ways gays are treated unequally," she noted.

AIDS Walk Houston, which benefits the AIDS Foundation Houston and five other agencies, will be held March 10.

"We're doing better than expected," said Ken Kelly, vice president of external affairs for the group. "We're ahead of where we were last year and have more corporate walk teams."

According to Kelly, the 2001 walk raised approximately \$350,000 with production costs of about \$30,000.

This will be good news to the AIDS Coalition's Saramentio. "If the AIDS Walk does well, we will all do well," she said.

Bringin' in the Green is Montrose Counseling Center's annual fund-raising event. It is a cocktail party/reception held on the Friday closest to St. Patrick's Day, which is March 15 this year.

The center's Sally Huffer said not as much sponsorship money has been raised so far as was raised last year, but there is a week to go before the deadline.

"However," she said, "last year the food was donated by Enron, and we won't be nibbling that well this year."

The 2001 event netted nearly \$17,000 after costs of about \$2,000, Huffer said.

Gary Teixeira is chair of the

FLAG/HATCH Youth Scholarship Foundation's Spring Fling, to be held April 19 at the Warwick Hotel.

"The event is as much about introducing who we are and celebrating what we do as about raising funds," he said.

According to Teixeira, last year's fling raised \$10,143 with expenses of \$4,064, leaving proceeds of \$6,079. The Foundation awarded \$57,000 in scholarships to 19 students in 2001.

Teixeira is optimistic about the group's fund-raising in 2002. Sponsorship recruitment for the Spring Fling is under way now.

"So far, my gut feeling is that we are ahead of last year in our fund-raising. We have a great story to tell," he said.

Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals has a prom in May as its annual fund-raiser. According to prom Chairman Kevin Davidson, the 2001 event raised \$15,525 with costs of \$923, leaving proceeds of \$13,902.

One event that is as much about raising fun as raising funds occurs this weekend. The Krewe of Olympus Ball will be Saturday, Feb. 2. According to Robert Brooks, Krewe president, the ball raised enough money to give away \$21,000 last year. The ball is by invitation only, and is the "best ticket in town," according to Brooks.

"Fund-raising is all about people, not money," Montrose Clinic's Rhodes said. "We may get smaller amounts from more people, but donors are thinking about where are their values and want to feel as if they are doing something important."

Zorn of the Center for AIDS, praised the city's gay residents for their willingness to help those in need.

"Houston has an exceedingly strong volunteer and donor community," he said. "It's truly a Houston thing, although other Texas cities are generous. It is very much in the forefront of giving. Agencies need to return to the basics and get the message out about what their mission and purpose is."



Volunteers for the 2001 'Bringin' in the Green,' a fund-raiser for Montrose Counseling Center, count up some of the nearly \$17,000 garnered in the benefit. This year's Bringin' in the Green is set for March 15.

Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce powers up for busy month

February is full of events scheduled by the Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce, starting with the group's regular monthly meeting on Tuesday. According to Executive Director Coy Tow, the Chamber general session begins with 6 p.m. social and continues with a 7 p.m. dinner Tuesday at the Warwick Hotel. RSVPs are needed by noon Friday. The Chamber also will help power an open house Thursday at Haus Edelweiss from 6 to 9 p.m. The business will offer beverages and snacks and welcome special guest Annise Parker, the only openly gay member of the Houston City Council. Also present will be lawmaker Debra Danburg. The public is invited to attend. For Valentine's Day, the Chamber offers members a chance to see "The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told" at Theatre New West. A dessert reception will follow the 8 p.m. performance, Tow said.

INFO

Greater Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce

Feb. 5 general meeting and dinner
6 p.m. social, 7 p.m. meal
Warwick Hotel
RSVP: 713-523-7576

Feb. 7 open house

6-9 p.m.
Haus Edelweiss
1833 West Alabama

Feb. 14 special performance

8 p.m.
"The Most Fabulous Story Ever Told"
Theatre New West
1415 California St.
Tickets: \$45 per couple or \$25 individual
713-523-7576

Fund-raising group wraps up year's events, presents new leaders



Recently crowned as new monarchs for Houston's RSICSS are Emperor XVIII Sean Carter and Empress XVIII Shelby St. John.

The Royal, Sovereign and Imperial Court of the Single Star of Houston, Inc. (RSICSS) recently wrapped up Reign XVII and work done under the leadership of Emperor XVII Wes Stewart and Empress XVII Barbara Walker. Throughout the year, the group raises tens of thousands of dollars for charities including Colt 45's, Miss Camp America Foundation, AIDS Foundation Houston and Camp Hope Program and the Houston Lesbian and Gay Community Center. Emperor XVIII Sean Carter and Empress XVIII Shelby St. John were crowned as the newest monarchs in the state of Texas and the International Court System. Membership in the Court is open to anyone interested.

INFO

RSICSS
713-524-3688
e-mail: emperorXVIII@aol.com

Artists entertain as part of Voices Breaking Boundaries

A variety of musicians and artists will participate Feb. 10 in an event sponsored by Voices Breaking Boundaries (VBB). The afternoon of poetry, prose, music and dance will feature "Dance for Peace: An International Celebration of Mother Language" by Rafia Sultana Rasu, dance artist from Bangladesh. Also slated to perform is trombone jazz player Dave Dove. In addition, high school students will present literary pieces and an open mike session will be held. The event is open and free to the public. VBB is a collective forum of writers from diverse perspectives, backgrounds, and countries. Host is Sehba Sarwar, founding member and artistic director.

INFO

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Fla. trans custody case first-of-its-kind for state

CLEARWATER, Fla. (AP) — The fate of a transsexual man fighting for custody of his two children in a bitter divorce case rests on whether a Florida judge decides he is legally considered a man. Pasco-Pinellas Circuit Judge Gerard O'Brien said the transgender custody case is the first in Florida courts and may be the first in the nation. O'Brien is hearing testimony on whether it was legal for Michael Kantaras, who was born female, to adopt his wife's 3-year-old son and be listed as the father of a child she later conceived with donated sperm. "The question is, does he become a man, can he marry, can he adopt?" O'Brien asked. "If the law says he's still a woman, he can't do any of those things." Florida law bans same-sex marriages and bars gays from adopting children. A verdict is not expected until February or later.

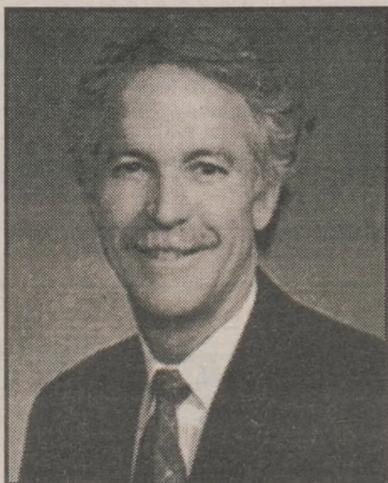
Intersex bias suit thrown out by Mich. judge

PONTIAC, Mich. (AP) — A judge threw out a sexual discrimination lawsuit filed by an Oak Park resident who claimed to have biologically changed from a man to a woman without surgery. Naomi Solomons, once known as David Solomons, sued her former employer — a Troy company called the Transition Team — claiming she lost her job and was otherwise discriminated against because of her sex. Solomons' attorney, Andrew Mudryk of Ann Arbor, contended that his client belonged to a group — intersex — that is protected under laws prohibiting sexual discrimination. Oakland County Circuit Judge Fred Mester ruled that the state legislature did not include transgendered or intersex individuals under the law, and that Solomons could not sue her ex-employer for damages. Around Christmas 1999, Solomons claimed in court documents, her body spontaneously began to grow breasts, she lost her facial hair and her voice changed.

Solo. bill would prohibit anti-gay job bias

DENVER (AP) — Most employees would be protected from discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity under a measure approved by a state Senate committee Jan. 23. The Senate Business, Labor & Finance Committee voted 4-3 along party lines, with Democrats in the majority, to send Senate Bill 74 to the full Senate for debate. The measure would add sexual orientation and gender identity to the list of characteristics protected from discrimination in hiring, firing, promotions and other workplace actions. "It's beyond me why sexual orientation would be any different from sex, religion, race and the other characteristics we already prevent discrimination on," said bill sponsor Sen. Doug Linkhart (D-Denver). The measure would exempt religious organizations that do not receive any taxpayer funding. A similar measure passed the Senate last year but was killed in a House committee. It was at least the fifth time such a measure was killed.

Colorado state Sen. Doug Linkhart has sponsored a bill to add sexual orientation and gender identity to groups protected against workplace discrimination.



Va. housing group maintains 'family rule'

RICHMOND — The Virginia Housing Development Authority's Board of commissioners voted 6-1 on Jan. 23 to continue barring gay and other unmarried couples from being eligible to apply for low-interest home financing loans. The commissioners are scheduled sometime in the spring to hold another public hearing and final vote on this issue. But opposition from the Family Foundation, a conservative group based in Richmond, and a proposed bill sponsored by Del. Ryan T. McDougle, a Republican, appear to have derailed the VHDA's plan for now to eliminate the state's "family rule." This rule allows only Virginians with low or moderate incomes who are related by "blood, marriage, or adoption" to apply for home financing loans together. "I think that the VHDA [board of commissioners] is very concerned about the possibility that the General Assembly will take over its decision-making authority," said David Scoven, executive director of Virginians for Justice, a statewide gay political group.

Two gay publications fold in recent months

SEATTLE — The weekly Seattle Gay Standard has folded after 13 months of publication, Editor & Publisher reported. The paper had a circulation of 15,000 and had turned profitable in August, but slumped following the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11. Five fulltime staffers lost jobs. The Seattle Gay News, a 28-year-old publication, is now the only gay paper in the city. Meanwhile, the Lesbian Review of Books ceased publication with the Winter 2001-2002 issue. The journal, which began publication in 1994, folded due to financial problems, staffer Loralee MacPike explained in an article in Sojourner. MacPike cited unpaid debts owed to the publication and rising printing and postage costs.

— From staff and wire reports

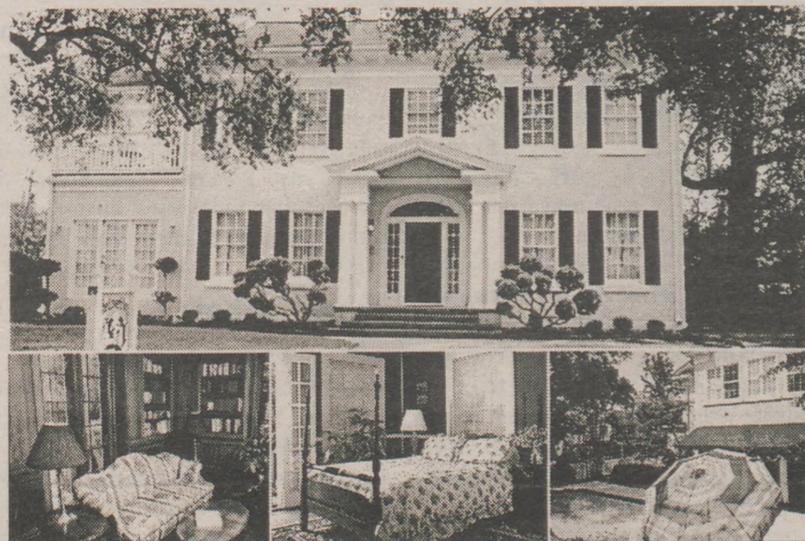


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Lesbian mom hasn't seen her sons for two years

➤ Continued from Page 8

state's landmark statute — the first in the country to give full rights to gay couples under state law — went into effect.

According to Susan Freer, her ex-husband, Darian Burns, cut off contact between her and the couple's three boys shortly afterwards, leading to a court battle that sparked a firestorm of attention from both pro- and anti-gay groups.

Last January, a Floyd County Superior Court judge ruled against Freer's argument that her civil union "satisfies the legally married portion" of a consent decree in which she and Burns agreed not to visit their children "during any time where [one] cohabits with or has overnight stays with any adult" to whom they are not married or related "within the second degree."

Last week, the Georgia Court of Appeals upheld the lower court's ruling, rejecting Freer's claim that the couple was married in Vermont and under "the full faith and credit doctrine they are married in Georgia" as well.

"Susan's position... has a flawed premise," Judge M. Yvette Miller wrote in the unanimous decision by a three-judge panel of the appeals court. "She and her female companion were not married in Vermont but instead entered into a 'civil union' ...

"Moreover, even if Vermont had pur-

ported to legalize same-sex marriages, such would not be recognized in Georgia," the court ruled.

Freer said she learned of the ruling from a reporter's phone call.

"My first reaction was more shock than anything. Once the news really hit home, I was pretty devastated. How could they do this to my children?" said Freer, who has not seen her three sons since August 2000 and not spoken to them since Christmas of that year.

Impact debated

According to the appeals court ruling, the "sole issue" in the case, known as *Burns v. Burns*, "is whether the trial court erred in enforcing" the consent decree.

"The trial court found that the provisions of its order applied equally... and that a 'civil union' is not a marriage," Miller wrote.

Arguing before the Court of Appeals in October 2001, Freer's attorney, Adrian Lanser of Cartersville, said civil unions are the same as marriage in Vermont, so they should be treated as a marriage in Georgia.

The appeals court soundly rejected that argument, agreeing with Staver, Burns' attorney, that the Vermont civil union law specifically creates the category as separate from marriage. And even if Vermont meant for civil unions to be the same as marriage,

the court ruled, Georgia's law banning gay marriage would prevent them from being treated as such here.

"This sets the parameters and groundwork for other states, if similarly challenged, to rely on this precedent," Staver said.

A variety of gay rights opponents filed friend-of-the-court briefs supporting Staver's position, including lawmakers in both Vermont and Georgia. Some 68 Vermont state legislators who opposed civil joined in a brief filed by the Marriage Law Project of Catholic University, while 11 Georgia legislators who supported the 1996 passage of the state's "Defense of Marriage Act" also argued against the Freers.

High-profile groups supporting gay rights lined up in support of the lesbian couple, including the ACLU, Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders, the New England-based group that brought the Vermont lawsuit that resulted in the passage of civil unions there.

All of these groups support full recognition of civil unions around the country, as well as legalizing gay marriage. But friend-of-the-court briefs filed by Lambda Legal and the ACLU offered ways that the appeals court could have allowed Freer's visitation without having to take the controversial step of ruling

on the legal weight of civil unions.

Lambda Legal said that the standard for child visitation cases is what is in the best interest of the child, and noted that no lower court has ever heard evidence to suggest that Susan Freer's children have been harmed by interacting with her.

The ACLU's brief argued that the relationship between Susan and Debra Freer can be seen as "related within the second degree" under Georgia law even without viewing their civil union as equivalent to a marriage.

Another brief filed by the three Vermont legislators who authored the civil union law appeared to add weight to that claim, stating that the civil union law intended to recognize committed same-sex partners as "immediate family members."

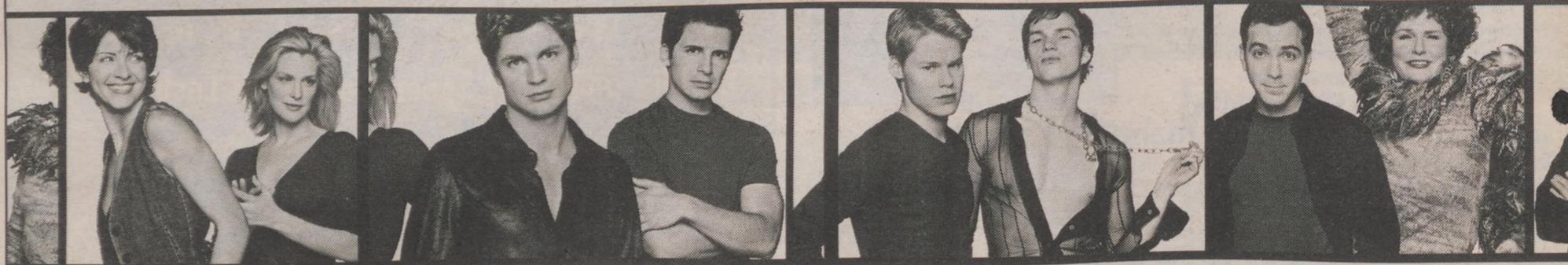
The appeals court decision did not address any of those arguments, but the silence should not be seen as rejecting them, attorneys for the groups claimed.

"It's a very narrow ruling. We know that civil unions are not marriage... and the court never addressed if civil unions should be afforded other recognition in Georgia. That remains an open question," said Jennifer Levi, senior staff attorney for GLAD.

The consent decree signed by Susan Freer should limit the impact of the case,

➤ Continued on Page 9

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Case may be appealed to a higher court

➤ Continued from Page 8

argued Robert Tsai, attorney for the ACLU of Georgia. "This is not going to be the last word on the legal significance of civil unions," Tsai said.

Fight not over?

After losing before the three-judge panel of the appeals court, legal experts said Freer has three options for continuing her case: going back to the trial court to ask for a change in the visitation stipulation, appealing to the full Court of Appeals, or appealing to the state Supreme Court.

This week, Freer said she would continue to fight to see her children, although she isn't yet sure how.

"We are still working with our attorney on the options and specifics, but I can tell you that we definitely are planning to continue the fight for my children's sake," she said.

But Staver said Freer's claim that she hasn't been allowed to see the children is "bogus" and "a lie." Burns would allow Freer to visit the children, even in the home she shares with Debra Freer, as long as Debra

Freer isn't present at the time, Staver said.

Freer, however, said that her ex-husband has moved and prevented her from knowing how to contact the boys, despite attempts by her attorney to set up any type of visitation.

"If Mr. Staver can get me a phone number, then that would be wonderful," Freer said. "It's like he's just pouring salt in my wounds, by hurting me so badly with the children and then turning around and lying about it."

Freer and Burns divorced in Calhoun County, Ala., in 1995. Burns received custody of the children, while Freer was awarded visitation. When Burns began denying her visitation, Freer said she charged him with contempt, bringing the case into Floyd County courts and resulting in the 1998 consent order forbidding visits around unmarried partners.

Freer said she did not have good legal counsel at the time, or she never would have agreed to the order. "I'm not asking anyone to agree with my lifestyle, only that as a lawful American citizen, I am entitled to be with my kids and live with whom I choose," she said.



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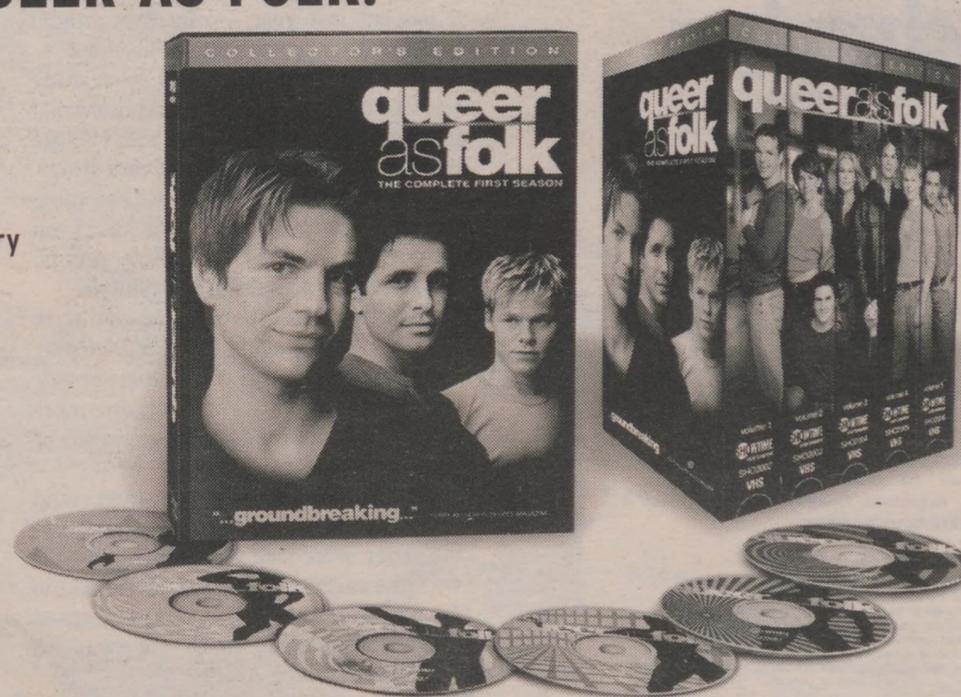
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Issue 1110



VIEWPOINT

I don't want my 'Gay TV'!

by MILES CHRISTIAN DANIELS

MTV and Showtime are planning to launch a new gay cable channel. I suppose, as a gay man, I should be overjoyed. But I'm not.

It's not that I'm against a gay channel in theory. But in the big picture, I'm not certain it's what we really need right now.

It's been nearly two years since I came out. And if asked, I'm honest about who I am. But, being gay does not mean I want to isolate myself, or allow my sexuality to completely define who I am.

I don't go to a "gay church." I've never seen an episode of Showtime's "Queer As Folk." I don't even own a rainbow flag.

I'm certainly not opposed to these icons of gay culture. But I do believe these — and other interest-driven endeavors — can serve as tools of isolation.

When I first read about the new gay TV channel, it made me think of other ways in which our society isolates other minorities: Lifetime, the cable channel for

women; and Sunday mornings, the most racially segregated time of the week.

That can mean missed opportunities to see how "the other half" lives. A number of heterosexuals have been brave enough to tune into "Will & Grace," the Emmy Award-winning sitcom now into its fourth season. It has become a jewel among NBC's "Must-See TV" Thursday night lineup.

I wonder whether some of those heterosexual viewers, before their exposure to that series, were somewhat homophobic and have softened a little because of the show's positive portrayal of our lives. If "Will & Grace" were on the new "gay channel," I doubt seriously that many heterosexuals would be watching.

I know a lot of gays who only go to gay bars, worship at gay churches, socialize with gay friends, and watch gay-themed shows. At the same time, they're screaming for equal rights, to be recognized as equals in our society.

Gays, and any other minorities for

that matter, should receive equal play. But like it or not, that comes with proving ourselves. Minorities gain equal rights by proving to the majority that our similarities far outweigh our differences.

Only a few years ago, Ellen DeGeneres was removed from ABC for coming out on her show. Now, we have "Will & Grace" and "Queer As Folk," and Ellen is back on the air for a second season with a CBS sitcom where she again plays an out lesbian.

Look around — mainstream society is slowly opening its arms and welcoming us in. That has a lot to do with us making them feel comfortable enough to do so. It has a lot to do with including ourselves in their everyday life without compromising who we are, and without isolating ourselves.

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



VIEWPOINT

It's our fault AIDS is spreading

by JENNIFER VANASCO

Recent AIDS news has not been good — and we only have ourselves to blame.

Early this month, the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention announced that U.S. AIDS cases rose by 8 percent last year — the first annual increase after seven years of declines.

This comes on the heels of a study released in December, which reported that nearly four out of five people with HIV are resistant to one or more antiviral drugs. This means that people who are becoming infected with HIV now, or who have been infected in the past few years, can no longer rely on a super-drug safety net.

Together, these two reports are dark indeed. It's been said before, but we may well be on the cusp of another decade ravaged by AIDS, when even one more year of community decimation would be too much.

Twenty years ago, the men who caught AIDS had no idea what was coming. They were true victims. The disease was like cancer — it was even called the "gay cancer" because its origins seemed mysterious and its outcome was an awful, debilitating death.

The country panicked. People stopped touching those with AIDS. Religious fundamentalists declared that it was God's wrath being carried out on homosexuals.

In response, gay men and lesbians came together. We raised money. We

educated the public. We fought for funding. We advocated for scientific research and ameliorative drugs. We honored the dead and cared for the dying. AIDS had become, in some ways, an awful rite of passage.

But the context is different now. We know how to prevent the transmission of HIV. We know about condoms. We know about clean needles. We know about safety around bodily fluids. We may not know how to cure it, but we know how to cut it off at the knees.

Unfortunately, because of the available drugs, AIDS is no longer feared. And it should be.

As the December study shows, the drugs will not be potent forever. In fact, they might not be potent for very much longer. And the number of cases is once again climbing, as more people bare-back, risking their lives in denial or simply for the sake of risk.

By continuing to engage in sexual practices that spread HIV, we are contributing to our own massacre. What is wrong with us? Are we so self-hating that we welcome death, that we would trade 10 minutes of pleasure for a lifetime of illness?

I am saying "we" here, but of course I don't mean "we" at all. I mean — let's be frank — irresponsible gay men. Haven't we had enough of these leeches?

The gay men who are now contracting HIV through unsafe sex are not victims. They have consciously decided to disregard their own health and the wel-

fare of their community.

They do not seem to care that once they get sick, our community's resources will be diverted from other vital projects — civil equality, for example — toward their health and well-being. They do not care that lesbians and responsible gay men must bear their burden, pouring precious energy, time and money into supporting them. They do not regret that behavior like theirs has led to an enormous loss of talent and skill that many of us feel keenly.

And you know what? The rest of us are tired. We are tired of trying to explain to adults who should know better why having unsafe sex is so dangerous. We are tired of fending off statements like, "But it doesn't feel as good," or, "I won't get it." We are tired of picking up the pieces left by selfishness and denial.

We have tried educating. We have tried reasoning. We have tried pleading. But what we have not tried — or not often enough — is anger.

We should be angry. Because the truth is, it is not OK to become infected with HIV and become a burden on the community, if what you've done is have unsafe sex.

It is not OK to get AIDS because you were drunk or high and forgot the condoms. And it is not OK to pass HIV onto someone else just because you haven't gotten tested yet, or because you haven't gotten tested recently. Only you have the power to control your own behavior. Only you can stop AIDS in its tracks.

LETTERS

It's about time the Voice speaks out on local issues

To the Editor:

So the Houston Voice has finally begun to find its "voice" on local matters. I had begun to wonder.

You say that our community has lost its sense of outrage (editorial, Jan. 25) — that because there were no mass demonstrations, no hue and cry over losing on City Prop. 2, that somehow gay Houstonians are complacent. I have to ask: Where was the Voice's editorial page during the battle?

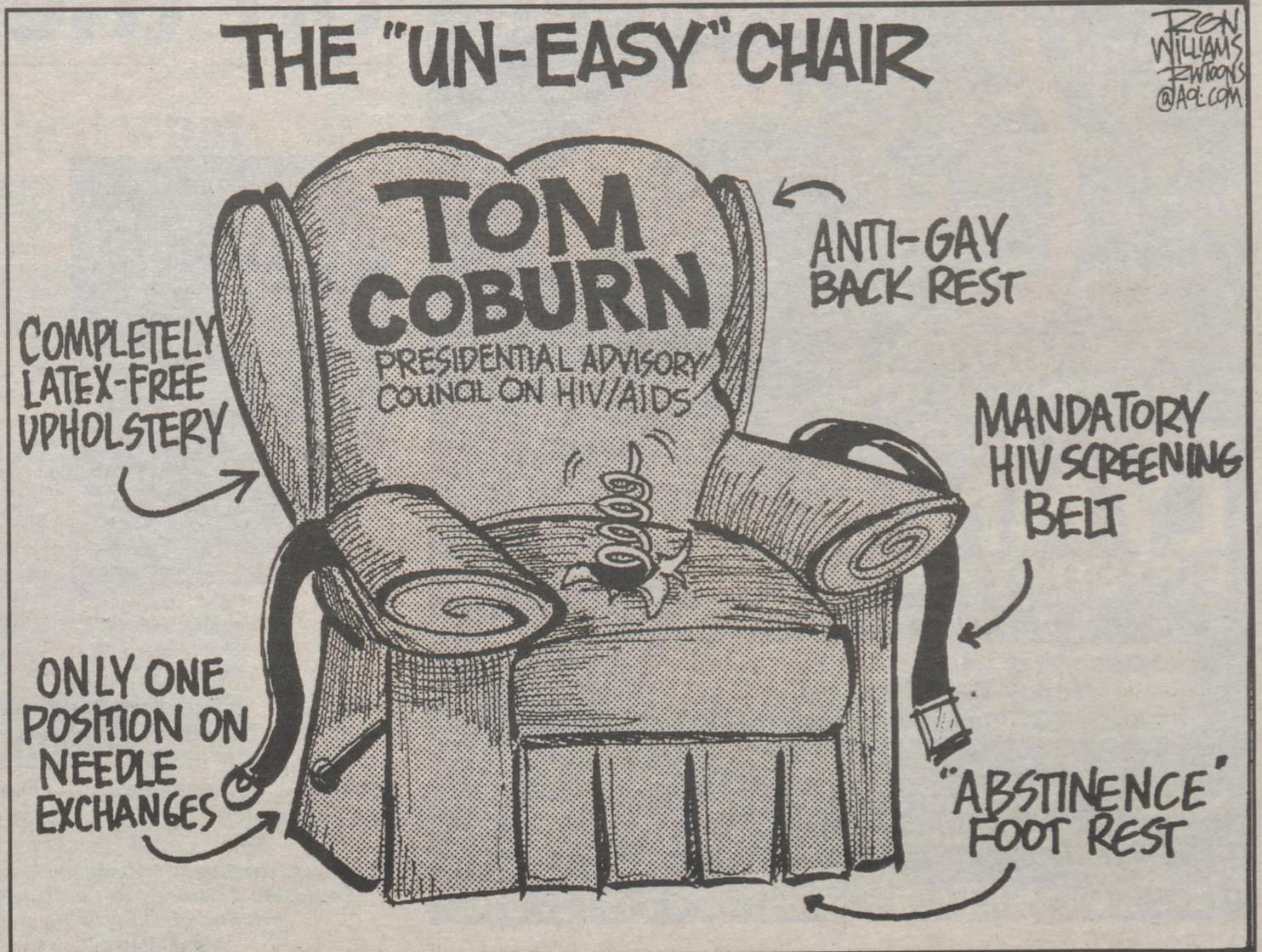
Over the last several months, we've been "treated" to editorials about New Orleans, Washington and oh yes, there was an interesting — if long-winded — editorial that said that seeking domestic partnership benefits really does weaken straight marriage.

So, where did the Houston Voice stand on City Prop. 2?

Yes, we lost on Prop. 2, but not for lack of trying. It was for lack of message. There were no personal stories from city of Houston workers showing how having partnership benefits would positively impact their lives, or how not having them has created hardships.

Making the story personal is how we, in corporate America, have changed the hearts and minds of our co-workers, as well as changing company policy. It worked at Continental, Chase, Chevron, Shell and countless other large employers in our city. It's an education process, and it takes time.

At Chevron, sexual orientation was included in the non-discrimination policies in 1992. It took another five years to educate management and employees about why domestic partnership benefits were needed but were not a threat to "traditional" marriage.



riage.

That these things take time is reality. To expect otherwise for the city is foolish.

We now have a window of opportunity. The city charter cannot be amended for another two years, at the next mayoral election cycle. Gay swing voters gave Houston

Mayor Lee Brown his third term. In a city evenly divided by race, we have the voting clout to make politicians listen — and we don't have to shout. We just need to tell our story.

Now that your publication is, once again, finding its "voice," I hope that you

devote the necessary space for telling the local stories — and perhaps even tell them in Washington, Atlanta and New York.

Michael Craig Houston

The Mostly Unfabulous Social Life of Ethan Green

by eric orner



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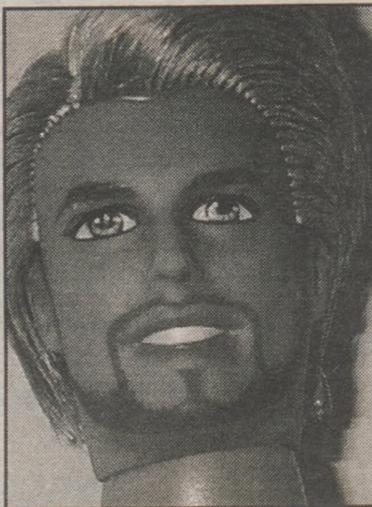


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Ken

"What I learned is that kissing is to the Chelsea boys what Kryptonite is to Superman. It weakens them, shorts them out. As soon as they begin to feel any emotion they implode; their muscles deflate, they lose their tans and move back to the Village."

The character "Ken," who leaves Barbie for G.I. Joe, in "I Think I Ken," a new play about gay night life by Jason Kordelos

"I stop traffic on the street because I look like Elizabeth Taylor. From that standpoint, God must be smiling."

Naomi Solomons, 59, born David Solomons, who sued her former employer claiming she lost her job because of her sex. Solomons claims to have biologically changed from a man to a woman without surgery

"These allegations that [Leona Helmsley] has any bias against gays are absolutely untrue. ... I guess [he was fired because] he didn't impress Mrs. Helmsley."

Robert Costello, lawyer for Leona Helmsley, rejecting to a \$5 million lawsuit by Michael Ward charging that the hotel matriarch fired him as catering director of Manhattan's Park Lane Hotel because he is gay



Leona Helmsley

"For me as a political figure, it was in many ways the most important event in my political life. There aren't many people who get to do what I did. ... Once in a generation an issue comes along where there can be no compromise. When you either have to figure out, do I stand up for the principles I believe in, or am I simply keeping this seat warm?"

Vt. Gov. Howard Dean, a possible 2004 Democratic presidential contender, explaining to a gay audience in Philadelphia his decision to sign Vermont's civil unions law

"There would be anything from oral sex, anal sex, mutual masturbation; any conceivable combination."

An undercover Broward County, Fla., police detective, on lewd conduct arrests made at Chaps Lounge, a Ft. Lauderdale gay bar, as reported by WSVN TV on Jan. 17

"I just don't want him to be my teacher anymore."

Jacqueline Estrada, a Ft. Lauderdale middle school student interviewed by WSVN TV about the lewd conduct arrest of her teacher at a local gay bar

"Homosexuality is not redemptive; it is addictive. By the very way in which they define themselves, the homosexuals are killing themselves, physically, morally, and spiritually."

Former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan, in his new book "The Death of the West," published by published by Thomas Dunne Books, a division of St. Martin's



Pat Buchanan

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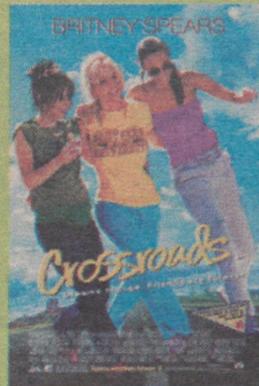
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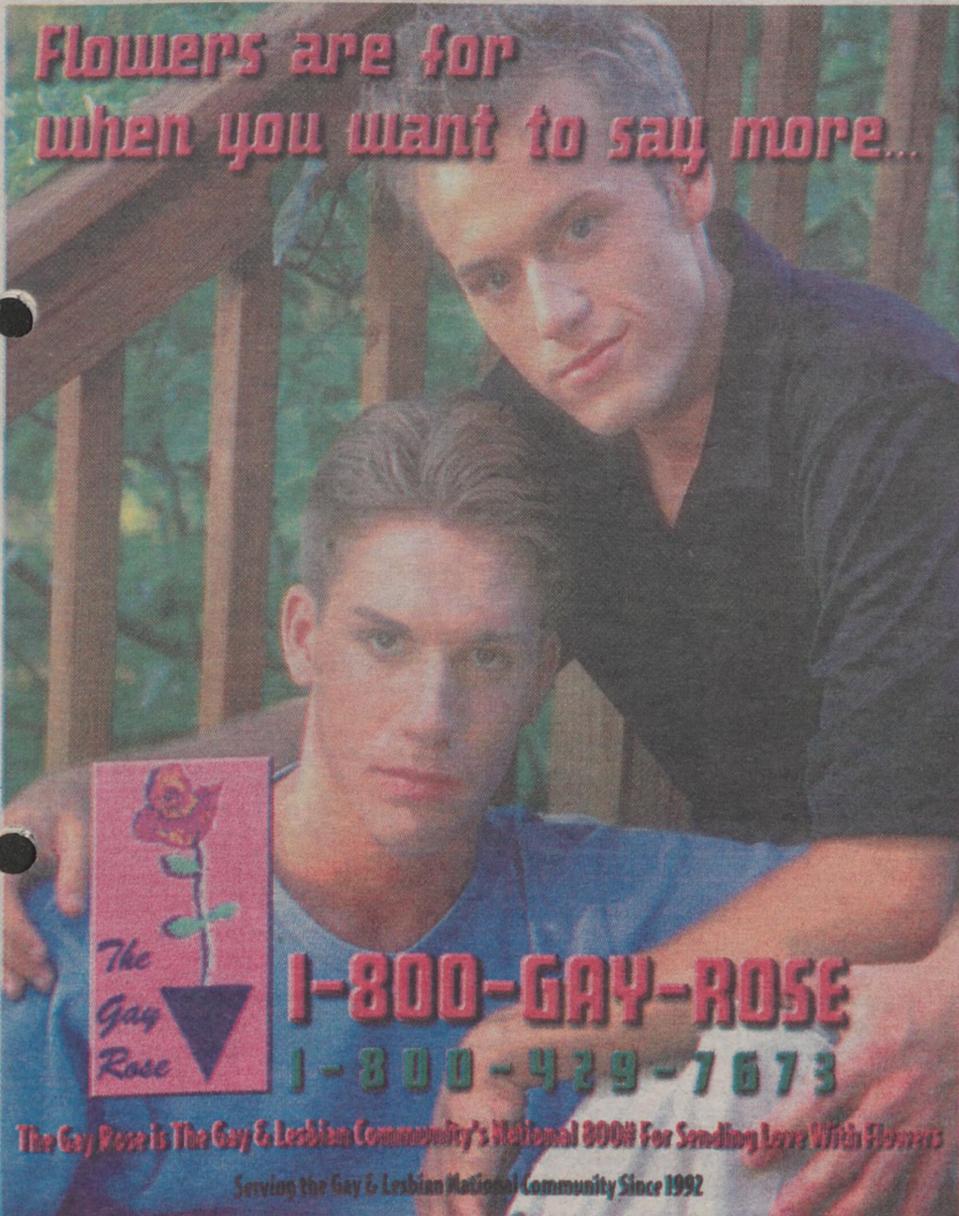


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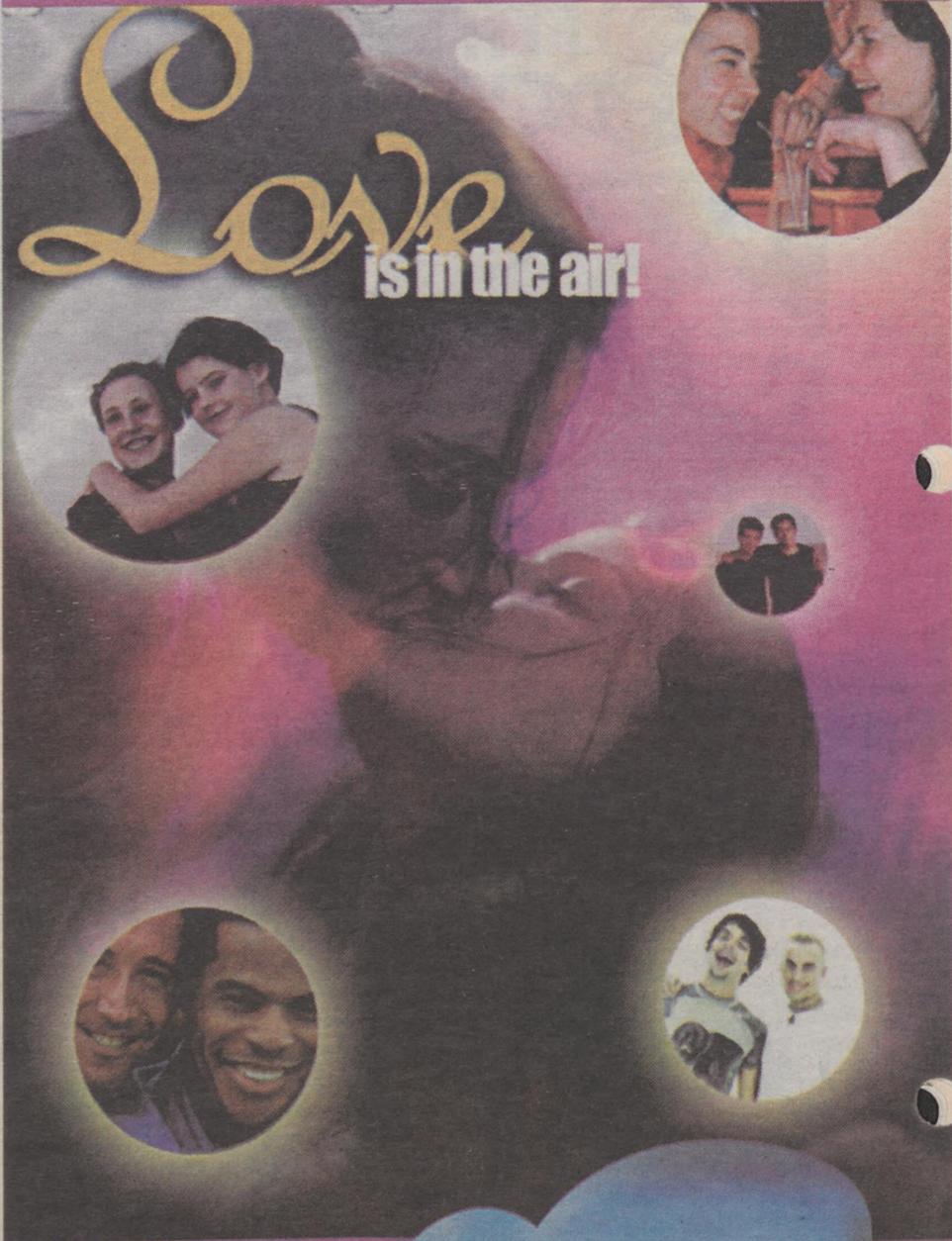
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Feb 8 issue

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Out on the Bayou

The Dating Dash

speed dating concept arrives in Houston for lesbians

by KAY DAYUS

Are you a lesbian looking for a date but don't have time or the courage to go out and find one? Don't want to go to the bars to meet a new Ms. Right? Tired of watching the same old programs on TV every weekend?

Houston lesbians may have a chance to worry no more and spend no more Saturday nights alone. The answer to the lesbian dating game quandary may be within reach via "Lucky 7" speed dating.

Houston's first speed dating event for lesbians is scheduled next week at Meteor Lounge in the Montrose area, says Shirley Knight, producer for the non-profit Athena Art Project, creators of the Houston Women's Festival and the local dating event, dubbed "Lucky 7 Gal-Pal Social."

Speed dating offers a secure and fun venue where shy or busy lesbians can meet each other in a non-pressured environment, according to Knight.

And speed dating is simple, she adds. The evening will begin with some icebreaking activities. Each participant will have a nametag with just their first name and a number for identification.

After initial introductions, the dating game begins. Each participant will be asked to turn to the person on her right and strike up a conversation with that person for seven minutes. A list of possible questions is to be provided for the really tongue-tied in the group.

Each person has a match card and after the conversation they are required to circle "yes" or "no" to indicate whether or not they interacted well with that person and if they would like to meet her again. Knight stresses that the cards

are confidential and only organizers will see them.

The game then progresses to the next person for another seven-minute conversation and so on until seven rounds of conversation have occurred. The dating game is scheduled to end at 8 p.m., when general socializing will again be the order of the evening.

Knight says anyone is invited to attend the after-event, so there's another chance to meet single lesbians. Registration and a fee are required to participate in the actual speed dating round.

Organizers collect the match cards to be tallied up later. Then they will inform the participants of possible matches and the women who took part can follow up as they wish.

"We did some research on speed dating and a lot of people have successfully met, sometimes during the general socializing too," Knight notes.

Speed dating at la Meteor has some other good points, she adds.

"Before we start and after the structured activity is also a good time to circulate and get to know the other women. Most likely, if you're at a bar, you don't know if the person is single or not; at speed dating, you will," Knight advises.

Aish HaTorah, an international Jewish educational network, originated the speed-dating concept in 1995 when group leaders were looking for ways for like-minded people to meet each other. After being featured on The Today Show and other television shows, speed dating spread nationally and internationally.

Organizers want to assure participants that they will not share their personal information without their permission, Knight notes.

The main idea of the evening, Knight says, is to have fun and "teach women how to date instead of nesting at home."

The beauty of it is that there is no commitment required, because participants will basically just be meeting people, according to Lucky 7 organizers. Another important point is that there's no overt rejection, they note.

Organizers hope to have 30-50 participants sign up for the event.

Dr. Joyce Gayles, author of The Dating Dance, will be at the event to sign copies of her book, which is about the intricacies of the dating game, Knight notes.

Lucky 7 is produced by Gal Pals, a division of the Houston Women's Festival, and Knight says organizers plan to do more events for Houston lesbians.

"We want to do some dance parties about every quarter. We are looking at doing one in April at the Engine Room, downtown on Pease," she reveals.

No doubt fewer Houston women will be at home alone if Lucky 7 and other dating events are as successful as organizers hope.



INFO

Lucky 7 Gal-Pal Social

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houston voice • february 1, 2002

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The public is invited to an open house for the political group Progressive Voters in Action. The non-profit organization is recruiting volunteers and has a new office located in the Heights. The open house/volunteer welcome party will serve to honor volunteers for their prior work and welcome neighbors to find out what PVA's mission and goals are. 1-3 p.m. at 2626 White Oak Drive. To volunteer: 713-880-3631.

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Society for the Performing Arts offers a glimpse of Korean history with SamulNori in "Tradition Meets the Present." SamulNori are the four musicians playing and dancing with four percussion instruments as part of the performance. Using ancient Korean percussion, the four simultaneously offer the audience racing rhythms with breathtaking beats and high energy. Tickets: \$26-35, box office: 713-227-4SPA. 7 p.m., Wortham Center's Cullen Theater. www.spahouston.org.

ongoing

Opening Feb. 1, a new co-production of Carlisle Floyd's "Of Mice and Men" takes the stage at Houston Grand Opera. The moving piece, which originally premiered in 1970, comes to Houston via music director



Composer Carlisle Floyd's adaptation of John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men" is now playing at the Houston Grand Opera.

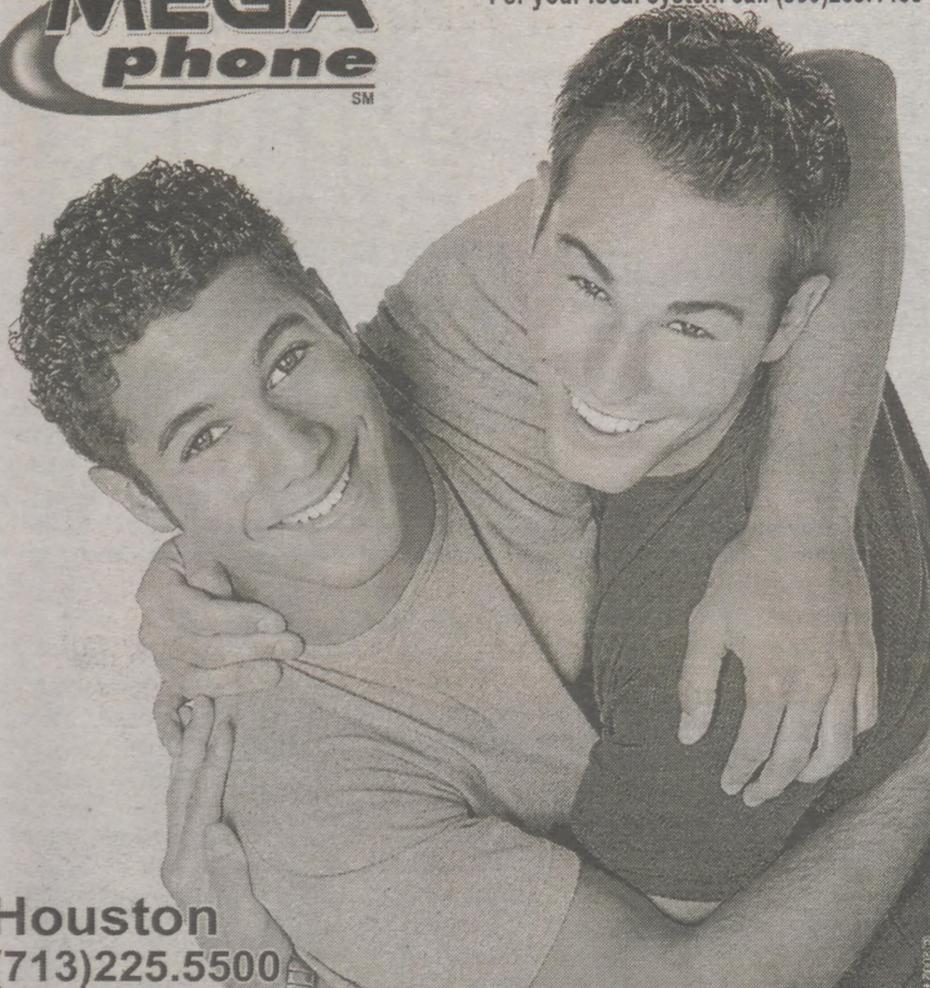
Patrick Summers and director Francesca Zambello. Floyd is known as one of the nation's greatest living composers, and the production brings a new touch to John Steinbeck's classic tale. Through Feb. 15. Tickets: \$18-225. Houston Grand Opera, Wortham Center's Brown Theater. 713-546-0200. www.houstongrandopera.org.

upcoming

Bering Memorial United Methodist Church will host a weekend retreat for couples from Feb. 8-10. "Intimacy and Ecstasy," led by Chris Glaser, will examine issues such as how to get close and yet respect personal boundaries, how to blend spirituality and sexuality and what Christian spiritual life can teach about intimacy and ecstasy. The event is 6-9 p.m. Friday with dinner and 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday with snacks and lunch. On Sunday, Glaser will preach at the 8:30 and 10:50 a.m. Bering services, and lunch will be served after the 10:50 service. Cost: \$45, which includes Sunday lunch. To register: Rev. Stacy Pever, 713-526-1017, or stacy@clearsail.net.

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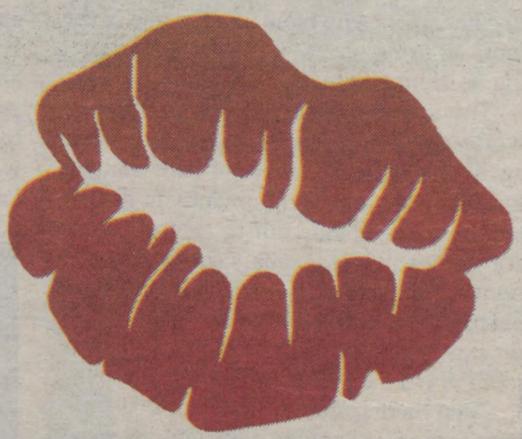
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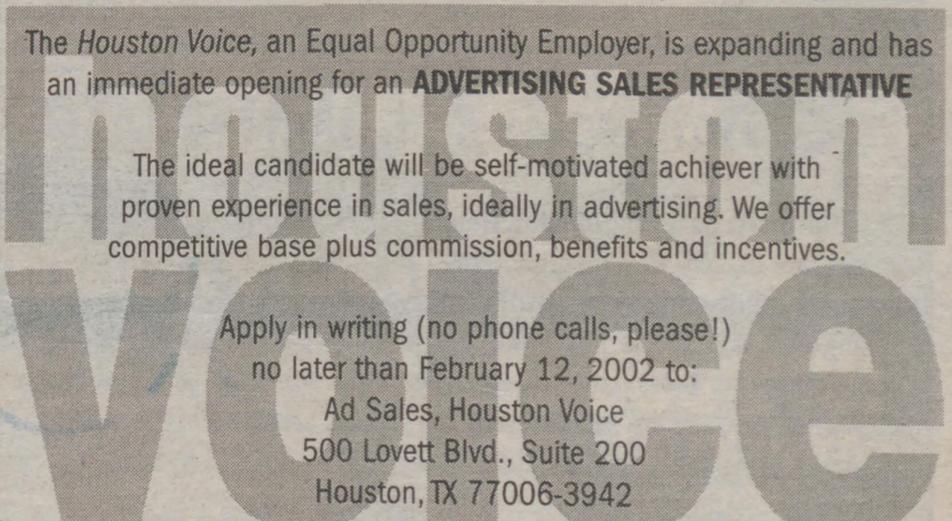


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ECSTASY

The University of Texas Houston Health Science Center is seeking volunteers age 15 to 30 who use the drug ecstasy to take part in a research study on the effects of ecstasy on memory and brain function. Taking part will involve answering questions about your mood, taking some computer tests, and some tests of brain function. Volunteers who do not use ecstasy are also needed for studies on mood and attention. Payment is available for your time. CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

Please call 713.500.2840 for more info.

on stage

THEATER REVIEW

'Laramie Project' a gem

Powerful production brings message of hope out of horrible Shepard tragedy

by GEORGE JONTE

Over the years, there have been incidents of inexplicable violence that have affected gay men and lesbians globally. But one of the incidents that hits so very close to home is the brutal murder of a young gay college student in the remote town of Laramie, Wyo. Of course, you know of whom I write - Matthew Shepard.

Moises Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project have given us such wrenching dramas as "Gross Indecency" and "The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde." Now, out of the events surrounding Shepard's murder, Kaufman and his theater troupe have fashioned an exciting piece called "The Laramie Project."

The structure of this piece is docudrama. Shepard's character is absent, except in spirit. The play centers around the people in Laramie and their reaction to this heinous crime. Kaufman and his troupe traveled to Laramie in 1998 to interview the different townspeople. Throughout the next two years, they made numerous visits back there.

The task they faced was how to make a theater piece out of thousands of conversations - actually, fragments of those conversations. A particular challenge was how to present the story without it being abysmally boring. The answer comes clear within the first minutes of viewing this drama being given its regional premiere at Stages Repertory Theatre.

First you have the incredible writing of Moises Kaufman and then you have the ingenuity and vision of Stages' Artistic Director Rob Bundy and a strong company of eight actors who blow life into one of the most uplifting pieces of theater now showing on Houston stages.

The uncanny timeliness of this play is worth mentioning too. It points out, once again, the endless number of lives that are touched when man's inhumanity to his fellow man gets totally out of control. There are ironies in the events surrounding the murder as well. A doctor, while treating Shepard, also treats one of his perpetrators for cuts (supposedly received in a fight) in a room down the hall in the same hospital.

Then there is the "live and let live" attitude of most of Laramie's citizens, yet some misguided values in some youths' upbringing have brought about a crime which shocks and dismays a sleepy little western town that had been just another dot on the map. Then there is the handful of gay and lesbian residents in Laramie, who live there seemingly without incident and without anyone knowing their orientation.

Co-produced with Unhinged Productions, the play moves at a steady pace with beautiful nuances as the actors weave through 68 different characters. Director Bundy has often opted for subtle underplay and it works beautifully in Stages' thrust theatre.

The play never gets "over the top" or maudlin but becomes a totally engrossing piece that draws the audience in and makes us all citizens of Laramie as well. Moving at a steady pace, the production is further enhanced with an open set and moveable set pieces, mood lighting designed by Kirk Markley and video projections and accompanying sound designed by Tim Thompson and Bill Brauer.

The company, all accomplished Houston actors, consists of Connie Cooper, Kelli Cousins, Rutherford Cravens, Kara Greenberg, Ann C. James, Daniel Magill, Drake Simpson and Corby Sullivan. They work together like a well-oiled piece of machinery, never letting the action drop for a moment save for intended dramatic pause. It is a strong ensemble, to be sure.

Houston in general and gay men and lesbians specifically owe Rob Bundy, Chris Jimmerson (Unhinged Productions) and their respective theater companies a debt of gratitude for bringing this piece the Bayou City. It is theater with a message that needs to be heard by everyone, straight or gay.

The wonderful thing about this piece is that it isn't just Matthew Shepard - it's James Byrd, Harvey Milk, Paul Broussard; it's an unknown transsexual gunned down in East Houston, it's a man in drag gunned down on Glenmont Street. The work encompasses the overwhelming emotion of so many tragedies.

Most Americans take this country's freedoms for granted and then are caught short sighted when something like this happens. I am reminded of what Nobel prize-winning author Elie Wiesel wrote in response to The Holocaust: "Let us never be that naive again."

Unfortunately, Houstonians only have about 10 days left to see this play. It is a powerful piece of theater - a true testament to the stage's ability to help heal and the wonderful message of hope that "The Laramie Project" brings to us all.

INFO

"The Laramie Project"

Through Feb. 10

7:30 p.m. Wednesdays & Thursdays

8 p.m. Fridays & Saturdays, 3 p.m. Sundays

Tickets: \$19-23, preview performances; \$32-42, regular performances

Stages Repertory Theatre

3201 Allen Parkway

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www.stagestheatre.com

out in sports

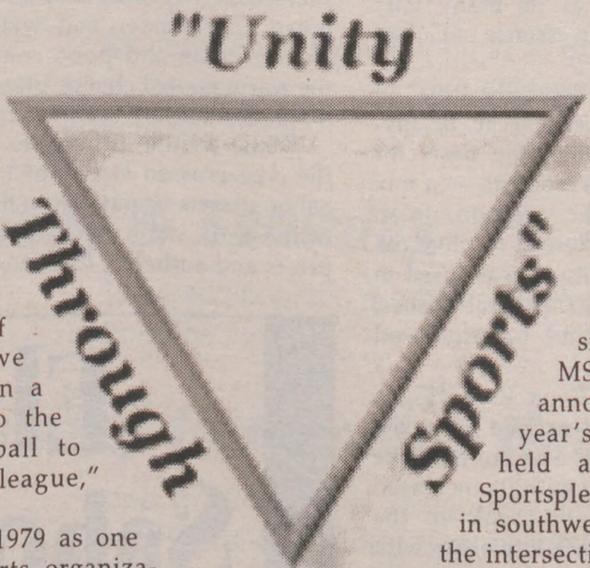
Softball league recruits

Gay Houstonians welcome to sign up at Montrose Softball League's annual event

by PENNY WEAVER

Spring may not quite be in the air, but it's close enough for gay Houstonians to get ready to step out onto the softball fields.

Montrose Softball League will regroup for a new season and welcome new members at Recruitment Day 2002 on Feb. 10 at the Memorial Park Softball Fields 4 and 5, noted Sam



Willson, chair for the event.

"We have all levels of play and we encourage even a new player to the game of softball to join our league," Willson said.

Formed in 1979 as one of several sports organizations under the umbrella of the Montrose Sports Association, MSL became an independent organization and renamed itself in 1983. This is the 22nd year for the group, which is made up primarily of gay men and lesbians.

MSL is a nonprofit organization, and league funding is generated via player and sponsorship dues. According to organizers, MSL designates a local charity to support each year, and that group receives a percentage of funds raised through various events.

The season runs through June, with games on Sunday, usually between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., Willson said. Each team plays 14-16 games per season. The annual MSL awards banquet is held in August.

At Recruitment Day, according to Willson, new members receive a packet with information about and gifts from the MSL. Those interested also can meet other league members and go through a practice session with coaches so that various managers can see who fits on which teams.

According to Willson, league organ-

izers try to provide every person interested in joining with a place on a new or existing team.

"Each year we have enough new members to form two to three new teams," he noted.

Lunch is provided by the league on Recruitment Day, which also includes afternoon softball games for those who attend.

The Montrose Softball League is a member of the North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance, and local teams winning their respective divisions (B, C, and D) will earn the right to represent both the league and the City of Houston at the Gay Softball World Series, which takes place every year in August. The

league's spring season actually begins Sunday, April 7, at a new site this year. The MSL Board has announced that this year's games will be held at the Houston Sportsplex facility, located in southwest Houston near the intersection of South Post Oak and Highway 90 on South Main Street.

According to league organizers, the Sportsplex facility's overall bid was the lowest while offering the league and fans the best amenities to date. At the Sportsplex, MSL hopes to offer league members more games in a shorter period of time while allowing space to expand membership through additional teams.

Games will be played on four new fields, currently under construction, which circle a two-story clubhouse and snack bar with covered seating.

INFO

Montrose Softball League
 Recruitment Day 2002
 Dues: \$50 annually
 Sunday, Feb. 10
 Memorial Park
 Softball Fields 4 and 5
www.montrosesoftballleague.com

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eating out

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Cuban cuisine blossoms

El Sabor serves up a menu full of tasty dishes at reasonable prices

by KATHREEN LEE

Many people who have never experienced Cuban cuisine assume a similarity to Mexican food. While both share common spices and techniques due to the Spanish influence, Cuban recipes also include a more complex blend of French, African, Arabic and Portuguese cultures with a flair of Caribbean thrown in for good measure.

El Sabor, literally "The Flavor," offers its patrons authentic Cuban and Latin American food that harmoniously blends the various flavors of its many past influences to create the essence of Cuban cuisine.

Cuban cooking relies very little on heavy or creamy sauces, cheese, or anything deep-fried. Rather, the basis for many Cuban dishes is a sofrito — a mix of green pepper, garlic, oregano, onion and ground pepper sauteed in olive oil. As flavoring, the sofrito is often used in the preparation of many meat dishes, black beans, stews and tomato-based sauces.

For instance, the Ropa Vieja (\$5.95) offers shredded beef seasoned using the sofrito and served over a bed of rice. The tender strings of beef, with its increased surface to volume ratio, soak up the sharp marinade and each bite oozes with its tangy seasoning. Ropa Vieja, literally "Old Clothes," is named such in a humorous reference to the shredded flank served in the dish.

Cuban cooking also commonly prepares meat by marinating in lime juice or sometimes even orange juice and roasting over a low heat. The citrus marinade combined with the gradual roast over a low flame tenderizes the meat until it is practically sliding off the bone. The Puerco Asado (\$5.95) is prepared in such a fashion. The acidic marinade not only tenderizes the meat, but also brings out the natural flavor of the roasted pork, and therefore no additional seasoning such as the sofrito is necessary.

All of El Sabor's entrees are served with fried plantains or yuca. A root vegetable, the yuca is flavored with a marinade, called mojo, which includes lemon juice, olive oil, sliced raw onions, garlic, cumin and little water. The dense root surprisingly absorbed the marinade well and transforms the normally flavorless yuca into a tangy appetizer.

While fried foods are few in Cuban cuisine, the Croquetas (\$2), normally served as appetizers, are lightly breaded and fried finger rolls stuffed with creamy

smoked ham. Perfect for snacking, the croquetas are a favorite not only in Cuban restaurants, but can also as a tapas in Spanish establishments.

If you're not in the mood for anything heavy or meaty, then El Sabor also offers a simple black beans and rice dish named Moros Y Christianos (Moors and Christians), a reference to the invasion of Spain by the Moors in 711 A.D. With no added seasoning or stock items, the Moros Y Christianos is a perfect dish for anyone in the mood for a Spartan meal.

Of course no Cuban establishment can pass muster until its Cuban Sandwiches (\$2.95) have been carefully scrutinized. Somewhat similar to a Philly cheesesteak, the Cuban sandwich offers slices of ham, roasted pork and Swiss cheese hot pressed between slices of sweetened egg bread. The tender and well-marinated slices of ham and pork, combined with the warm melted cheese, offer the perfect lunch fare for any hungry diner.

While a little difficult to find within the criss-crossed streets of Pasadena, El Sabor attracts its patrons to its little hole-in-the-wall with the promise of low prices and authentic Cuban cuisine.

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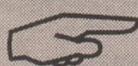
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community calendar

saturday, feb 2

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every saturday

All-Spanish Worship Service/Culto en espanol. 6 p.m. Resurrection Metropolitan Community Church, 2026 W. 11th. 713-303-9403 or 713-861-9149.

After Hours. KPFT 90.1 FM. 12 a.m. to 3 a.m. 713-526-5738.

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

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

Houston Chain Gang Bicycle Club. Call for ride locations. 713-863-1860.

Houston Outdoor Group. Memorial Park walk. 9:30 a.m., meet in front of tennis center. Jimmy, 713-864-7299.

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

Q-Patrol walks the streets 9:30 p.m.

Convenes at community center. 713-528-SAFE. E-mail: qpatrolinc@aol.com

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

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in noon-4 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

sunday, feb 3

PFLAG-Houston. Meeting, 2 p.m. 713-867-9020. www.pflaghouston.org/meetings.html.

every sunday

Anarchist Black Cross Federation/Anarchist Reading Group. 1 p.m. www.houstonabc.org. 713-595-2103

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

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

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

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

First Unitarian Universalist Church. Services at 9:30 & 11:30 a.m. Brunch available, 10:30 a.m. Panel discussion, 1:30 p.m. 713-526-5200. church@firstuu.org.

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

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

Houston Mission Church. Service 10:30 a.m. 713-529-8225.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. to noon.

Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Maranatha Fellowship Metropolitan Church. Service, 6:30 p.m. 713-528-6756.

Rainbow Riders. A bicycle club for women. 713-869-1686.

Resurrection MCC. Services. 9 and 11 a.m. Adult Sunday School, 10 a.m. Youth Sunday School, 11:15 a.m. Handbell Choir rehearsal, 1:30 p.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.

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

Thoreau Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Adult discussion, 9:45 a.m. Service, 11 a.m. 281-277-8882. www.tuuc.org.

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

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

Houston Gay & Lesbian Community Center. Drop-in 2- 5 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

monday, feb 4

every monday

AIDS Mastery. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

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

gayDAR. Wellness Community. Support Group. 7 p.m. 713-526-1017, Ext. 211.

Gay Fathers/Fathers First. Support group. 8-9:30 p.m. Grace Lutheran Church. Tom, 713-726-8736. www.geocities.com/

gaydadshouston/

Gay Men's Chorus of Houston. Open rehearsals, 7 p.m. 713-521-7464.

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

HIV testing. STD exams and treatment. Free. AVES. 1-6:15 p.m. 713-626-2837.

Houston Tennis Club. 9 a.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. 713-692-2703.

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

Lesbian & Gay Voices Radio Show. 8-10 p.m. KPFT 90.1. 713-529-1223.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

tuesday, feb 5

Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston, Inc. Monthly meeting, 7 p.m., 404 Westheimer. 713-603-0023, or e-mail: LHIhouston00@aol.com.

every tuesday

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

CPR Classes. 3 p.m. 713-607-7700.

For Mature Audiences Only. Support group.

7 p.m. Bering Memorial UMC. 713-526-1017.
Free HIV Testing. Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Club Houston. 713-830-3000.
Gay Men's Process Group. 7 p.m. 3316 Mt. Vernon. 713-526-8390.

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

Helping Cross Dressers Anonymous. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-524-0439.

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

HTGA. Support group. 7 p.m. 713-520-0439.

Men's Network. Discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual men. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. Open 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

wednesday, feb 6

Bering Omega Care Center. Monthly lecture series on HIV-related topics. This month: "TB and HIV: Fears, Facts and Fallacies," 6 p.m. Reservations required. 713-520-7070, ext. 141.
Classic Chassis Car Club. Monthly meeting, 7 p.m. World Café, 1340 West Gray. 713-797-8615. www.classicchassiscarclub.org.

every wednesday

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

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

Free HIV Testing. Thomas Street Clinic. 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2015 Thomas St. 713-793-4026.

Houston Pride Band. Open rehearsal. 1307 Yale. 713-527-0931. www.houstonpride-band.org.

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

Lesbian Literature Discussion Group. 7 p.m. Meets every other Wednesday. 713-383-6738.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 936-441-1614.

Spiritual Uplift service. 7 p.m. Bible Study 7:30 p.m. Resurrection MCC. 713-861-9149.

Women's Network. Montrose Counseling Center discussion group for social, educational development of gay and bisexual women. 7 p.m. Montrose Counseling Center. 713-529-0037.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • Free HIV testing, counseling, 6-9 p.m. • Houston Committee for People's Radio, 6:30 p.m. • Bi-Net Houston, 7:30 p.m. • 713-524-3818.

thursday, feb 7

Gay/Lesbian Jewish Study Group. Meets the first Thursday of the month. 7:30-9 p.m. at Congregation Beth Israel, 5600 North Braeswood Blvd. Alan: 713-523-3673 or Rabbi Glickman: 713-771-6221.
Gulf Coast Transgender Committee. Meeting. 713-780-4282.

every thursday

Community Gospel. Service. 7:30 p.m.

713-880-9235. www.communitygospel.org.

Free HIV Testing. By the Montrose Clinic. 8 p.m. to midnight. Toyz Disco. 713-830-3000.
Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 1-4 p.m. Lunch provided. 713-523-9530.

FrontRunners. Running club. 6:30 p.m. 713-522-8021.

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

HIV Art Therapy Program. 1-4 p.m. Kermit Eisenhut. 713-523-9530.

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

Lambda Skating Club. 8 p.m. Tradewinds. Skating Rink. www.lambdaroll.org. 713-410-7215.

Northwoods AIDS Coalition Food Pantry. 10 a.m.-6 p.m. 281-633-2555.

Rainbow Ranglers. Free C&W dance lessons. Two hours free line dance instruction. No partner required. Drop in anytime. Brazos River Bottom. 8:30 p.m. 713-528-9192.

STD exams & treatment. Free. AVES. 713-626-2837.

Spanish Charla Conversation Group. Empire Cafe, 7 p.m. Email charlahouston@msn.com. 713-416-7203.

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

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

friday, feb. 8

every Friday

Freelance Art Classes. By Kermit Eisenhut for HIV+ individuals. 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Light breakfast provided. 713-523-9530.

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

Govinda Yoga Club. Free yoga classes at 3115 West Loop South, No. 21. 713-439-0455.

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

Houston Tennis Club. 7:30-9 p.m. Memorial Park at the Tennis Center. houstontennisclub@aol.com

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

Lesbian & Gay Voices. KPFT 90.1 FM. 7 p.m. 713-526-5738.

Q-Patrol. Walks the streets. 9:30 p.m. 713-528-SAFE.

Houston Lesbian & Gay Community Center. Drop-in 6-9 p.m. • 803 Hawthorne. 713-524-3818.

volunteer/self-help

Gay & Lesbian Help line. For gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. Staffed by volunteers of all ages. 6-11 p.m. Monday-Friday, 5-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. 888-340-GLBT.

Peer Listening Line. Youth only. Staffed by GLBT youth for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth. 5-10 p.m. Monday-Friday. 800-399-PEER.

Volunteers needed. Trauma volunteers needed at Memorial Hermann Hospital to comfort and support family members in the emergency and trauma departments. 866-666-6772.

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

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February 10th Guest Speaker

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For more info...
 713-528-6756 or email
 maranatha@ev1.net

Maranatha Fellowship
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 "Building Community Through Compassion"

houston classifieds

Houston Classifieds deadline is Monday at noon

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NIBL 2002

NIGHT IN BLACK LEATHER • March 2, 2002 • Rich's • 7pm

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Seeking individual to Supervise 6 member team of health educators • knowledge of HIV/STDS • Must be familiar with GLBT community • Fax resume to 713-830-3023. www.montroseclinic.org

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Offering free employment assistance to HIV+ individuals. Including job preparedness, training, resume development, and job searching assistance. For more info call 713-981-1543

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Q Puzzle

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13			
14				15					16						
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59				60			61	62			63				
64				65			66				67				
68							69				70				
71							72				73				

"AMAZONS IN THE DRAWING ROOM"

ACROSS

- Feature of Liberace's teeth
- Harold's facial marks in "The Boys in the Band"
- Stein fillers
- Look up a man's dress, e.g.
- Amendment (weak hate-crimes bill)
- Ready for plucking
- off (repel)
- It arouses something that sticks out from your body
- Of great proportions
- Lesbian painter and "wife" of 60-Across
- Pre-Eppie Beatle Sutcliffe
- Chemical suffix
- De-Lovely
- One with a gifted tongue
- T. Lardbottom of "Kudzu"
- "A League of Their ..."
- Detergent target
- Abbreviated attention
- Top (fashionable)
- Put the top on the cake
- Lesbian painter of portraits
- Note to Tammy Baldwin's staff
- Mountain top
- Willa Cather's pair
- Group that won't pose for nude photos
- "The One I Love" band
- Embroidered mat
- Word after empty
- Poem of Sappho
- Response to Jesse Helms
- "Pinafore"
- Lesbian painter of animals
- "Jeffrey" won one
- Log structure for some Republicans
- The Phantom of the Opera's name
- Signs of "The Lion King"?
- Went down on a body part
- Maya Angelou's "Still I Rise"
- Sea eagles
- She beat Navratilova in the '91 US Open finals
- Jethrene Bodine portrayer Max

DOWN

- Kurt once of Nirvana
- Jack Nichols' "Gay ...": Talking Back to Fundamentalists"
- Earhart transportation
- good example
- "Thou ... not covet thy neighbor's...ass"
- Opera tenor Enrico
- Molecule component
- Fey Dudley Do-Right's org.
- Plumed military hat
- "We ... everywhere" ('70s slogan)
- Type of lesbian
- Top examples
- Tied to the chair, e.g.
- "To ... Mockingbird"
- Work unit found in "Sergei"
- Like a melody, to Bernstein
- Not more than
- "... there's a will..."
- Snatch
- Summons (abbr.)
- Threesome in "Roma"
- Harlan Greene's "What the Dead ..."
- It's left out
- Neither companion
- From days of yore
- Chicago gay bar
- Cukor's "A Life of ... Own"
- Disney's "The Gnome-..."
- Peninsula where the rain falls mainly on the plain
- Thelma's lady friend
- New ... (Deborah Glick, for one)
- Equality ... Concert
- Homosexuality and more in Leviticus
- Not nutty as a fruitcake
- His brother laid him in his grave
- Alpert of "Mame" fame
- Straight leader?

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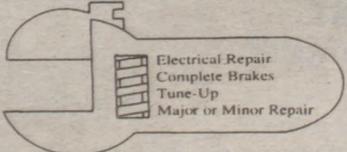
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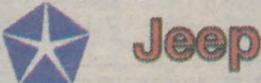

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answers to puzzle on page 24

My Stars!

by JILL DEARMAN

YOUR WEEKLY HOROSCOPE



Feb. 1-7

ARIES (March 21 to April 20)

No need to stir up a ruckus just 'cause people are asking you to follow through on what you promised to do anyway! Be a mensch, or at least stop complaining so much! A Cancer wants you to be his friend, his sister, and his brother. Justify your love.

TAURUS (April 21 to May 20)

Practically every planet including the Sun (well at least half of the planets) are transiting your mid-Heaven - aka the fame sector. People are going to know your name whether you like it or not. You might as well do your homework and impress them. A Cancer wants to be your Svengali.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 21)

Saturn in your sign makes a lovely little trine to Neptune in early February, which means that you can balance the creative part of your nature with the industrious side. Bring your art to a higher level. A Pisces wants to shower you with a higher kind of love. Bring it on!

CANCER (June 22 to July 22)

If you're feeling squeamish about making money, get over yourself. Now is your time to make it and to hoard it. Later you can live the life of Gatsby. Be a good worker bee and an Aries will call you "honey," honey.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22)

Brush up on your reading of dry but still relevant existential French writers and wry but still realistic '70s sitcom reruns. This is the most humbling time of the year for you, Leo, as several planets oppose you and take away your defenses. Enjoy being naked, in every sense, in front of an Aries.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22)

A Capricorn may continue to drag your heart around, but you can handle the pain, can't you? I hope so because Venus and Uranus are both transiting the masochistic part of your chart. Enjoy it, darling. Giving, and giving yourself over to love, is so sexy and satisfying during the twisted early days of February.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22)

Mars in your house of relationships could bring out the passive fighter in you. That means that if you simply don't give up on love, you could win. Your own "declaration of principles" and the heart of a Virgo are at stake, so dig in for the long haul.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21)

You have to take some time off, to be alone, and just enjoy your own company darling, so why not now? You've been too social lately and need to recharge your "loner" batteries. Plug back into yourself. A Gemini will wait for you and guard the doors to your inner sanctum while you ruminate.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21)

Saturn's trine to Neptune (and the moon on Feb. 10) could bring you a new idea about how to change the day-to-day aspects of your life. If you have a sudden epiphany about "your ideal day job," listen up! A Leo could hook you up with the right organization.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19)

Bend over and smell the coffee, Capricorn. You are about to learn just how much of a flesh-and-blood human being you are. You've put your longings aside long enough. Let a Scorpio satisfy you!

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18)

Half the planets in the sky are transiting your sign, baby. It's time to take power and stop pretending that the world is fair. If you can act like a benevolent (but brave) commander in chief, hordes of good people will follow. Practice your oratory (and other oral-oriented) skills on a Libra.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20)

You are an inspiration to the people around you now, especially the ones who are elderly, sick, or physically challenged. Live up to your role as a great empathizer. Forgive a Virgo.

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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