

national briefs

CALIFORNIA

Alameda residents Mike Trelow and his daughter Heather are asking the state to revoke the license of a fifth-grade teacher who discussed the April 30 coming out episode of ABC's sitcom *Ellen* in class without parental permission.

In a formal complaint filed July 9 the Trelows said Victoria Forrester, a teacher at Amelia Earhart Elementary School, violated a state education code requirement that parents be notified in writing of classes that will discuss topics related to human reproduction.

According to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Trelows believe the teacher went too far when she described the *Ellen* character as "brave and proud."

The Alameda school district investigated the incident through a separate complaint process and concluded that the teacher had not behaved inappropriately.

The state commission has several options short of revoking Forrester's license, such as dismissing the case or sending a letter of reprimand.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

For the first time, a leader from the gay and lesbian community participated in an official U.S. delegation to the annual summit of Africans and African Americans in Zimbabwe.

Keith Boykin, executive director of the National Black Lesbian and Gay Leadership Forum, joined U.S. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater, the Rev. Jesse Jackson and other delegates for a weeklong international conference in Harare.

The summit, held July 21-25, addressed topics including AIDS and health care, arts and culture, business and economic development, media and communications, education, democracy and governance, population and women's issues.



A canister of tear gas exploded in a Capitol Hill gay bar July 12, and gay and lesbian community leaders are criticizing the initial response from police as inadequate, reports the *Washington Post*.

The paper says about 80 patrons were evacuated after part of the club filled with smoke and fumes, but no serious injuries were reported.

Witnesses reported seeing two white men with "Marine style" haircuts near the entrance of the club about the time the canister exploded.

Police say the case has been classified as a hate crime.

Combined with the recent fatal stabbing of a gay man in D.C., the tear gas incident has left many in the city's queer community concerned that violence against gay men and lesbians may be on the rise and that police aren't responding adequately.



Billionaire and former Republican presidential candidate Steve Forbes has launched a \$150,000 ad campaign against Initiative 57, a proposal that would protect people with AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses and their health care providers from criminal prosecution related to the medicinal use of marijuana.

The ballot measure is the brainchild of ACT UP Washington's Steve Michael, himself a former presidential candidate.

He predicts Forbes' campaign will have little impact on local efforts already underway to gather the 16,700 signatures needed to place the medical marijuana initiative on the ballot.

MICHIGAN

Two Lansing men are facing felonious assault charges following a June 22 blow-dart attack that police say targeted participants in the previous

day's Gay Pride rally.

The *Lansing State Journal* reports that Raymond Terwilliger, 33, and Kevin Hartges, 40, have been released on bond and that two local men suffered minor injuries as a result of the attack.



According to police, the two men blew darts out of small blowguns from a moving car as they passed in front of the Esquire Bar on Turner Street.

In addition to the two blowguns, police discovered a handgun when they arrested the men shortly after the incident.

NATIONWIDE

The federal Food and Drug Administration issued several stern directives to Johnson & Johnson, maker of the home HIV test kit Confide, in the months prior to the product's removal from the market, says the *New York Times*.

Government records show federal regulators took the corporation to task over its quality control procedures and testing methods and because it failed to report customer complaints of false test results.

Citing weak sales, the company's Direct Access Diagnostics unit said June 26 it would scrap the home test kit, which cost millions to develop and languished through 10 years of negotiations with the FDA before hitting store shelves in June 1996.

Ninety thousand Confide tests have been processed since its release, according to Direct Access.

The company will stop accepting tests for processing on Aug. 8, and on Aug. 29 will discontinue the free phone counseling it had said would be available for up to two years to consumers who tested positive. After that date, callers will be referred to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for counseling referrals.

NORTH CAROLINA

Responding to the recent passage of anti-gay resolutions in several North Carolina counties, the grass-roots organization Citizens Against Discrimination called for a boycott of the state by the film industry.

Charles Edwin Merrill, 63, a member of the Merrill/Lynch brokerage family and founder of the group, launched the boycott effort by contacting entertainment executives Barry Diller, Rupert Murdoch and Michael Eisner, as well as Hollywood Supports, a group formed in 1991 to counter workplace fear and discrimination based on HIV status and sexual orientation.

Merrill, who is openly gay, said he formed CAD in memory of two gay cousins, Stuart Merrill and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet James Merrill. He also said his main objective is to have the anti-gay legislation in the state rescinded.

TEXAS

Three educators are planning to open a private high school in Dallas for gay and lesbian teens.

The Walt Whitman Community School is scheduled to open in September and will offer a normal high school curriculum for annual tuition of \$7,000.

According to United Press International, it will be housed in a building owned by Cathedral of Hope, a congregation of mostly lesbians and gay men.

Director Becky Thompson says she and other school organizers were inspired by a 1984 study conducted in New York which found that 28 percent of lesbian and gay students drop out of high school because of harassment. Schools similar to Whitman already exist in New York, Toronto and Los Angeles.

Compiled by Christopher D. Cutrone

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