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national news

Come out, come out,
wherever you are



People are still chattering about the very public coming out of Ellen DeGeneres, but fame isn't required to make a difference. National Coming Out Day is Oct. 11, and the Human Rights Campaign says it wants to help everyone make the most of it.

According to HRC, people are much more supportive of ending discrimination based on sexual orientation when they are made aware of the lesbian, gay, transgendered and bisexual people they already know.

And coming out isn't just for queer people: HRC is urging all fair-minded straight people to come out in their own way by demonstrating their support for equal rights. "As long as our gay sons and daughters face discrimination and are excluded from the basic protection of our laws, I will urge all American families to come out for fairness," says Ellen's Mom, Betty DeGeneres, spokeswoman for HRC's 1997-98 National Coming Out Project.

For more information on National Coming Out Day or to receive a free resource guide to coming out, call 1-800-866-6263; visit HRC's Web site (www.hrc.org); or write to 1101 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005.

Third time a charm?

President Clinton has nominated Dr. David Satcher, current director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for the position of surgeon general and assistant secretary of health.

If confirmed by the Senate, Satcher would be the first person to hold both positions since they were separated by controversy during the Reagan administration.

Satcher, 56, who has been at the CDC since 1993, has held positions at Meharry Medical College in Nashville, Tenn., and Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta.

He graduated from Morehouse College in 1963, and in 1970 became the first black student to earn simultaneously a medical and doctoral degree at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio.

According to The Associated Press, Clinton administration officials say Satcher was under consideration for the beleaguered post as early as April of this year, but his nomination was delayed by paperwork, the congressional recess and the president's vacation.

The decision to nominate Satcher doesn't please everybody. Steve Michael of the AIDS activist group ACT UP calls the nominee "another bland bureaucrat."

Satcher's supporters, however, say he is a tireless advocate for the health concerns of the poor and underserved. According to the National Medical Association, during his tenure at the CDC, child immunization rates rose more than 20 percent and the agency's breast and cervical cancer screening program expanded to all 50 states.

One small virus protein, one giant leap for AIDS research

Researchers studying a herpes virus that causes an AIDS-associated cancer have uncovered information which may help in the fight against HIV.

Reuters reports that Thue Schwartz of the University of Copenhagen in Denmark and a team of international colleagues, working under the aegis of Glaxo-Wellcome, identified vMIP-II, a protein manufactured by human herpesvirus 8 (HHV-8).

The protein resembles a chemokine and acts as a blocking agent on receptors, molecules on the surface of a cell that regulate passage through the cell membrane. Chemokines are a class of signaling chemicals involved in immune response and of great importance in understanding how HIV works. Two of the many receptors blocked by vMIP-II are CCR5 and CXCR4, both known to be used by HIV to enter cells.

"Because vMIP-II could inhibit cell entry of human immunodeficiency virus...this protein may



serve as a lead for development of broad-spectrum anti-HIV agents," the team wrote for the journal *Science*.

A relative of the viruses that cause genital herpes and cold sores, HHV-8 causes Kaposi's sarcoma, a once-rare form of cancer that is now one of the marker diseases for AIDS. The protein it creates performs more functions than any single known human chemokine.

Producing vMIP-II serves to protect the virus by blocking receptor sites and thereby preventing white blood cells from being attracted to the site of the infection.

Oh, those Gingrichs!

Susan Gingrich, a resident of Harrisburg, Pa., and a nonlesbian half-sister of House Speaker Newt, has established a new company, Conservative Lady Inc., and is pushing forward with plans to launch a monthly magazine for conservative women called *Today's Lady*.

The obstacles she encountered in finding a publisher interested in a pro-Republican article she wrote following her brother's first year as speaker fueled Gingrich's frustration with the women's magazine market, according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

"There's nothing for women who have conservative values. They [magazines] all have a liberal bias," she told the *Inquirer*. "A lot of women are totally disgusted with what's available. A lot of them have stopped buying magazines."

Gingrich would like to circulate her magazine nationally and said it would cover a wide range of topics. She hopes to woo disaffected readers with stories on such topics as what it means to be a lady today, women and guns, and the popularity of Christian diet programs.

She told the newspaper she believed a key to the publication's success would be its foundation in conservative central Pennsylvania.

"I really want this to be Pennsylvania-based," she said. "I don't believe New York and Washington are the real world."

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