

NATIONAL news

would play out differently elsewhere," Martin said. "Second, the action reported is an administrative move by a regulatory board which has broad discretion in determining 'nonprofessional conduct.' While an encouraging action in support of LGBT rights to access health care and to maintain privacy, the...board's requirement that this dentist seek psychiatric treatment does not carry the same weight as criminal discrimination charges."

Although the American Dental Association explicitly respects the rights of dentists to select patients, it specifically prohibits denial of service because of race, creed, color, gender or national origin. Martin hopes the ADA will consider adding sexual orientation to the code of professional conduct during its annual meeting in October.

NEW YORK

The Harvey Milk School—the nation's first full-fledged public high school for gay, lesbian, bi and trans students—will open in September.

"Harvey Milk High celebrates the life and legacy of a pioneering civil rights activist, and just on the heels of the Supreme Court's recent landmark decision overturning sodomy laws," said Craig Bowman, National Youth Advocacy Coalition executive director. "This school will serve as a safe place for young people who are committed to achieving educational excellence and graduating with the high-quality public school education to which they are entitled."

The school has operated successfully for more than two decades as a small alternative program with just two classrooms. Next month it will open in a city-renovated building with 100 students.

More than 170 kids are expected to be enrolled by 2004. Administrators predict 95 percent of them will attend college.

"This is a school all about inclusion," said Terrence Calhoun, NYAC board chairman. "It stands for fairness, equality and justice, and it holds out the hope of an education free from harassment, intimidation and violence. As most LGBTQ students will never have an option like the Harvey Milk School, however, we hope that all of our nation's public schools will work even harder to protect their students, including those who are LGBTQ."

TEXAS

The congregation of Cathedral of Hope—the world's largest liberal Christian church with a primary outreach to gay, lesbian and trans people—voted July 27 to disaffiliate from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.

The preliminary results indicate 89 percent of the voting members opted to disaffiliate from the denomination and become an independent church. The church's board of directors announced the numbers to a crowd of about 500 people assembled at the culmination of the cathedral's 33rd anniversary weekend celebration.

"The Cathedral of Hope was a vital member of the MCC movement for more than 30 years,

and we deeply value the passion and ministry they brought to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender community as part of the MCC fellowship," said the Rev. Elder Don Eastman, MCC vice moderator. "Though the Cathedral of Hope has explored options for disaffiliation in previous years, MCC deeply regrets the loss of relationship with the congregation.... We also affirm the congregation's choice to leave the global MCC fellowship and pray God's abundant blessings on their future ministry."

The American Civil Liberties Union reached an agreement Aug. 7 with officials from the San Antonio Independent School District to reinstate Luther Burbank High's Amnesty International Club, which had been banned in March after some of its members independently took part in a silent demonstration to raise awareness about violence against queers.

"We're really happy this has all been resolved before the new school year and that the district understands that students have free speech rights, too," said Blanca Bazan, a senior who will be the leader of the club when classes begin Aug. 18. "When some of our members took part in the Day of Silence last spring, they were really careful to do it in a way that didn't disrupt classes or break the law, and it's great that the district recognizes that."

Last March, the school shut down the club because some of its members had taken part in the Day of Silence Project, an annual nationwide action in which students take a daylong vow of silence to illustrate the silence in which queers often suffer when they experience discrimination and violence. After talks with the ACLU, the district agreed to reinstate the club and allow students to participate in future Day of Silence activities as long as students continue to make sure they don't interfere with instructional time while doing so.

"All of this came about because one student realized her rights had been violated and looked for help," attorney Ken Choe said. "We hope that young people everywhere will be inspired by this to learn about their rights and make a positive difference in their communities."

KANSAS

Responding to a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union, the Topeka and Shawnee County Public Library has conceded that, under the law, it cannot forbid an employee from talking at work about the recent historic U.S. Supreme Court ruling banning sodomy statutes.

"To a large number of Americans, the court's decision in Lawrence vs. Texas was a shining moment in our history because it's another giant step toward equality for all Americans," said Dick Kurtenbach, ACLU of Kansas and Western Missouri executive director. "We've made certain that the public library understands that it cannot

strip Bonnie Cuevas of her constitutional right to free speech by prohibiting her from ever talking about this important development at work."

On the day after the ruling, Cuevas—a longtime Topeka activist and member of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays—was ordered by two managers to never again discuss at work the decision and its impact on her family. The ACLU sent a letter to the library, pointing out that such an order violates her First Amendment right to free speech, and its attorneys have now responded that it will not restrict her or any other employee this way in the future.

"When the Supreme Court struck down sodomy laws, it was an incredibly significant moment for my family," said Cuevas, the mother of a gay son who was the victim of a hate crime. "Ordering me not to talk about a social issue like this at such a crucial time in history seems to me to be completely contrary to the ideals and principles that public libraries should exemplify."

COLORADO

Jennifer Veiga was elected July 17 to fill a vacancy in the Colorado Senate. She becomes one of only 10 openly gay, lesbian or bi state senators serving in the country.

Veiga was the Democratic leader in the Colorado House before her move to the Senate, where she now represents portions of Denver and Adams counties as the Rocky Mountain State's first openly queer senator. "I'm thrilled to have this opportunity to move to the Senate to continue working on behalf of Colorado's working families, children and seniors," she told The Associated Press.

As a state representative, Veiga played a key role in defeating a bill preventing adoptions by same-sex couples and has been a stalwart supporter of queer civil rights and hate crimes measures. She also counts among her top concerns funding for public education and responsible community planning and growth.

"We're proud of Jennifer Veiga's climb up the ladder," said Chuck Wolfe, Gay & Lesbian Victory Fund executive director. "She is a shining example of the quality of openly gay and lesbian officeholders in the country. There is no doubt she is working hard on behalf of all of her constituents."

FLORIDA

The Sarasota City Council unanimously passed an ordinance Aug. 4 that bars employment bias based on sexual orientation.

The measure was the idea of the Florida Triangle Democratic Caucus, a statewide queer Democratic group, which worked for more than a year to implement a successful strategy. The new law goes into effect Oct. 1.

Sarasota resident the Rev. Jim Merritt, caucus chairman and a former national board member of the National Stonewall Democrats, helped draft the ordinance. His partner, Al Leach, serves on NSD's board of directors.

"This ordinance is a testament to Democratic, grassroots efforts," said Dave Noble, NSD executive director. "The Triangle Caucus was able to successfully convey to the city commission why Democratic principles of inclusion are good for Sarasota." J

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



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