

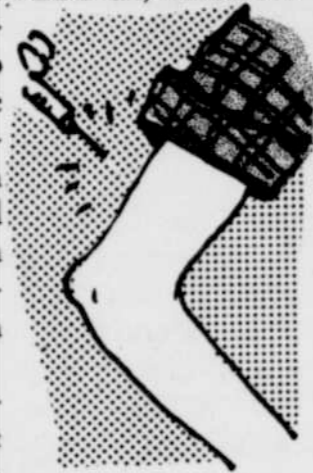
VaxGen Inc.'s AIDSvax is the focus of the three-year test, which incorporates volunteers in more than 30 cities across the country, including New York, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Denver, Los Angeles and St. Louis. Volunteers were chosen from groups considered to be at high risk for exposure to HIV, including gay men.

Some volunteers will receive a placebo, while others will receive AIDSvax, which scientists say is not dangerous because it carries no live HIV. The vaccine uses only the outer coating of the virus, which researchers hope will train the immune system to recognize and eradicate the most common subtypes of HIV.

VaxGen has produced two trial vaccines: one for strains predominant in the United States and one for southeast Asia. Study organizers are seeking permission from Thailand's Health Ministry to begin testing there.

About 25 potential HIV vaccines have been tested worldwide, but no others have advanced to this level of testing, known as a Phase III trial.

Daniel T. Reiner, VaxGen chief operating officer, maintains that 99.5 percent of people vaccinated in smaller AIDSvax tests produced strong levels of antibodies, an encouraging sign.



GATES' LARGEST BENEFITS VACCINE EFFORT

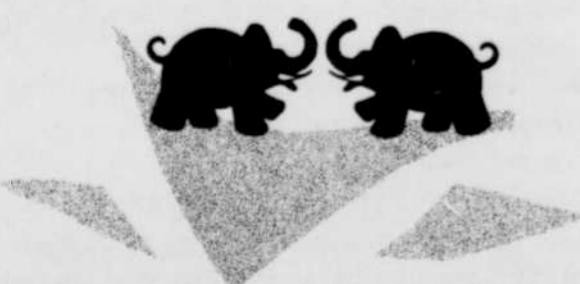
Bill Gates, Microsoft founder and, with a net worth in excess of \$50 billion, one of the richest people in the world, has decided to share a little of his wealth with the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. The William H. Gates Foundation is donating \$1.5 million to the group, reports United Press International.

Upon making his contribution, Gates stated, "As parents, and as believers in science and technology, we make this gift with the hope that a safe, accessible vaccine can be developed to end AIDS for all time."

IAVI's president, Dr. Seth Berkley, described the organization's role as one of fostering collaboration between industry, international agencies and governments working to produce an HIV vaccine.

GEPHARDT BLASTS LOTT, ARMEY AND THE GOP

The Business Wire reports that U.S. House of Representatives Minority Leader Richard Gephardt spent some time in Dallas at the Metropolitan Community Church's Cathedral of Hope July 2.



He used the opportunity with the predominantly lesbian and gay audience to criticize anti-queer comments made recently by U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott and House Majority Leader Dick Armey, both Republicans.

"Mr. Lott's and Mr. Armey's comments are a shame and are certainly not my views or the views of the majority of the House of Representatives," Gephardt insisted.

Following comments by Arney and Lott comparing homosexuality to kleptomania and other treatable illnesses, the Cathedral of Hope invited the duo to visit its congregation. Neither of the politicians responded to the invitation.

Gephardt's hour-long speech touched on other topics important to the sexual minorities community, like AIDS funding and anti-discrimination laws. Such issues, he said, will continue to be held back by red tape as long the GOP maintains a majority in the House.

CATHOLIC CHURCH REVISES POSITION ON GAY CHILDREN

Under pressure from more conservative forces in the church, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Marriage and Family Life has revised the document *Always Our Children: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers*. Activists say the changes tone down the message of outreach and understanding expressed by the document's first edition, which was released in October 1997.

In a July 1 press release, Dignity/USA Executive Director Charles L. Cox said, "Our hope has been replaced with concern and fear that the pastoral sensitivity that once marked *Always Our Children* may have been replaced with a dogmatic, legalistic approach in the church's ministry to homosexual persons."



He added: "The original version of *Always Our Children* was not perfect, and the latest revision makes it even more imperfect. Each of the changes represents a capitulation to the conservative voices in the church."

The Dignity/USA statement fell short of identifying the specific changes, but did question why the document, which was well-received by Catholic families, needed to be changed at all.

Founded in 1969, Dignity/USA is the nation's largest organization of Catholic lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, trans people and their supporters.

NGLTF TAKES ON NEW FIELD ORGANIZERS

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force announced July 8 it has hired Alexis Sainz and Dan Hawes as field organizers.

Sainz's background focused on queer youth and people of color issues, while Hawes has been a labor organizer.

Sainz is a graduate of NGLTF's 1995 Youth Leadership Institute, the first queer youth training program of its kind in the country. Sainz's focus will be primarily on youth and family issues and will include coordinating the task force's annual Youth Leadership Institute, which is scheduled this year for August 5 to 9.

Hawes will serve as NGLTF's staff coordinator of the Federation of LGBT Statewide Political Organizations. In addition, he will provide technical assistance and support to activists across the country on a variety of issues.

Compiled by WILL O'BRYAN and INGA SORENSEN



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