

Cop Wins Mr. Gay U.K. Contest

West Yorkshire police officer Mark Carter, 23, is the new Mr. Gay U.K.

Carter triumphed over 24 regional finalists as 50 of his police colleagues cheered him on Sept. 30 at Blackpool's Flamingo Club.

In an official West Yorkshire Police statement, Superintendent Nigel Hibbert said: "It's a great achievement, and we are all proud of Mark. He's done very well, and we are pleased that he has won."

Carter described himself as "absolutely over the moon" about the victory.

"I am happy that people will be able to see that there are police officers who are gay and we are not necessarily the usual people that they see on TV programs like *Big Brother*," he said. "It will be good for other young gay men to see someone like me who has been successful in a professional job like policing. I thought telling people I was gay would mean no one would want to know me, but at the Mr. Gay U.K. final I had more people together, supporting me, in one place than I've ever had in my life."

Carter received approximately \$9,500 in prize money.

AMERICAS

Civil Union Bill Presented to Costa Rican Legislature

Costa Rica's Diversity Movement has drafted a civil union bill that will be introduced in the Legislative Assembly by supportive deputies. It would extend some of the rights of marriage to registered same-sex couples.

In May, Costa Rica's Constitutional Court ruled 5-2 that same-sex couples do not have a right to marriage. But the court also urged legislators to grant gay couples justice and legal security by creating a way to regulate stable, loyal same-sex unions.

Plaintiff Yashín Castrillo, a gay lawyer, had sought to have the Family Code's heterosexual definition of marriage declared unconstitutional. He said at the time that he would appeal to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

A recent University of Costa Rica poll found that 71 percent of Costa Ricans oppose same-sex civil unions. About 16 percent support them, and nearly 12 percent have no opinion. Pollsters questioned 1,000 adults with an error margin of 3 percent.



George Smitherman, a gay Liberal legislator, was elected deputy premier of the Canadian province of Ontario.

Gay Man Becomes Deputy Premier of Ontario

A hockey-loving gay man with a political reputation as a feisty player has been appointed deputy premier of the Canadian province of Ontario.

George Smitherman, a Liberal legislator since 1999 and the province's health minister since 2003, represents Toronto's gayest neighborhoods. In May, he acknowledged that in the 1990s he was addicted for five years to illegal stimulant "party drugs" that are popular on the gay scene.

Buenos Aires Mayor Says He Isn't Gay

Jorge Telerman, the mayor of Buenos Aires, Argentina, has said he isn't gay, he's just "Frenchified."

"The other day, a daily [newspaper] insinuated that I was gay," he told *Noticias* magazine. "But afterward they stopped screwing around, maybe because they saw that it didn't bother me. I wouldn't have any problems in saying that I'm gay, but I'm not. I've been called 'afrancesado' [Frenchified], and the truth is that I am Frenchified. I love everything French."

The magazine then asked Telerman if he's a metrosexual.

"This word doesn't appeal to me," he said. "I am coquettish. Since I was a little boy, I've liked to be well-dressed."

ASIA/PACIFIC

600 Couples Register in New Zealand

Six hundred couples have tied the knot since New Zealand began offering civil unions in April 2005—226 male couples, 264 female couples and 109 opposite-sex couples. Auckland has seen more registrations than any other location, 128.

Amnesty Launches Filipino Campaign

Amnesty International appealed to Philippines lawmakers Oct. 3 to pass pending legislation that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

"Adoption of this law is very significant for the entire region because only one other Asian country—Fiji—currently prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation," said Michael Heflin, director of Amnesty International USA's gay OUTfront program.

The legislation would ban anti-gay discrimination in public services, public accommodations, the military, employment, education and health care, among other areas.

Fiji is a South Pacific island republic east of Australia and north of New Zealand. Although its 1998 constitution forbids anti-gay discrimination, religious groups recently have begun agitating for repeal of the protections, and political support for the sexual minorities community might not be solid.

In recent years, some legislators have said that they were surprised to learn the constitution protects gays and that they would not knowingly have supported such safeguards. 10

REX WOCKNER has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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