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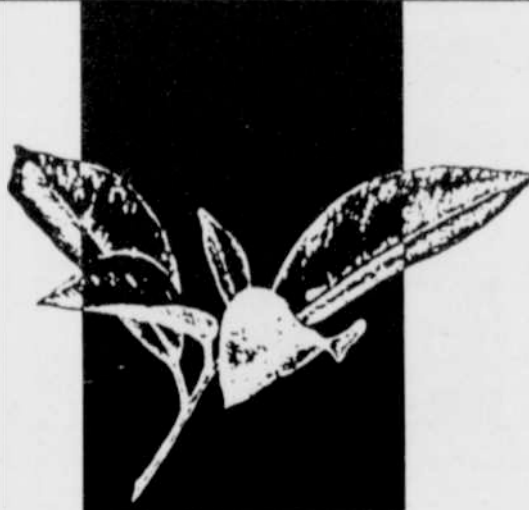
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VISA

NATIONAL news

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As the Equality Project's first trans board member, Melissa Sklarz vows to support progressive shareholder actions, dispel myths and fight gender stereotyping and discrimination throughout the financial community

Jeff Goodman, incoming board chairman of the Equality Project, a shareholder-oriented human rights group, announced Oct. 8 the unanimous election of New York City resident Melissa Sklarz as the organization's first trans executive board member.

A longtime trans rights activist and member of the New York-based Gay & Lesbian Independent Democrats, she is believed to be the first trans U.S. citizen ever elected to a Wall Street nonprofit advocacy group. In 1999 she became the first trans person elected in New York as a Democratic Party judicial delegate.

"So many of my transgender and transsexual friends simply cannot find basic 'pay the rent' jobs, much less appointments to high-profile corporate positions," Sklarz said. "In these uncertain financial times, it is more important than ever that we not turn away from anyone who could bring dynamic new energy and resources to any workplace environment."

COLORADO

Kaiser Permanente announced Oct. 8 that it has reconsidered its initial rejection of a kidney transplant for a Denver-area man with HIV and will now cover the procedure. Late last month, Lambda Legal filed a formal appeal with the HMO, asking it to reverse its denial in light of a range of scientific data and John Carl's personal health history and experience.

"When real research on HIV and AIDS is considered, reasonable people come to reasonable conclusions, and that's exactly what happened in this case," attorney Hayley Gorenberg said. "In the last seven years since the advent of better treatments for people with HIV, the medical community nationwide has learned a great deal about organ transplants. Kaiser's decision emphasizes this."

John Carl, a 53-year-old resident of the Denver area, began experiencing kidney failure in the fall of 2001 and receives dialysis three times a week. The treatments take several hours a session.

Carl feels ill from buildup of toxins in his blood before each dialysis treatment, and the sessions leave him feeling weak afterward. He also runs the risk of dangerous or even deadly infection dialysis procedure itself.

This summer, he requested coverage for a kidney transplant, but Kaiser denied his request in late July, saying, "kidney transplantation for HIV-positive patients is contraindicated...due to its experimental status and nonfavorable outcomes." A recent study of 45 liver and kidney transplant recipients with HIV on anti-retroviral medications showed that after one year, the patients and their new organs survived at rates similar to HIV-negative transplant recipients.

FLORIDA

Lambda Legal announced Sept. 30 that a favorable settlement agreement has been reached in an anti-gay housing discrimination case in Boca Raton.

The agreement requires Royal Colonial Apartments to post a nondiscrimination statement in its office and on housing application forms. The statement makes it clear that it will not discriminate against gay and lesbian individuals or couples.

In addition to the nondiscrimination policy, the housing complex will pay \$75,000 in damages and legal fees.

"Housing discrimination against gay people is a widespread problem that often goes unaddressed. This case shows that anti-gay discrimination won't be tolerated," attorney Greg Nevins said. "In places where gay people have protection from discrimination, like Palm Beach County, it is important to enforce those laws."

Before showing Fred Sternbach several Royal Colonial units, property manager Peggy Watson asked him to complete and return a file card that asked, among other questions, how many people would live in the apartment and what their relationship to Sternbach was. He wrote that he would live with his partner. He was shown a number of available units and expressed interest in one of them.

An hour after Sternbach left, Watson called him to ask what "partner" meant and whether it was a wife or fiancée. Once he explained that partner did not mean wife or fiancée, she said Royal Colonial Apartments would not be able to accommodate him because it only rents to couples who are married. Although Sternbach and his partner, Stephen Miller, have been together 16 years, there is no state, including Florida, where officials will grant them a marriage license.

CALIFORNIA

Governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger would not have signed the domestic partner legislation that recently was signed by outgoing Gov. Gray Davis, *The San Francisco Chronicle* reported Oct. 5.

This revelation lends encouragement to right-wing extremists who are seeking to overturn the civil rights law both in court and at the ballot box. State Sen. Pete Knight and Assemblymember Ray Haynes filed a referendum to overturn it three days after it was signed by Davis at a jubilant ceremony in San Francisco.

Schwarzenegger has not responded to repeated requests to publicly state his position on the ballot referendum that would prevent the law from being enacted. The proposal has been cleared for signature gathering and could come before the voters as early as March 2004.

A campaign committee, Equality for California Families, has been formed to respond to this attack on citizens who already have fewer legal protections than others. More than 70 percent of voters statewide support legal rights for domestic partners.

Davis also signed legislation Oct. 12 that will provide access to health care for a million uninsured California workers and their spouses or domestic partners. The new law will require large employers to provide domestic partners of their employees with health insurance, making California the first state in the nation to do so.

In a significant gesture of support at the 14th Annual National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Leadership Awards held Sept. 28 in Los Ange-



Arnold Schwarzenegger