

NATIONAL news

in fact, extended official recognition to at least one alumni chapter that is based on common interests. He said the "Recreational Vehicle" chapter is not based on members' geographic location.

"It is difficult for many of us gay graduates to participate in the regular chapter meetings, because we are not welcome," Petrie said. "Regardless of what has happened, we still take great pride in having graduated from the Naval Academy and are honored to have had the opportunity to serve our country. You can't take away our pride."

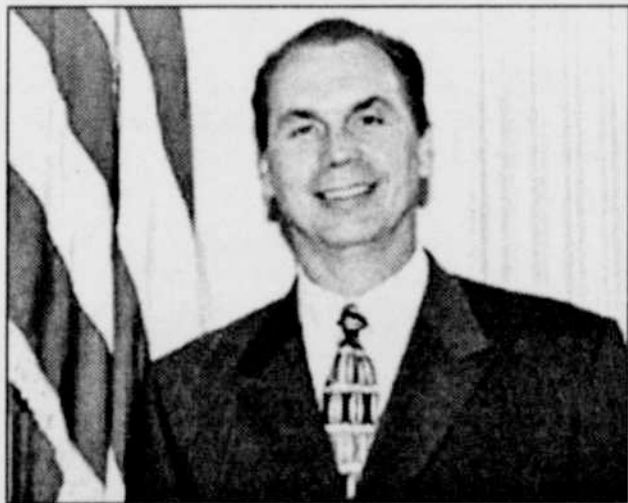
WYOMING

In response to a letter sent on behalf of two girls who were marched out of a homecoming dance by police, the Sublette County School District has agreed that same-sex couples no longer will be excluded from the functions, the American Civil Liberties Union announced Dec. 9.

"This is a terrific victory for the lesbian and gay students in our school," said Amanda Blair, a senior at Big Piney High in rural western Wyoming. "From now on, all students, not just straight students, will be able to enjoy school dances. It's good to know that you can make a difference by standing up for what's right."

Blair, who is heterosexual, decided to attend the Sept. 12 dance with a female friend in order to help gay and lesbian students in her district who might want to bring dates to school dances in the future. When she and her date arrived at the function they were met by police officers, who then escorted them off the premises without any explanation.

"We are very pleased that the school has decided to follow the law and do right by its lesbian and gay students," said Linda Burt, ACLU of Wyoming executive director. "It's unfortunate that Amanda and her date were so brutally excluded from participating in this year's homecoming dance. But by coming forward and standing up for their rights, they have made the school a better place—especially for the lesbian and gay students who now know their school won't exclude them from dances because of who they choose to date."



A campaign led by California Assemblymember Ray Haynes failed to collect enough signatures to challenge the Domestic Partner Rights & Responsibilities Act of 2003

CALIFORNIA

Equality for California Families announced Dec. 5 that the right-wing push to qualify a ballot referendum in opposition to the Domestic Partner Rights & Responsibilities Act of 2003 has failed to submit signatures in time to qualify for the March ballot.

Based on constitutional and statutory requirements, the signatures would have had to be submitted Dec. 4 in order to clear the certification process in time for California voters to weigh in on the new law next March. The referendum proponents, state Sen. Pete Knight, R-Palmdale, and Assemblymember Ray Haynes, R-Riverside, now have until Dec. 21 to submit signatures for the measure to appear on the November 2004 ballot.

"The quick response of the LGBT community to this threat against our civil rights has certainly put a damper on the right wing's ability to muster support for their anti-gay agenda," said Geoffrey Kors, executive director of Equality

California, which was the official sponsor of Assembly Bill 205 and took the lead in setting up a campaign committee to defend the new law.

The Web site of the anti-gay Campaign for California Families confirms its failure to mobilize. It says Knight and Haynes "have dropped their plans for a statewide ballot referendum to reverse AB 205."

"We are not surprised that referendum proponents are having an increasingly difficult time finding support for their anti-gay agenda," Kors said. "However, we can't be certain that, just because they say they aren't collecting signatures, they won't actually submit signatures for the November election."

Assemblymember John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, denounced a plan by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to freeze enrollment for the AIDS Drug Assistance Program.

The Health Subcommittee of the Senate Budget Committee held a hearing Dec. 10 to discuss the proposal, which would cap enrollment at a level anticipated as of Jan. 1. This number is expected to be 26,479 people. Once the cap has been reached, eligible individuals who need these drugs would be placed on a waiting list.

"This proposal will mean that approximately 3,800 low-income Californians with HIV or AIDS will not receive life-saving drugs through June 20, 2005," Laird said. "As a consequence, they will become sicker and have a higher risk of death. This is unacceptable. Instead of proposing enrollment caps, the administration should be looking at ways to make the program more cost-efficient in order to accommodate those Californians who rely on these medications to live."



John Laird

PENNSYLVANIA

In a decision made public Dec. 10, a judge ordered Pennsylvania's Medicaid program to approve a life-saving liver transplant for an HIV-positive man with advanced hepatitis.

Lambda Legal argued its appeal at a hearing before an administrative law judge in late November. It sought to reverse Medicaid's denial in light of a range of scientific data and the man's personal health history and experience. The judge's decision noted that patients with HIV have successful transplant rates and that well-managed HIV is not a life-limiting disease.

Altoona resident William Jean Gough, 46, tested positive for HIV and hepatitis C in 1996. While his viral load has been undetectable for years and he suffers no disabling symptoms from HIV, the hepatitis has caused an advanced form of liver disease. The effects of his liver disease are at times completely debilitating, requiring his longtime partner, Bob Hoffman, to care for him.

Gough "could live 10, 20, 30 years or more with a liver transplant," Judge Bernadene Kennedy said. "Given his ability to successfully control his HIV, [he] may live a prolonged life and maintain quality of life equivalent to non-HIV transplant patients."

Mainstream medical journals show "no evidence of poorer survival among otherwise healthy HIV-positive patients who are receiving anti-retroviral therapy," according to attorney Hayley Gorenberg. She said people with HIV are sometimes blocked from being considered for transplants, even though medical and scientific evidence makes it clear that they should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis like any other transplant candidates. □

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

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One Shepherd
John 10: 14-16

Metropolitan Community Church of the Gentle Shepherd
Reverend Harriet Barshofsky

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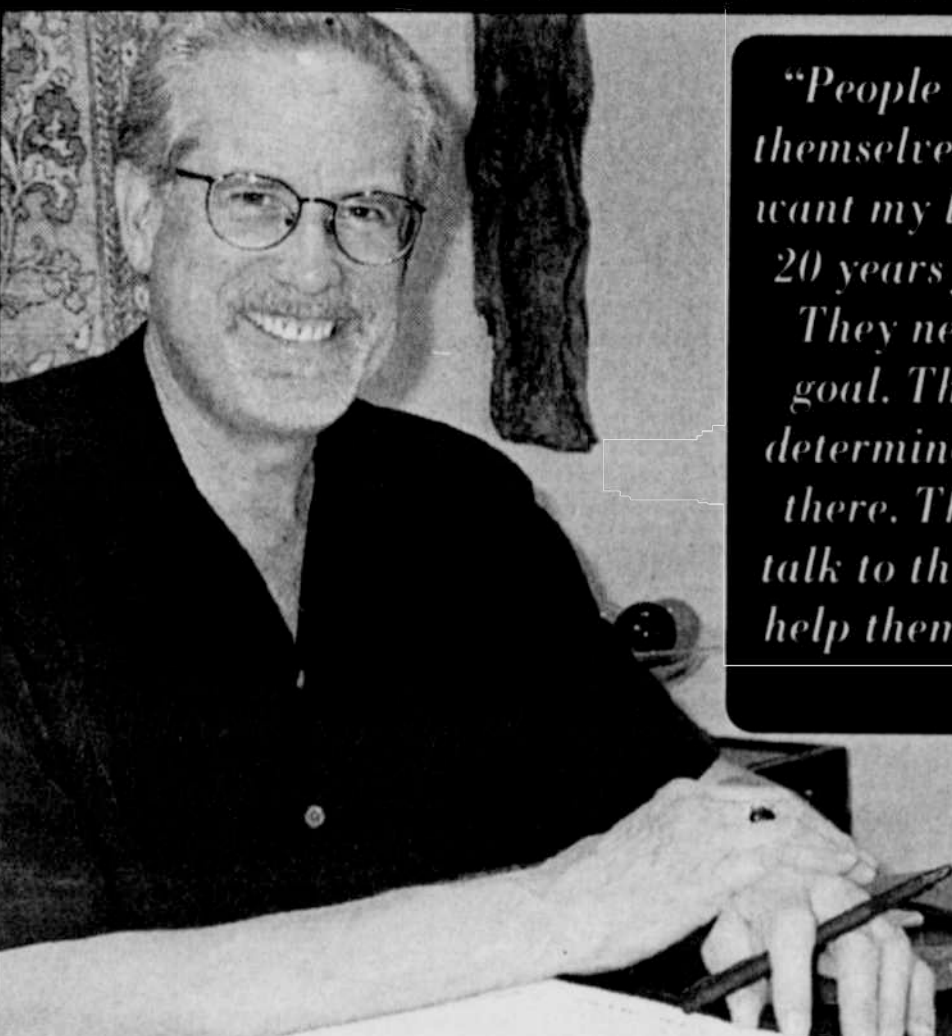
Christmas Sunday, Dec 21
Meditative Service 9:00am
Celebration Service 10:00
with Chancel & Handbell Choirs

Christmas Eve, Dec 24
Family Service 7:00pm
Candlelight Service 11:00pm
with Chancel & Handbell Choirs

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