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national news

Voted most likely to be controversial

A new club for gay and straight students at Dimond High School in Anchorage, Alaska, has become a source of controversy although it was intended to promote awareness and acceptance. According to an article in the *Anchorage Daily News*, a local conservative talk radio show railed against the Gay/Straight Alliance, parents have questioned the sexual orientation of principal Pat McDowell, and some students are calling for a ban on all noncurriculum clubs, similar to the one in place at Salt Lake City schools.

School district leaders say that the club is clearly allowed under district policies that conform to the federal Equal Access Act, which prohibits schools from banning clubs based on their religious, political or philosophical beliefs. However, school board member David Werdal said the board will review those policies, noting that an exception applies for clubs that distract students from learning. He also expressed concern that club posters encouraging students to examine their sexual orientation might be considered "recruitment."

Student members and faculty advisors for the club insist that their sole mission is to fight prejudice and homophobia through education and awareness.

School board president Debbie Osslander said, "It also needs to be clear the club is not something the school district promoted or supported. It's strictly student-led and student-initiated. It's not subsidized by us, only to the degree that we're allowing our building to be used."

Hollywood parade will feature gay float

The internationally televised Hollywood Christmas Parade will include this year an entry from the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, sponsored by the West Hollywood HIV/AIDS pharmacy Capitol Drugs. The float will highlight the center's 25th anniversary and feature openly gay actor Dan Butler (*Frasier*) and his life partner Richard Waterhouse.

Although sexual minority groups have been faced with legal battles over participation in other parades, the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, which produces the event, did not hesitate to include the center's entry. An existing rule which prohibits anyone other than celebrities and their family members from riding on floats was also not an issue.



The Dec. 1 parade will be aired live in Los Angeles and distributed to more than 135 cities in North America. Last year's parade was rebroadcast in its entirety in Russia, Thailand, Taiwan, the Philippines, Scandinavia, Malaysia, South America and Greece.

Old drug may become new HIV/AIDS treatment

Ten years ago Honolulu Medical Group dermatologist Bruce Mills discovered that dinitrochlorobenzene, or DNCB, a medication that stimulates the body to remove warts, also clears up skin lesions caused by opportunistic infections in people with AIDS. According to a

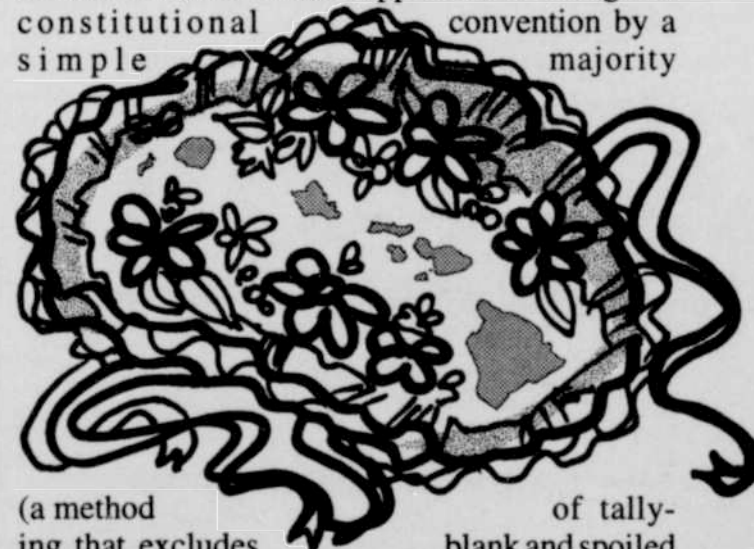
story in the *Honolulu Advertiser*, after Mills first published his findings, the treatment was not pursued by experts, only by patients themselves in the San Francisco area where he was practicing at the time. Since then, a trial conducted in Brazil found that patients using DNCB did not get opportunistic infections, gained weight and didn't have problems with parasites, even without taking other commonly used AIDS drugs.



Following up on similar results produced by two doctors in California and one in Sweden, Mills has begun the first major study of the drug in the United States to determine if it can increase T-cell counts. The trial, funded by the Queen's Medical Center, administers DNCB through an adhesive patch applied to the skin. The application causes a rash, which in turn stimulates the immune system to fight the surface under the patch. After the body has been sensitized, the immune system will attack the invading virus even in parts of the body where DNCB was never applied.

Hawaii faces constitutional convention

State Attorney General Margery Bronster has issued a legal opinion that in the last election Hawaii voters did indeed approve the calling of a constitutional convention by a simple majority



(a method of tallying that excludes blank and spoiled ballots rather than counting them as "no" votes). The opinion is likely to be challenged, however, according to reports in the *Honolulu Advertiser* and the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*.

Opponents of the convention feel that issues such as same-sex marriage and insurance reform should be decided by the judicial system, and cite the convention's estimated \$6 million cost—which could increase if special elections are held to select delegates.

Sexual minority rights advocates fear that the convention may be used to pass a constitutional amendment barring same-sex marriages before the Hawaii Supreme Court rules on the controversial and well-known case currently in litigation. Dan Foley, an attorney representing the three same-sex couples suing the state for the right to marry, said a challenge will come from a group he declined to identify.

The Hawaii Government Employees Association and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs are also considering court challenges of their own. The League of Women Voters opposed the convention during the election, and has set its own estimate of the cost at \$12 million, but will not challenge the decision in court; instead the group will urge its members and supporters to run for positions as delegates.

Bronster said she had anticipated a legal challenge no matter which way her office ruled, and