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## national news

### Queer fruit flies?

The fruit fly, famous in high school biology classes, is the subject of a New York University study concerning sexual orientation. *The Washington Blade* reported that fruit flies were chosen for the study, headed by Ralph J. Greenspan, NYU professor of biology and neural science, because most aspects of the fruit fly's sexual behavior are known to be genetically determined and controlled.

In the study, a fruit fly gene called transformer was implanted in male fruit flies. This gene switches cells to the female development pattern, resulting in a strain of male fruit flies with "feminized" brain regions. Current thinking is that male flies recognize females by detecting chemical signals, called pheromones, in odors emitted by the female. The male then begins the courting process.



"Adult males make two compounds that inhibit courtship by other males," Greenspan said. "What we noted in the study was that the feminization of the olfactory [sense of smell] system affects the male flies' ability to recognize the inhibitory pheromone. The flies display a nondiscriminatory sexual preference because of the change in circuitry."

He added, "Conventional scientific wisdom is to say that the components of human sexuality are biological and environmental. This study, by showing that molecular variations to brain regions influence or control responses in mating and sexual orientation, should contribute to proving a biological basis for sexual orientation."

The study was published in the February issue of *Science* magazine.

### Olympics Out of Utah project starts

Gay and Lesbian Utah Democrats have created an Olympics Out of Utah project. Formed in answer to the passage of Utah's House Bill 366, the project will encourage the International Olympic Committee to reject Utah's bid to host the 2002 Winter Olympics. HB 366 bans recognition of same-sex marriages performed outside of Utah.

"The International Olympic Committee and would-be Olympic participants must be warned that this state is unprepared to offer equal protection of legally married same-sex couples including those who would choose to attend the Games," said GLUD founder David Nelson. "The Olympics deserve to be hosted by a venue which recognizes and protects the diversity of the world's athletes and citizens. The passage of this bill is stark proof that this state is unprepared to do that."

Gay and lesbian Georgians made a similar request of 1996 Atlanta Summer Olympics organizers last year. The request came after Cobb County, Ga., commissioners passed a controversial anti-sexual minority resolution. Organizers moved the volleyball competition out of Cobb County.

### Man with AIDS to receive baboon bone marrow

Sometime in the next few months a man terminally ill with AIDS will receive a bone marrow transplant from a baboon. It is hoped that the transplant will rebuild the man's immune system. The transplant was described at a conference, held in February, of the American Association for the

Advancement of Science.

An unsuccessful baboon-to-human bone marrow transplant was attempted two years ago at the University of Pittsburgh. In that experiment the transplanted cells failed to grow. The recent discovery of a type of marrow tissue called facilitating cells has researchers hopeful that the transplant might work this time.

Facilitating cells, discovered by Dr. Suzanne Ildstad, who is directing the current transplant experiment, constitute approximately one in 200,000 marrow cells. Their exact purpose is unknown. They appear to prevent the destruction of transplanted marrow by the host body. In this experiment, the baboon marrow will be enriched with the patient's own facilitating cells.

Ildstad has conducted previous experiments where human marrow was transplanted to three baboons. The first baboon underwent this procedure six months ago, and is doing well. Twenty percent of its circulating blood cells are now human. This is no guarantee that transplanted baboon cells will work in a human.

### Yakima groups meet to develop resources

Gay and lesbian organizations and supportive organizations in the Yakima Valley have united to form a gay and lesbian resource project for the Yakima Valley, reports Spokane's *Stonewall News Northwest*.

The impetus to develop resources came after new phone books were distributed in the Yakima Valley that listed a Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays contact number as a hotline number under Gay and Lesbian resources. The listing resulted in an unexpected flood of calls.

The initial goals of the project are to publish a Yakima sexual minority resource directory and to meet with a broader and more inclusive coalition of organizations.

### Victory fund backs new candidates

Last month the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund recommended five more openly gay and lesbian candidates to its national donor network. This brings the number of candidates supported by the Victory Fund to seven. The candidates, who, according to Victory Fund political director Kathleen DeBold, underwent rigorous screening to determine their viability as potential public officials, will now have access to the financial and technical support needed to run winning campaigns.

Here are the candidates and their races: Larry Bagneris, Louisiana State House of Representatives; Jeff Horton (incumbent), Los Angeles Board of Education; Carole Migden, California State Assembly; Tina Podlodowski, Seattle City Council; and Zeke Zeidler, Redondo Beach (Calif.) School Board.

### Seattle couple fasts for right to marry in church

For 10 days last month, James Black and Thomas Monahan conducted a fast in a chapel next to Seattle's St. Mark's Cathedral. The fast was in protest of the Episcopal Church's policy against blessing same-sex unions.

The couple had scheduled a wedding in celebration of their 10 years together to take place in St. Mark's last December. They canceled the event after Bishop Vincent Warner, head of the Episcopal Church in Western Washington, informed them he could not allow the ceremony to take place because the House of Bishops, a governing body of the national church, had not taken an official position on same-sex marriages.

*Compiled by Kristine Chatwood*