

# national news



## Special AIDS stamp to be issued by Postal Service

International AIDS Awareness Day, Dec. 1, is when the U.S. Postal Service plans to issue its new commemorative stamp on HIV-related disease. The stamp's release is still questionable due to the controversy over the service's 1981 issue of a commemorative stamp directed at fighting alcoholism. The Postal Service believes that diminished sales of the stamp, with the words, "You can beat it!" were the result of customer's fears that using the stamp would accuse a letter's recipient of having the disease. A Madison, Wis. nurse, who has lobbied for the stamp for over five years was elated over the announcement, "Hot darn, I'm delighted," she said. Joan Anne Hlavacek got involved after the death of a friend's relative and has written over 1,000 letters lobbying for the stamp.

## Courts approve lesbian and gay men adopting

Nationally, certain state courts are responding more favorably to lesbian and gay male couples wishing to adopt children. In a recent case in New York, a gay man has won the right to adopt a Russian child. The Immigration and Naturalization Service originally blocked the adoption because he was living with his same-sex partner. The U.S. Justice Department overruled the INS decision, saying, "The nature of a relationship a prospective adoptive parent may maintain with another adult in the household will not serve as the basis for denial of an orphan visa petition."

In Massachusetts recently, its Supreme Judicial Court, the state's highest court, has ruled that an

adoption application could proceed for a "second parent" adoption by a lesbian couple. In this case, the partner of the birth mother is seeking adoption of the daughter without having the birth mother lose her parentship. These cases are new for the courts because an unrelated adult would not traditionally be allowed to adopt a child unless the child's biological parents gave up their legal rights to the child.

Custody cases involving lesbians or gay men have shown, in some states, the courts' willingness to disregard sexual orientation in favor of the child's best interests. A county court commissioner in Washington state has rejected a plea by a mother seeking to regain custody of a child she gave up for adoption. The woman, Megan Lucas, 22, sought to regain custody after she learned that her four-year-old son would be adopted by a gay male couple. The couple had already been approved as the child's foster parents. In another custody case, a judge ruled that a lesbian from South Dakota can retain custody of her two children despite her lesbianism. The judge, in his ruling against the father's gaining custody, said, "The children appear to be normal, active children who are very well adjusted to all of their present circumstances." In addition, the judge said that while the "court cannot morally condone the mother's live-in relationship, the record clearly reflects that the mother provides an excellent environment for the children, which is not detracted from the presence of (a same-sex partner) who actively participates in the family household."

## Mississippi has first civil rights march for lesbians and gay men

Responding to the outcry of the First Baptist Church and others in opposition to the formation of a gay and lesbian community center, the gay and lesbian residents of Ocean Springs, Mi., marched for the first time down the city's streets. About 350 people showed up to support Todd Emerson and Luis Cintron, founders of the G.L. Friendly service organization, which proposed the community center to be opened in nearby Biloxi. Despite strong opposition from a crowd of onlookers a strong showing of local police ensured the peace during the march.

Police kept the two groups from crossing police lines and handing out literature. State and local obscenity laws — among the toughest in the nation — ban profanity and sexually suggestive language, obscene, profane, or threatening gestures and obscene or indecent attire. Speakers at a rally after the march praised the group's actions while condemning the city for being defined "by a minority of hateful, ignorant bigots."

## FDA approves drug to treat weight loss in PWA's

Megestrol acetate has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration to treat the wasting syndrome experienced by people with AIDS. Megace, as it is commonly referred to, was first developed in the 1970s to help breast cancer patients. Researchers found that the drug had a side effect of weight gain for the patient. That side effect is now being put to good use in people with AIDS who experience significant weight loss and loss of lean body mass. It was found through study trials that patients receiving an 800 mg daily dose of the drug had a significant increase in weight and in muscle mass than those receiving the placebo. According to one of the study's principle investigators, Dr. Jani Von Roenn, it is the increase in muscle mass that is important to the health of people with AIDS because loss of it leads to a wasting syndrome and worsening health. Von Roenn says, "Severe weight loss may increase patient anxiety, morbidity and debilitation." Bristol-Myers Squibb, manufacturer of Megace, reports that the drug will cost approximately \$69.88 a bottle but that the company will make the drug available free of charge for those patients who do not have adequate insurance and cannot afford the medication. Physicians who want more information about Megace should call Bristol-Myers Squibb at (609) 897-2126. Physicians who wish to refer patients to the free drug program should call (800) 788-0123.



## New AIDS prevention ad vibrating the airwaves

A new public service announcement has been created by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation that, according to its executive producer, delivers "more direct, honest and effective communication about HIV." The 30-second black-and-white ad features shots of affectionate multicultural, mixed and same-sex couples as the words "Communication," "Love," "Pleasure," "Joy" and "Responsi-

bility" flash across the screen, with Marky Mark's "Good Vibrations" playing back-up.

Les Pappas, the ad's executive producer, says the imagery shown in the ad (i.e. sex-positive, joyful and caring with a friendly reminder to care for yourself and your partner) is brand-new to televised HIV-prevention ads and one for which the public is hungry. "New Vibrations" is scheduled to air on television, cable and in movie theaters nationwide.

## Religious group angered by NEA decision

The Christian Action Network has sent a 15-minute tape to the White House and Congress, allegedly showing clips from three of the films shown at the 1991 Pittsburgh International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival in protest of the National Endowment for the Arts decision reversal. The Network said that by reversing a decision by former acting director Anne-Imelda Radice to deny funding to three gay and lesbian film festivals, the NEA gave the films included a "Good Housekeeping stamp of approval." The Network has deemed the films pornographic.

NEA spokesperson Ginny Terzano said the clips circulated by the group had nothing to do with the funding decision. She stated, to which Network president Martin J. Mawyer conceded, that the grant finally awarded was for the 1992 festival.

## Decatur mayor tells queers to "Come on down!"

Mayor Mike Mears of Decatur, Ga., has publicly welcomed gay men and lesbians into his city. "Our city's always been open to anyone," said the mayor of his headline-making statement. "It was never any question." In the wake of neighboring city Atlanta's homophobic response to its domestic partnership proposal, Mears is making a concerted effort to adopt a similar proposal in his city.

"I think that people who form relationships for whatever reasons, need to have the same protection as other individuals," Mears said. "The traditional concept of family has been evolving for many years. We people in political positions need to be aware of the change and need to be prepared to make changes in policies, ordinances and laws that reflect the development of the concept of partnership and family." Although Mears expects some opposition from a local Christian Coalition, he says he is "absolutely committed to the idea that no one's lifestyle should be an impediment to their full enjoyment ... in the community."

Compiled by Lee Norwood

## cathartic comics | featuring The Brown Bomber and Diva Touché Flambé by Prof. I.B. Gittendowne

