

NATIONAL news

overturned the state's ban on gay adoption, implemented the New Hampshire Safe Schools Act and officially proclaimed each June as Gay Pride Month. She remains the only elected official in the nation to vote for nondiscrimination law while in the state Senate, then sign it as governor.

Shaheen's Senate opponent, John Sununu, maintains a dismal record on gay and lesbian issues. He opposes all nondiscrimination and hate crime laws that include sexual orientation. He continually has refused to sign a pledge stating he will not fire his own staff based on their sexual orientation, and he voted to overturn President Bill Clinton's 1998 executive order banning discrimination against gay and lesbian federal workers.

MICHIGAN

The Michigan Court of Appeals overturned Oct. 23 the \$29 million judgment in a civil lawsuit entered against *The Jenny Jones Show* in 1999 stemming from the murder of a guest, Scott Amedure, by another guest, Jonathan Schmitz. It held that the program "had no duty to anticipate and prevent the act of murder committed by Schmitz three days after leaving [the] studio and hundreds of miles away."

"We are deeply gratified by the court's ruling," said Jim Paratore, Telepictures Productions president. "For seven years, our position consistently and steadfastly has been that the show was not to blame for this brutal murder, and the court today affirmed that the case against us had no legal merit and should have been thrown out of court long before it ever went to trial."

Several days before the March 1995 murder, both men had appeared as guests on an episode of *The Jenny Jones Show*. During the taping, Amedure, who was gay, revealed he had a crush on Schmitz. The two men, who were friends, flew back to Detroit together, went out drinking and made plans to go shopping the following weekend.



Jonathan Schmitz (center) looks toward his friend Donna Riley (left) as he is hugged by Scott Amedure

But days later, after Amedure left a blinking light and sexually suggestive note on Schmitz's doorstep, Schmitz went to Amedure's home and killed him. Schmitz was convicted of second-degree murder and is serving a 27- to 50-year sentence.

In its eight-page ruling, the Michigan Court of Appeals found that *The Jenny Jones Show* had neither the ability nor the duty to predict and prevent Amedure's murder: "Schmitz gave every appearance of being a normal, well-adjusted adult who consented to being surprised on the show by a secret admirer of unknown sex and identity.... Nothing in Schmitz' demeanor, or in any of his interactions with the show, put defendants on notice that he posed a risk of violence to others."

The court said that the case never even should have gone to the jury and that "the trial court should have ruled that the murder was not foreseeable as a matter of law and entered judgment in favor of defendants." It held that to find the show liable under the circumstances "would expand the concept of duty to limitless proportions."

Jones said she is "elated" by the ruling. "Scott Amedure's murder was a horrible tragedy, but I

have always believed that it was fundamentally wrong and unfair to blame the show."

History was made Oct. 21 when Lansing Community College decided to offer domestic partner benefits to its gay employees. The board of trustees voted 5-2 to accept a collectively bargained union benefits package that includes extending health care benefits to the unmarried same-sex partners of employees.



The vote makes **Todd Heywood** Lansing the state's first community college to offer such benefits, even though scores of other Michigan-based employers such as General Motors, University of Michigan and the city of Kalamazoo offer them. The primary advocate for the measure was trustee Todd Heywood, the first openly gay elected official at a Michigan higher educational institution.

"The Lansing area has always been ahead of the game on GLBT rights," said Sean Kosofsky, Triangle Foundation policy director. "East Lansing... was the first city in the country, and possibly the world, to pass a human rights law that banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. Now Lansing Community College is continuing that tradition by sending a clear message that all families are valued regardless of their sexual orientation."

NATIONAL

The American Academy of Family Physicians passed a resolution Oct. 16 supporting legislation that would protect children of same-sex parents. The group represents more than 93,500 physicians and medical students nationwide.

The academy's congress of delegates passed the resolution at its annual meeting in San Diego, calling on the group to "establish policy and be supportive of legislation which promotes a safe and nurturing environment, including psychological and legal security, for all children, including those of adoptive parents, regardless of the parents' sexual orientation."

The group also supports equal rights for same-sex parents through domestic partner life and health insurance and a certain legal relationship to both parents through second-parent and joint adoption. In a written statement, academy president Warren A. Jones said the resolution reflected the need to protect all U.S. children by supporting the diverse families in which they live.

"As family physicians who care for all ages, we believe the health of American's children is one of the utmost importance," he said. "Children deserve to be raised and protected in a safe and nurturing environment. This policy advocates for the family in all its complexities and particularly for children."

The resolution follows positive steps taken by other key professional health organizations. In the February issue of a peer-reviewed journal, the American Academy of Pediatrics urged its members to "support the right of every child and family to the financial, psychological and legal security that results from having legally recognized parents who are committed to each other and the welfare of their children." The statement was accompanied by a technical report providing details from the best available scientific studies of children who grow up with same-sex parents. [E]

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



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