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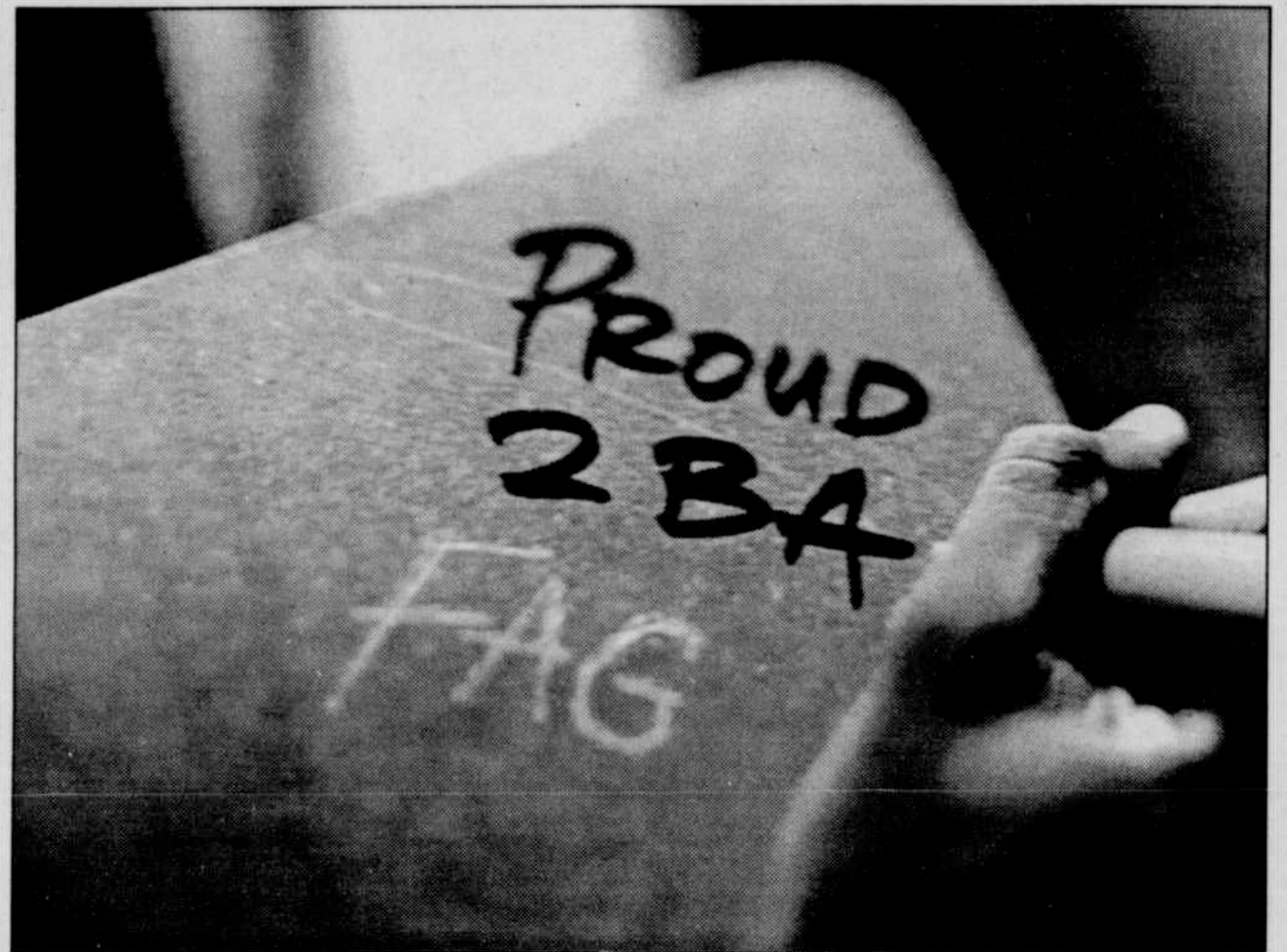
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**NATIONAL news**



Public service announcements produced by GLSEN and MTV address anti-gay intolerance among youth

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More than eight out of 10 gay, lesbian, bi and trans students report verbal, sexual or physical harassment at school, according to a study released Oct. 10 by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network. In addition, 84.3 percent report hearing homophobic remarks such as "faggot" or "dyke" frequently or often; 81.8 percent of these students report that faculty or staff rarely or never intervened when such remarks were made.

In response, MTV has teamed up with GLSEN to launch the largest-ever series of public service announcements aimed at countering anti-gay intolerance among youth. The 10-second spots, called "snaps," showcase young people who experience harassment, break stereotypes or display pride in being who they are.

"As these numbers make clear, harassment against LGBT youth in schools is the rule, not the exception," said Kevin Jennings, GLSEN executive director. "We are raising awareness of the need to protect and support LGBT students through policies and programs designed to create respect for all young people in schools."

The 2001 National School Climate Survey polled 904 middle and high schoolers from across the country. Other findings: 83 percent of gay, lesbian, bi and trans kids report being verbally harassed; 65 percent report being sexually harassed; 41 percent report physical harassment; and 21 percent report physical assault because of their sexual orientation. In addition, more than one out of five report hearing homophobic comments from faculty or school staff.

The spots began airing during the Oct. 10 premiere of "Hate in the Hallways," the second episode of the new series *Criminal*. "We hope these statistics and public service announcements will push young people to continue examining their own prejudices," said Brian Graden, MTV programming president.

**DELAWARE**

Two youngsters now share two legal fathers thanks to a ruling allowing a man to adopt his partner's children. It is the first time a gay family has been granted such an adoption in Delaware.

Born premature and addicted to cocaine, the boys were considered "difficult to place" by the foster care system. Nevertheless, Peter and George thrived in the care of their adopted

father, Gene Hart, and his partner of 22 years, Burke Shiri. (The family's real names are being kept confidential to protect their privacy.)

Hart adopted one child in 1999 and the other in 2000, and Shiri functioned alongside him in every way as a parent. In June of last year, he filed a petition to adopt the boys under Delaware's adoption provision.

"In raising my children I provide them with what my parents have given me—love and the security of a happy home," Shiri said. "This decision by the court does no less than ensure their right to my care and support."

The Delaware family court Oct. 12 approved what is known as a second-parent adoption, making clear that both fathers are equal parents and giving significant protection to the boys, ages 6 and 1. Second-parent adoption allows a person to adopt the children of his or her partner without terminating the first parent's legal status as a parent. In his decision, Chief Judge Vincent J. Poppiti found that granting this adoption was in the boys' best interest.

"In fact and in law what does matter in their best interests is that Peter and George have already begun to reap the benefits of the love of these two men and have even in their tender years returned it in kind," he wrote. "What does matter in the best interests of Peter and George is that they are thriving in the environment created by Gene Hart and Burke Shiri."

Attorney Norman C. Simon praised the ruling. "The court's carefully reasoned opinion legalizes the strong bonds of love in this family and will pave the way for other families throughout Delaware to protect their children," he said.

Granting the adoption provides practical securities for the children—like the right to Social Security, inheritance and insurance benefits—and the ability of both fathers to make important medical decisions. The court's order recognizes that the boys are being raised in a home with two equally dedicated parents.

Second-parent adoptions are widely available to nongay stepparents and, in an increasing number of states, to lesbian, gay and other unmarried couples as well. At least 22 states recognize the validity and importance of second-parent adoptions.

**GEORGIA**

A lesbian mother is challenging a state court's order barring her from visiting her three sons while living with her partner.

After Susan Burns and her husband divorced,