

# national briefs

## CALIFORNIA

An Oct. 17 political forum hosted by the San Francisco AIDS Foundation was disrupted by members of ACT UP-San Francisco who set off stink bombs, blew whistles and shouted down event speakers. The actions were to protest SFAF's heavy promotion of protease inhibitors and the AIDS prevention plan proposed by city health officials, which would require that people with HIV be tracked and forced to take protease inhibitors in an approach called direct observational therapy, a method currently used for communicable diseases such as tuberculosis.

Dr. Donald Abrams, head of the Food and Drug Administration's Antiviral Committee and director of the AIDS program at San Francisco General Hospital, has recently stated his reservations about antiviral therapy with protease inhibitors, saying the drugs were insufficiently studied and should not have been approved by the FDA.

Medea Lopez, one of the demonstrators, said, "The fact is that protease inhibitors were rushed through the FDA approval process so that they could be heavily marketed to clinicians and patients during the July International AIDS Conference."



The AIDS Memorial Grove Act, part of the National Parks Bill, was passed by Congress on Oct. 3, designating a 15-acre wooded area in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park as a monument to the tragedy of AIDS and the millions of people in this country whose lives have been touched by AIDS.

The grove is scheduled for completion in December 1997.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Former National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director Virginia M. Apuzzo has been appointed associate deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Apuzzo previously served as president of the New York State Civil Service Commission. During her tenure at NGLTF she led negotiations with the Social Security Administration to secure federal disability benefits for people with AIDS.

## ILLINOIS

The Food and Drug Administration has authorized expanded access to the anti-diarrheal drug nitazoxanine for people with AIDS suffering from cryptosporidiosis. The decision removes the limit to the number of patients who may receive nitazoxanine, formerly set at 150.



Unimed Pharmaceuticals Inc., manufacturer of the drug, stated in a press release that the action will allow an open label compassionate-use study, providing the experimental drug to people with AIDS previously unable to participate in controlled clinical trials, and will generate additional safety and efficacy information to support phase II and III trials planned for the end of the year.

## NEW YORK

The New York State Court of Appeals ruled in October that dentists cannot refuse to treat patients with HIV or AIDS. The opinion stated that legislators who wrote the state's Human Rights Law did not intend "that persons with disabilities should be free from discrimination in such places as ice cream parlors and skating rinks, but that dental and medical providers could lawfully deny health care to them solely on the basis of their disability."

The case was brought when a Long Island dentist, Dennis Cahill, refused to treat a patient he believed had HIV.

## NORTH CAROLINA

The North Carolina Court of Appeals on Oct. 15 reversed a lower court ruling that had removed two sons from the custody of their gay father, and found that a parent's sexual orientation should be irrelevant in custody disputes throughout the state.



Fred Smith, who had raised his sons since their birth and had had custody since his 1991 divorce, lost custody in 1995 when his ex-wife discovered he is gay. His sons will be returned to his care.

## OHIO

Denise Smith, a male-to-female preoperative transsexual residing in Painesville, was allowed to legally marry her girlfriend by providing a note from a doctor confirming that her male sexual organs will be intact on their wedding day, according to a story in the *San Francisco Bay Times*. Smith plans to have a complete sex-change operation within the next few years, but will remain legally male so that her October marriage to Debi Easterday will be valid despite the Defense of Marriage Act.

## OKLAHOMA

Stanley J. Barby, brother of openly gay congressional candidate Paul Barby, and six other members of the Barby family have publicly given their endorsement to Frank Lucas, Paul Barby's incumbent opponent. The statement released by Stanley Barby stressed the necessity of "traditional family values" but did not mention his brother by name, reports the *Northwest Gay Times*.

The Barby family has ranched in western Oklahoma for 100 years and also operates an oil and gas company based in Woodward.

Paul Barby was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and two months ago revealed his sexual orientation to party leaders in the state's 6th District. His mother and sister are among members of the family still supporting his campaign.

## PENNSYLVANIA

More than 250 middle- and high school students in Elizabethtown walked out of class on Oct. 8 to stage a protest against their school board's new pro-family resolution, according to The Associated Press. Students at the high school had been warned by school officials that they would be disciplined if they protested. More than a dozen parents attended the rally in support of their children.

The resolution, passed Sept. 17, states that "pro-homosexual concepts on sex and family will never be tolerated or accepted in this school," and describes the two-parent family as "the norm." It matches a document sent to many school districts by the conservative Christian group Concerned Women for America, which was drafted in response to the National Education Association's own resolution on diversity, racism, sexism and sexual orientation.

## VERMONT

According to the *San Francisco Bay Times*, Matt Stickney, the South Burlington student who was suspended for wearing a dress to school and who later disappeared for several days, has returned safely. His story gained national attention after a hundred classmates cross-dressed in a show of solidarity. Stickney was later assaulted by a fellow student, who is being charged with a hate crime.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cuttone

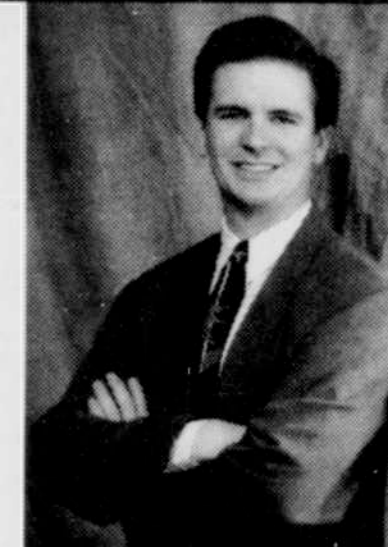
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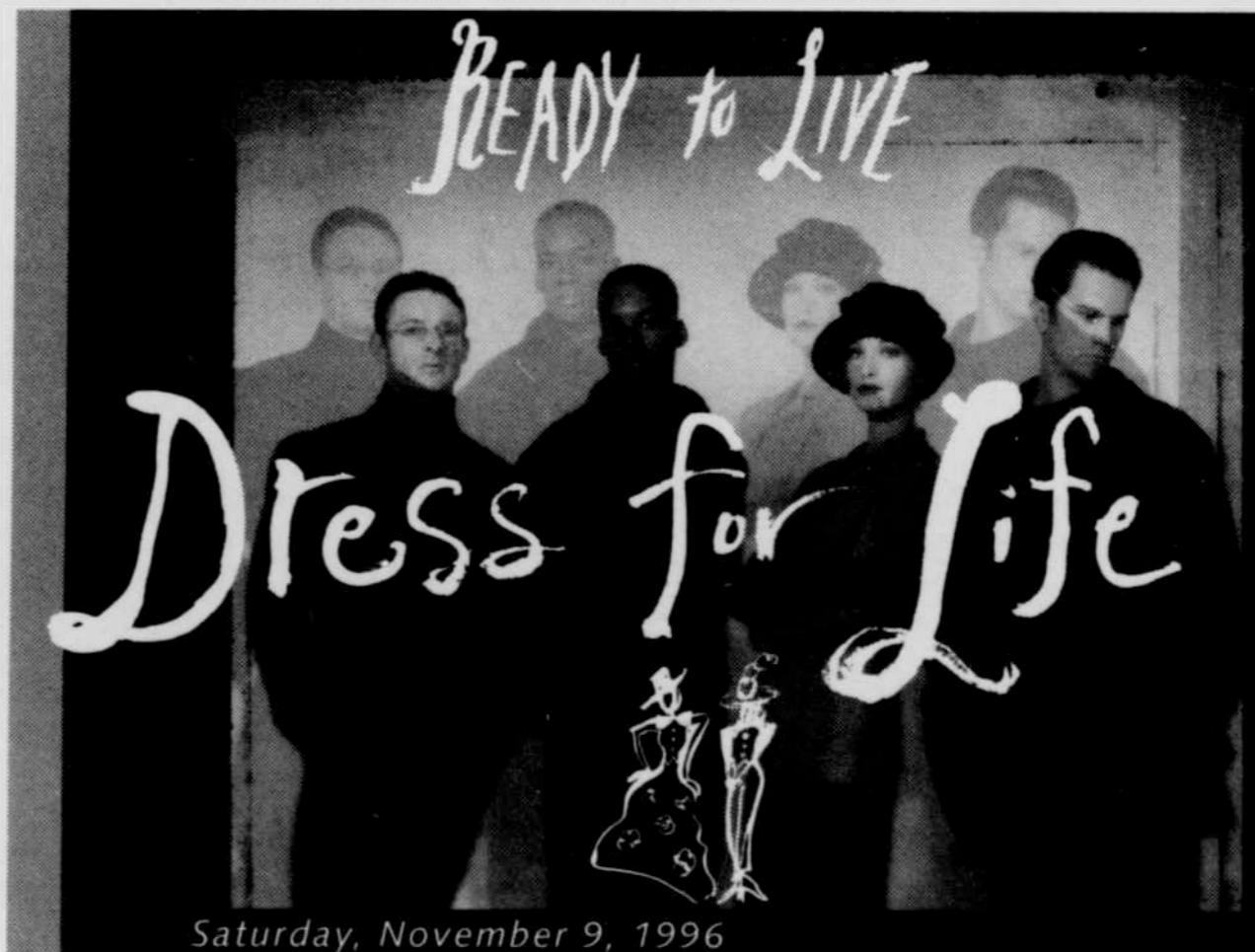
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