

Violence Prevention Act of 2000, a California law prohibiting discrimination against public school students on the basis of sexual orientation.

Under the settlement, the district admitted no guilt but agreed to put in place an amended anti-discrimination policy, provide training for teachers and other school staff on issues of anti-discrimination and diversity, and provide educational programs for students at all grade levels on respecting diversity. It also will pay Massey \$45,000.

"I'm hoping this inspires other people to take a stand when they feel they haven't been treated right or when they see someone treated unfairly," she said. "It's not right for anybody to have to go through this."



Toni Atkins is San Diego's first queer deputy mayor

Openly lesbian San Diego City Councilor Toni Atkins was appointed deputy mayor Dec. 1 by Mayor Dick Murphy, becoming the first member of the sexual minorities community to hold this position in San Diego.

"I'm honored that Mayor Murphy has appointed me to this esteemed position, and I'm grateful for the support of my fellow council members," she said. "In a purely historical context, it's incredibly humbling and at the same time empowering to be the first of anything, so I accept this appointment proudly and share this honor not only with members of the LGBT community but all the residents of the Third District."

The deputy's duties include running City Council meetings in the mayor's absence and meeting with visiting dignitaries and representing the city at official government, civic and social functions when the mayor is out of town or has a scheduling conflict. Atkins will hold the position until Dec. 6, 2004.

PENNSYLVANIA

Saying that Pennsylvania's Medicaid program might cost an Altoona man his life by refusing to cover a liver transplant because he has HIV, Lambda Legal argued its appeal in the case at a hearing Nov. 19, asking the state to reverse its denial in light of a range of scientific data and the patient's personal health history and experience.

"In denying our client the care he needs, Pennsylvania's Medicaid program is ignoring published reports on organ transplants for people with HIV and not looking at the patient's individual health status," 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. Medicaid's decision denying this man's trans-

plant is not based on good medicine or sound science, and it may cost him his life."

William Jean Gough, 46, was denied a liver transplant shortly after being accepted as a candidate in August by the transplant team at the Thomas E. Starzl Transplant Institute because Medicaid said the procedure was not "medically necessary." The institute is a part of University of Pittsburgh and has performed transplant surgeries on people with HIV for years. Gough suffers from advanced liver disease and is often not well enough to care for himself because of the ailment.

According to Gorenberg, Medicaid's justification is simply untrue. "It's flat-out wrong that liver transplants for people with HIV are experimental and have unfavorable outcomes," she said. "There's a solid and growing body of scientific and medical evidence that clearly shows HIV does not significantly affect the outcome of liver transplantation."

NATIONAL

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released a report Nov. 20 showing a rise in U.S. syphilis rates among men, particularly men who have sex with men, for the second year in a row. This trend is of great concern to AIDS activists, as it offers more evidence that HIV transmission is continuing to increase as well.

The new CDC data underscore the need for additional research to explore the factors that have led to this resurgence in syphilis. Health care providers believe drug use—crystal methamphetamine, in particular—plays a key role in promoting syphilis among urban white men who have sex with men. Additional research is needed around the factors that are driving the disproportionate prevalence of syphilis infections among communities of color.

The CDC's report did contain some good news: Specifically targeted government efforts, in 2000, to reduce syphilis among women and African Americans appear to have been moderately successful. AIDS activists believe that when resources are aimed at localities hardest hit by an epidemic, knowledge increases, and more people come forward for testing, diagnosis and treatment.

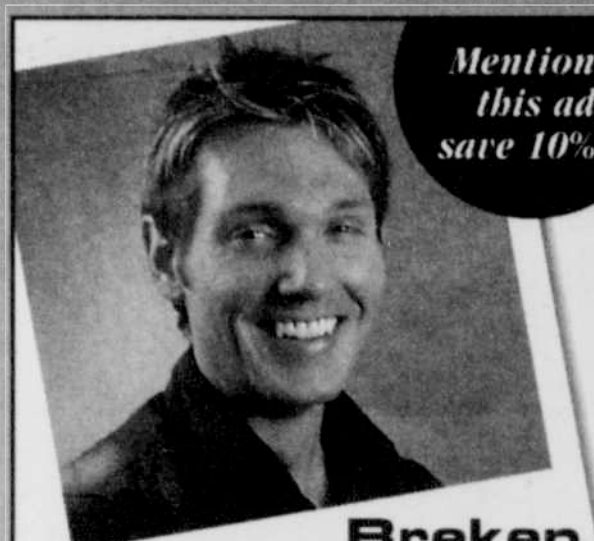
"It is imperative that the CDC empower local community-based organizations to stem the tide of new syphilis and HIV infections," said Ana Oliveira, Gay Men's Health Crisis executive director. "It is also important to allow frank discussions of sexual behavior and drug use in language that has been proven most appropriate to reach communities that are at risk." JM

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



Ana Oliveira of Gay Men's Health Crisis is alarmed about a resurgence in U.S. syphilis rates among men

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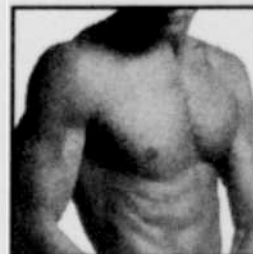
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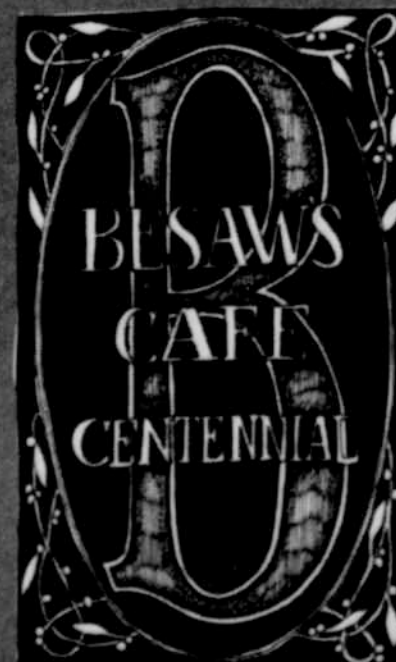


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