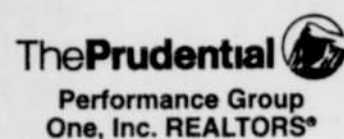




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national news

CALIFORNIA

Leaders of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association met in February with U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Donna Shalala. The two issues discussed at the meeting were the plight of HIV-infected health care workers, and what GLMA Executive Director Benjamin Schatz called "the need for a proactive and comprehensive initiative by HHS on lesbian and gay health issues."

Shalala pledged to take action on both issues, according to GLMA President Valerie Ulstad, M.D., a Minneapolis cardiologist. HHS officials have been instructed to examine whether current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines that restrict HIV-infected health care workers are scientifically valid and whether they have caused unnecessary discrimination. Ulstad also said Shalala agreed to determine the scope of HHS activities on lesbian and gay health and to develop a plan for a broader, more proactive approach.

FLORIDA

A conservative Christian state legislator has been charged with having sex with a prostitute.

Rep. Marvin Couch (R-Oviedo), picked up a prostitute at an Orange County shopping center. He paid her \$22 to perform oral sex in his truck. In addition to prostitution, Couch was charged with exposure of his sexual organs and with unnatural or lascivious acts.

Couch, 42, has been a strong advocate of the religious right's political agenda. Last year he received a perfect 100 rating from the Orlando-based Christian Coalition of Florida.

Couch's current term ends in November. He has said he will not seek re-election, but he would like to finish serving this term.

ILLINOIS

The Chicago Commission on Human Relations fined the Chicago Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America \$100 for violating the city's human rights ordinance. The commission found that the council discriminated against a gay man when it told him he need not apply for a job at the council. The commission also ordered the Boy Scouts to pay the man \$500 in damages.



The commission's ruling orders the Boy Scouts to refrain from discriminating against gay men and lesbians. The national headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America issued a statement saying the group will appeal the decision.

Jamie Nabozny, a young gay man from Wisconsin, received the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Teachers' Network's Pathfinder Award in early March. The award was given at GLSTN's annual conference held in Chicago; it is given annually to an individual who has forged new paths in the work against homophobia in schools.

Nabozny is the plaintiff in the first federal appellate case challenging anti-gay violence in public schools. He was repeatedly assaulted by fellow students while in the seventh through eleventh grades. He was beaten, punched and kicked. As a

result of some of the attacks, he required hospitalization and surgery. Nabozny's parents supported him, constantly battling school officials who refused to discipline Nabozny's tormentors.

"Jamie is the perfect recipient of the Pathfinder Award," said Kevin Jennings, executive director of GLSTN, "because his determination to pursue justice is an inspiration to youth everywhere, showing them that they need not tolerate homophobic harassment."



A second gay student has joined a \$1 million lawsuit that accuses Riverside-Brookfield High School officials and other students of anti-gay name-calling, physical abuse and threats.

The suit was filed last year by a student known as "Mario Doe."

Mario Doe alleges that when he informed a school counselor that he was being harassed, the counselor told him to "learn karate for self-defense." He also claims that students pinched him, grabbed his genitals and threatened him. Mario Doe dropped out of school and filed the lawsuit in Cook County Circuit Court.

The second student, known as "John Doe," claims that the same school counselor told his father John Doe was gay, despite the fact that John Doe wanted that information kept confidential. He dropped out of school this year.

School officials say the suit is without merit.

NEBRASKA

Bucking a national trend, a member of the Nebraska state legislature introduced a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in that state, according to a story in the *Baltimore Gay Paper*.

Sen. Ernie Chambers of Omaha knows that his proposal, LB 1260, has a slim chance of passing this session. He says, though, he won't give up.

"This is an issue related to civil rights and civil liberties that can't be dodged by political bodies. It has an impact on so many people," Chambers said.

NEW YORK

Dyke TV, a cable access television show by, for and about lesbians, recently announced staffing and programming changes for the upcoming season. Produced in New York City, *Dyke TV* can be seen in nearly 60 cities throughout the United States.

Changes include a new executive producer, Cyrille Phipps; and a new development director, Maria Petulla. Phipps will oversee implementation of the new organizational structure. Petulla will manage the strategic fund-raising plan.

Dyke TV will now air twice a month. Beginning in May, shows will focus on specific topics such as motherhood, global dykes, virtual reality and relationships.

Dyke TV has also launched its own Web site. It can be found on the Internet at <http://www.dyketv.org>.

SOUTH DAKOTA

Passage of a law that bans the recognition of same-gender marriages in South Dakota may have spelled doom for a major international ballooning event held in the state.

South Dakota natives Jacques Soukup and Kirk Thomas, longtime partners, philanthropists and internationally recognized balloonists, have withdrawn their support of the Governor's Cup, a national and international ballooning competition. They have taken this action to protest the passage of the South Dakota law. Soukup and Thomas had planned to serve as officials and event organizers.

"There will probably be no measurers, stewards, judges, meteorologists or jury members," they said. "Since we know most competitive balloonists worldwide, we will inform them of the actions of the South Dakota government and will discourage anyone from attending this event held in such an inhospitable state."

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood