

NATIONAL news



PHOTO BY ALISSA YOUNGBLOND/SOUTHERN VOICE

Aimee Bellmore

lesbian. She was informed that to promote its religious beliefs, the Home would employ only Christian heterosexuals who are married or celibate.

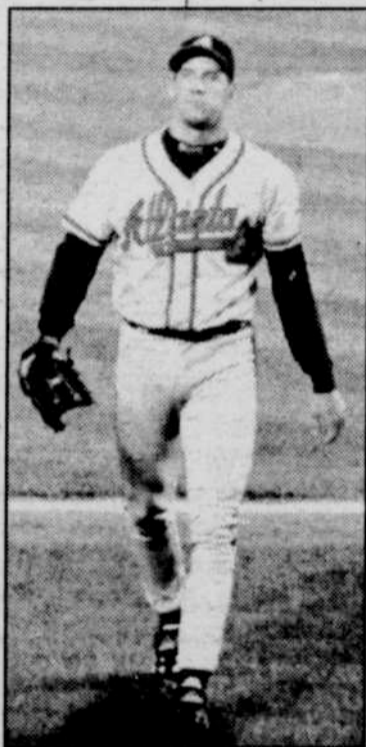
"My sexual orientation has nothing to do with my ability to be a good counselor, and I proved that at the Home," Bellmore said. "Gay and lesbian youth in foster care need someone who's supportive and sensitive to their needs, not someone who'll make them ashamed of who they are and try to change them in the name of religion."

TEXAS

Texas Rangers pitcher John Rocker called a gay couple "fruitcakes" while eating Aug. 4 at a Dallas restaurant, according to a Reuters report. In 2000 the athlete was fined and suspended from Major League Baseball for making disparaging remarks about racial and sexual minorities during an interview with *Sports Illustrated*.

Rocker issued a statement Aug. 5 indicating he was badgered and baited with suggestive comments before leaving the restaurant, despite witness reports to the contrary. He claimed a group followed him outside and provoked him with an obscene gesture.

"At that point, I admit I was angry and said some things I probably shouldn't have said," Rocker



John Rocker

explained. "But I wanted to make it clear that their attentions were unwelcome."

Rangers general manager John Hart said Rocker "acted appropriately" to avoid a confrontation. According to the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, this interpretation of the encounter "would be laughable if it didn't indicate that anti-gay abuse is still acceptable in Major League Baseball."

"This isn't an isolated incident; it's simply the latest of Rocker's homophobic remarks," communications director John Sonogo said. "The Texas Rangers and Major League officials have an obligation to hold their players, managers and teams accountable for actions like these that disgrace the profession."

Although The Associated Press referred to Rocker's statement as a "written apology," GLAAD noted that it was nothing of the sort.

"It's an attempt to deflect responsibility by blaming the people he attacked," Sonogo said. "Sports media...should investigate the circumstances thoroughly and report accurately on the nature and context of Rocker's epithets and not simply serve as agreeable conduits for his and his manager's feeble excuses for unconscionable behavior."

NATIONAL

The National Minority AIDS Council announced Aug. 7 that incoming AIDS czar Joseph O'Neill will address the sixth annual United States Conference on AIDS on Sept. 19 in Anaheim, Calif. It will be his first major public appearance since being named to succeed Scott Evertz as Office of National AIDS Policy director.

"It is important that the thousands of representatives from HIV/AIDS organizations around the nation and the world have an opportunity to meet with the chief policy person on the issue in the Bush administration," said Paul A. Kawata, council executive director. "We look forward to a frank discussion and open dialogue with Dr. O'Neill on the issues that so severely impact the world, the nation and especially minority communities."

More than 3,500 people from HIV/AIDS organizations, government agencies and corporations are expected to attend the conference. Sessions will cover international perspectives on the epidemic, housing and youth. [M]

Compiled by News Editor JIM RADOSTA, who can be reached at jim@justout.com.

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