

NO LONGER ASHAMED

Growing up gay is an exercise in secrecy. At a very early age we learn that boys are to be "a certain way." To deviate from that norm is to be *different*. No one wants to be stigmatized so we hide our true selves and pretend to be someone we are not, living our lives in shame, fearful that we will be found out. Hidden from the world, we believe that exposing our true nature and facing its bigotry and malice would be too painful to bear. Yet, until we find the courage to step out of the closet, we are victims of shame.

While in the closet, we find many ways to rationalize our fear. We may think we are protecting our loved ones or we may believe that God does not approve of our living honestly. So presenting a façade, we waste energy uselessly suppressing our true selves. In some instances, we carry on covert activities and rationalize that we have no choice.

We are created in the image of God. In our hearts we know that our sexual orientation is really a gift of creation and not a mistake. It is a part of God's stamp of Truth within us. Referring to Truth, Jesus said, "No one lights a lamp and hides it under a bed." Jesus knew that the human spirit longs for authenticity. We are to live our lives honestly and openly.

A message from the Anawim Community.

If you are considering coming out or are recently out and would like an opportunity to participate in a confidential discussion group beginning in January, call 493-8505 for information.

NATIONAL news

CALIFORNIA

Steven Cozza is a 13-year-old Boy Scout from Petaluma, and his father, Scott, is an assistant troop leader. Both Steven and his father have been active with the Scouting for All campaign, a project organized to fight the Boy Scouts' refusal to admit gay boys to the Scouts and to approve gay leaders. They believe their work with Scouting for All is the reason Dec. 31 will mark Scott Cozza's last day as a Scout leader, according to a story in the Nov. 14 *San Francisco Examiner*.

The Boy Scouts deny that Scouting for All had anything to do with the decision to dismiss Cozza. Steve Venckus, president-elect of the Redwood Empire District Council, said, "To the best of my knowledge, the reason for not renewing...had to do with the way he conducted himself with the troop, not with the other issues he is promoting."

Cozza pointed out that he has been an assistant scoutmaster for two years. Until now, no one had talked with him about any problems with his performance as a Scout leader. He remains convinced the decision to dismiss him grew out of the anti-gay sentiment of some of the parents involved with the troop.

Michael Huffington, 51, who spent \$28 million in his nearly successful campaign to unseat Sen. Dianne Feinstein four years ago, is now acknowledging he is gay and dated men as early as the 1970s.

Huffington divorced his wife, columnist Arianna Huffington, last year. In the January issue of *Esquire* magazine, he tells writer David Brock, "I know now that my sexuality is part of who I am. I've been through a long process of finding out the truth about me."

According to the Dec. 6 *Los Angeles Times*, Arianna Huffington issued a brief statement saying, "I wish Michael well, and all that matters to me is that he's a good father to our daughters."

Brock writes that Huffington, who talked about dating men 20 years ago before his marriage, has now begun to date men again.

Meanwhile, *The Washington Post* reported Oct. 30 that Huffington recently gave \$140,000 to the University of Southern California's Annenberg School of Communications for the formation and teaching of undergraduate and graduate courses on sensitivity in reporting issues of sexual orientation. The courses will begin in the fall of 1999.

FLORIDA

What goes around comes around. In 1977, Anita Bryant led a successful campaign to repeal a Dade County gay rights ordinance. Now, 21 years later, the county government has approved an ordinance prohibiting discrimination against gay men and lesbians in the workplace and in housing.



According to media reports, county commissioners listened to more than four hours of public comment before enacting the law by a 7-6 vote on Dec. 1. The new ordinance adds the words "sexual orientation" to an existing law prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, ancestry, national origin, gender, pregnancy, age, disability, marital status or familial status.

MINNESOTA

Q Monthly, one of three publications serving the gay and lesbian community in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, has folded.

The last issue of the 4-year-old paper was published just before Thanksgiving. Like other newspapers around the country, *Q Monthly* fell victim to the "bottom line."

Stern Publishing of New York City became the owner of *Q Monthly* in March 1997 when it purchased the *Twin Cities Reader*, a free weekly alternative paper, according to the Dec. 6 *Star Tribune*.

Although *Q Monthly* generated \$200,000 in revenues last year, the owner felt the paper wouldn't remain profitable in the coming year.

Papers still serving the gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans community in the Twin Cities are *Lavender* and *Focus Point*.

NEW YORK

An 8-year-old girl who is living with HIV has finally found a troop she can call her own after several other Girl Scout troops rejected her, the Associated Press reported Dec. 3.

Quashawn Donovan was invited to join a Brownie troop led by a man who heard news reports about her in the town of Queensbury, about 45 miles north of Albany.



Although her mother, Dianne Donovan, said Quashawn is excited about joining the troop, she said she is still upset by the reactions of local troop leaders.

"There's feelings of anger, hurt and great sadness at seeing how it made my daughter feel," she told the AP. "But there's also empathy and understanding of the fear."

Donovan began searching for a troop for her adopted daughter to join in mid-October. She said she was initially given an enthusiastic response from the Adirondack Girl Scout Council when she told them of Quashawn's HIV status, but later was rebuffed by troop leader after troop leader.

Donovan and her husband adopted Quashawn at eight months, and her brother Danny, now 10, at four months of age. Both siblings are living with HIV.

UTAH

A high school teacher who said she was fired as a volleyball coach because she is a lesbian had her day in court and won.

Wendy Weaver, a psychology teacher at Spanish Forks High School, claimed school officials violated her rights by placing her under a gag order that forbade her to talk with students or staff about her sexual orientation, even outside of school, reports a Nov. 25 Associated Press story.

Federal Judge Bruce Jenkins agreed that Weaver's rights of free speech, equal protection and due process were violated. The Nebo School District was ordered to lift the gag order, pay Weaver \$1,500 in damages and offer her the coaching job.

In his ruling Jenkins wrote, "Although the Constitution cannot control prejudices, neither this court nor any other court should, directly or indirectly, legitimize them."

No comment was available from the school district's attorneys.

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