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national news

CALIFORNIA

Gay and lesbian Christians can now purchase books, brochures, audio tapes and music CDs from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches Resource Center. Interested shoppers can request a free copy of the Resource Center's catalog by writing to UFMCC, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029. Fax requests to (213) 464-2123.

Items available through the catalog include books on "queer theology," a video on dealing with grief, and pamphlets that discuss HIV/AIDS and homosexuality and the Bible.



San Francisco Bay area artist Frank Pietronigro has produced a commemorative full-color print honoring lesbian and gay diversity. The poster, called "Equality and Justice for All," shows 12 gay and lesbian couples of different cultural backgrounds and ages. Twenty percent of all proceeds from sales of the 18-inch-by-24-inch limited edition print will be donated to Visual AID, a San Francisco-based organization that provides financial assistance to artists with life-threatening illnesses.

To purchase a copy, write to Masterworks, PO Box 193163, San Francisco, CA 94119, or call (415) 777-8242.



A Southern California school district has banned a federally funded, county-approved AIDS education program from local high schools, according to the American Civil Liberties Union's "Newswire." Last November a lecturer from the Catalyst Foundation for AIDS Awareness and Care answered a student's question about oral sex during a presentation at Quartz Hill High School near Lancaster. In January the Antelope Valley Union High School District banned Catalyst.

The controversy started when a student asked the presenter what protection should be used during oral sex. The presenter answered that a condom, a dental dam or even plastic wrap could be used. The lecturer then moved on with the presentation.



The Birdcage, the Hollywood remake of the 1979 French film *La Cage aux Folles*, is the first gay-themed film to gross more than \$100 million. The movie reached the \$100 million mark in its first six weeks of release. The film stars Robin Williams and Nathan Lane.



At its annual convention in April, the California State Democratic Party voted to adopt a platform calling for lesbians and gay men to be allowed to serve in the military "without question or restriction," reports *The Washington Blade*. The more than 1,500 delegates voted unanimously to include the plank in the party platform.

California Democrats will now attempt to convince the Democratic National Convention to adopt the California platform as the platform of the national Democratic Party.

FLORIDA

A nasty letter written by an employee of the state Department of Transportation in response to a request for a pledge for a Miami-to-Orlando AIDS Ride has sparked controversy and raised a fear that Florida tourism could suffer a negative impact, reports the (Fort Lauderdale) *Sun-Sentinel*.

Leanne O'Connell, a youth traffic safety program coordinator, wrote her letter on official DOT letterhead. In the letter, she states that AIDS "was created as a punishment to the gay and lesbian communities across the world." She goes on to say, "As far as the gays and lesbians of the world...let them suffer their consequences!"

The state's response to O'Connell's letter has

been somewhat tepid. She was reprimanded and sent to counseling. The DOT sent a letter of apology to the AIDS ride coordinators. That response was not enough to satisfy the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care. The physicians' group announced that it was canceling plans to hold its 1997 conference in Fort Lauderdale. The group's president said he intends to urge other medical groups to boycott Florida.

IOWA

Supporters of current policies that protect Des Moines school employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation presented the school board with a petition April 23 urging the board to keep the sexual orientation protections in the nondiscrimination policy, according to a *Des Moines Register* story. The petition contained 5,850 signatures.

Earlier in April a conservative Christian political action committee, Concerned Parents of Des Moines, presented the board with a 1,000-signature petition urging that the words "sexual orientation" be removed from the school district's employment policies.

The school board has taken the issue under advisement.

LOUISIANA

New Orleans has lost more than \$1 million in federal grants for AIDS programs because city officials incorrectly completed the grant application forms, reports *Southern Voice*. As a result, the city will receive no federal AIDS money this year. In the past, New Orleans has received approximately \$1.5 million annually to fund services such as transportation, housing and mental health.

MASSACHUSETTS

A judge has ordered a Brockton woman who advertised on the Internet that she had a cure for HIV to remove the ad from the World Wide Web. The ad claimed "In six weeks you are HIV negative," and offered the cure in a book for \$24 or through a 900 number for \$1.99 a minute. The so-called cure is a compound of wormwood, cloves and black walnut hulls.

The state attorney general obtained a temporary restraining order against the woman and is now seeking a permanent injunction against the ad.

OKLAHOMA

A self-proclaimed prophet, his wife and an accomplice were convicted April 24 on charges of conspiring to manufacture homemade bombs that they intended to use to bomb gay bars, government agencies, abortion clinics and civil rights groups in Southern U.S. cities, according to a Reuter report.

Willie Ray Lampley, his wife, Cecilia, and John Dare Baird were found guilty by a federal jury in Muskogee. They will be sentenced within two months.

TENNESSEE

A Nashville woman pleaded guilty to knowingly exposing her two female roommates to HIV by having sex with them without telling them she was HIV positive. Thomasina Goodman's roommates learned her HIV status from a public health official. They then filed charges against her under a 1994 Tennessee law. She will be sentenced later in May on the two felony counts.

Compiled by Kristine Chatwood

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