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MAY 19 - JUNE 1, 2005

INSIDE: Orlando Fringe
Sarasota Pridefest • HRC in Tampa Bay

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PREVIEW



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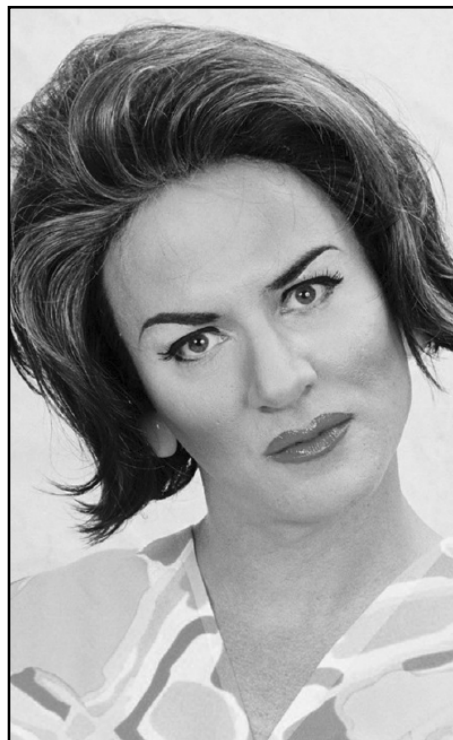
The queer side of the Orlando Fringe Festival ... Betty White's lesbian connection ... Parrots for same-sex couples.

GAY DAYS WEEKEND

The big changes in the 15th year ... Universal-Orlando's involvement ... a 15-year timeline ... a comprehensive Gay Days Weekend schedule ... at long last, the return of the Orlando area bar map.

ABOUT THE COVER

Gay Days visitors and friends: Alike, yet different. Cover by Lisa Buck



DAVID LEE stars as Anita Bryant in Pie-Face at Orlando's Fringe Festival. For details, see page 31.



Editor's Desk

BY DAVE WIETHOP

A couple of buddies and I were talking one night and the conversation moved to the marriage rights issue.

"We'll have to get equal rights sooner or later," I said. "After all, we're eventually going to own all of the property."

"That's what the Jews said in the 1930s," a pal chided and the room became chilly. That was one of the more astute remarks I've heard in a long time. We forget what it's like to have our freedoms taken away — that is, until it is too late.

And while it is grand that many gays and lesbians can live their lives unencumbered by blatant prejudice in communities that may have protections for us, many others watch their rights erode day by day.

Those bastions of tolerance, Kansas and Texas, have recently begun turning back the clock to work toward prohibiting gays and lesbians from adopting — just like Florida. I'm not sure what the legislatures hope to accomplish except for the ability to clog their respective systems with even more children without parents.

Oh, I am so tired of this mired-in-the-1960s nonsense. It's so backwards that it's almost "retro," and not in the cool sense of the word. Forget the fact that study after study clearly demonstrate that children thrive in households with two mommies or two daddies, just as they thrive in homes with a mommy and a daddy. Children don't thrive in houses full of hate and anger.

Now, the dumbest idea in a long, long time has come from the Food and Drug Administration. Apeing the American Red Cross' policy on blood donations, the FDA has announced a new policy that will prevent gay men from donating sperm for artificial insemination.

The reason: The FDA wants to reduce the risk of AIDS transmissions. This federal agency apparently has discovered that gay men get AIDS — and it stopped learning *anything else* at that point. The FDA will not allow men who have had sex with other men in the last five years to donate their spunk. What's left unsaid is that they will prohibit donations from any man who will *admit* that he's had sex with another man.

So, the FDA would rather have donations from straight guys, regardless of their sexual histories — and regardless of whether they will tell sperm donation centers the truth about sleeping with other men. This policy ignores that 15% of new HIV infec-

tions come from heterosexual sex. In other words, a straight guy who screws an HIV-positive prostitute can donate sperm, but a gay man who has been celibate for 4 1/2 years cannot.

The provision kicks in on May 25 as part of a major set of cell and tissue donation edicts, and most doctors and clinics are expected to follow it. Critics of the new proposal have said that the safety of the donations could be better served by testing a donor, freezing his sperm and retesting it six months later — regardless of the donor's sexuality. That idea makes sense, but it doesn't fall in line with the current groupthink that wants to eliminate rights for gays.

The whole idea feels like another federally approved witch hunt. We should expect better of our federal government, shouldn't we?

On to happier things. If you've gotten this far into this issue of *Watermark*, you have undoubtedly noticed its heft. At 88 pages, this issue ties with another from a few years ago for the all-time high page count.

This issue is thick for several reasons, including the fact that we have many, many stories to tell. Among them: our coverage of Sarasota Pridefest 2005, our preview of the increasingly gay-centric Orlando Fringe Festival and the Human Rights Campaign president's appearances locally. We also celebrate the 15th anniversary of what we call "Gay Days Weekend" — a term that reflects the breadth of the festivities without taking sides.

This issue also marks an internal milestone for *Watermark*: Our editorial staff has increased again. Freelance writer Steve Blanchard has been named as our full-time writer in our Tampa Bay bureau, allowing us to further strengthen our coverage of the West Coast.

Steve and I have something in common: We're both veterans of the same tiny daily newspaper in Fulton, Mo., separated by a few years. I had long considered my work in Fulton (the home of my alma mater) to be my favorite job, that is, until I signed on here. Thanks to the diligence, talents and perseverance of *Watermark's* very ambitious team — and the breathless demands of producing an 88-page issue now and then — this job becomes more enjoyable every day.

I know you'll find this issue of *Watermark* to be informative, insightful and entertaining — not to mention heavy.

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P R E V I E W

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EVENTS YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

DADE CITY

SAT., MAY 28

The sexy and soulful **ERIC HIMAN** returns to the Sawmill Campground and Resort at 8 p.m., Saturday, May 28, only weeks after his sensational appearance during the recent Southeast Gay and Lesbian Arts Festival. With tinges of Tracey Chapman, Eagle Eye Cherry, Rufus Wainwright and Ani DiFranco in his voice, the richly inked Himan rocks with the best of them. And he's only 24. And gay. Visit Flsawmill.com for details.

LAKELAND

WED., MAY 25

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Lakeland will conclude their Open Your Eyes forum series with the movie **BENT** at 7 p.m. The film draws from award-winning play that spotlights Nazi persecution of homosexuals. The emotional drama chronicles the struggles of a gay man who not only survived a concentration camp but also emerged from it a better, more caring human being at peace with his sexuality. The showing takes place at the UUC of Lakeland, 3140 Troy Ave. Call (863) 646-3715 for more details.

ORLANDO

THURS.-SUN., MAY 19-29

The area's creative convention for playwrights and actors alike, the **ORLANDO FRINGE FESTIVAL**, moves to Loch Haven Park for 12 days of theatre, art, music and madness. Tickets and schedules for the 14th event can be found online at OrlandoFringe.org or by calling (407) 648-0077. A recent preview showed a good number of the shows having gay themes — see page 31 for our own intro to the festival.

SAT., MAY 28

Let the parade of divas at the Parliament House begin! Though Gay Days Weekend sees a trio of singing beauties, singer **PEPPER MASHAY** headlines the resort's Memorial Day carnival tonight with a live performance. There'll also be carnival games to play that will benefit Hope and Help. We're waiting to see how many of you actually follow her advice when she belts out the refrain to *Dive in the Pool*. Go on — you know you really want to get soakin' wet.

TUES., MAY 31

And so it begins. The annual pilgrimage of gays and lesbians to Orlando, like a flock to Mecca, begins with the **GAY DAYS KICKOFF PARTY** at 5 p.m. at the Winter Park Civic Center. Appearances by **JASON STUART**, comedienne Bear and the Orlando Gay Chorus highlight the evening. Advance tickets are \$20 and are available at GayDayS.com.

TAMPA BAY

FRI., MAY 20

OLD HYDE PARK VILLAGE offers a robustly romantic evening of jazz from 6 to 9 p.m. Friday, May 20. What a nice way to spend time in this gay-friendly district with your sweetie. The music and the parking is free. Visit Oldhydeparkvillage.com for more info.

WED., MAY 25

You know her from *Queer Eye for the Straight Girl*, but the drag queen-monikered **HONEY LABRADOR** also produced and starred in the film, April's Shower. The Tampa International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival will offer the film at 7:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 25, as part of its Summer Film Series at St. Petersburg's Palladium Theatre. For details, visit Tiglff.com. ▼

Water Cooler

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

HONEY, YOU CAN LOSE KAREN'S VOICE ANY TIME

Will she be another **ELLEN DeGENERES** — or another **SUZANNE SOMERS**? Industry publications say that **MEGAN MULLALLY** (if you don't know that she plays "Karen" on *Will & Grace*, then you need to go back and study your homosexual agenda) may be on the fast-track to getting her own syndicated talk show.

Always a great guest, Mullally seems to be the gay man's version of **BONNIE HUNT**, who also deserves to spend an hour in our living rooms. If the show gets picked up, Mullally says she'll do double-duty with the sitcom.

FAGS ON WHEELS

The cleverly named **FLAMINGO AUTO GROUP** (FAG — you clever boys!) is testing the Orlando area to see if there is any interest in starting a GLBT car-nut chapter. An initial meeting could be scheduled as soon as Gay Days Weekend. If you love old, beautiful cars — and you don't necessarily have to own one — send an e-mail to Mel Lesperance at Mellesperance@tampabay.rr.com.

SWOONING OVER A CROONER

Among the reasons to stay in Florida this summer: The handsome crooner **MICHAEL BUBLE** will perform Friday, June 22, at the Carol Morsani Hall at the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center. Tickets are on sale May 20.

Perhaps a gay man's **HARRY CONNICK JR.**, the singer has deep repertoire — and a very clear understanding — of

old standards like *The Way You Look Tonight* and *Fever*, as well as newer classics from such performers as Van Morrison and the Bee Gees. Plus, the Sinatra-esque tunesman is a swell-looking guy, and that never hurts in this swingin', koo-koo kinda world. Call (813) 229-STAR for tickets visit TBPAC.org.

SOON, THEY'LL BE TOO BIG TO SPEAK TO US

Provincetown's delightful Post Office Cabaret has hosted the likes of **LILY TOMLIN**, **LEA DeLARIA**, **WAYLAND FLOWERS** AND **MADAME** and **RUTH BUZZI** over the years — and this July, the club will add Orlando's own **OOPS GUYS** to its roster of acts.

The duo have been booked in the venue's upstairs lounge beginning July 1. This comes on the stylish heels of runs in the Poconos, Atlanta, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia and the Gay Days Cruise. Visit kookyart.com/oopsguys for more about where the Oops Guys can be found next. Bravo to them.

THINGS WE WISH THAT WE HAD SAID

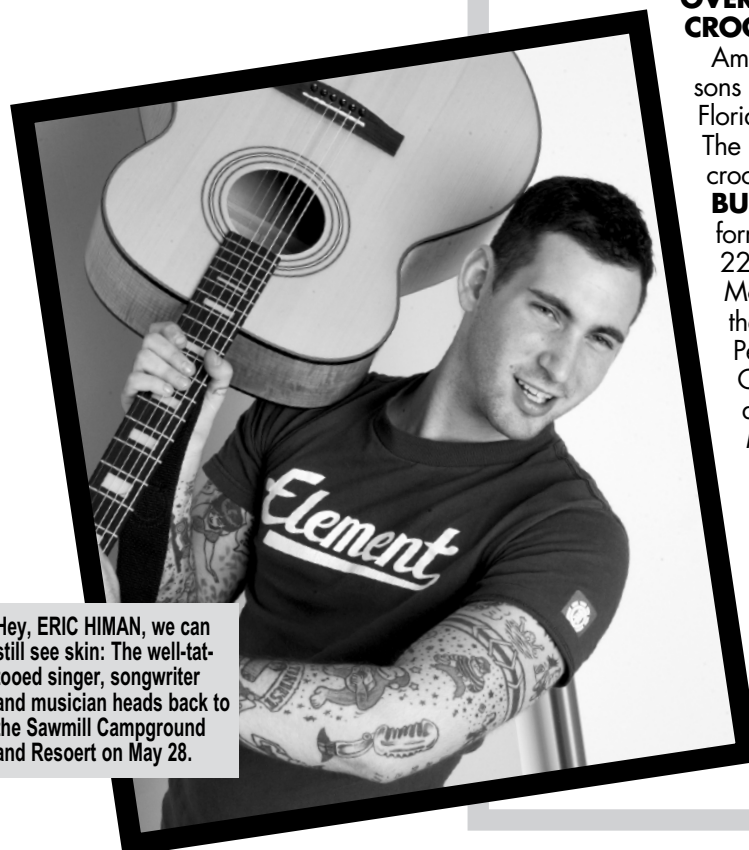
Heckling from the audience at a recent appearance at the University of Texas-Austin rattled conservative fembot **ANN COULTER** so badly that she told organizers that she wouldn't take any more questions unless the crowd was controlled better.

That worked — until the inexplicably best-selling author announced that she supported the definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman. A good woman, Coulter said, civilizes and inspires a man to strive for something better.

This led to a question from a sophomore that unnerved Coulter: "You say that you believe in the sanctity of marriage," the student asked, "How do you feel about marriages where the man does nothing but fuck his wife up the ass?"

Police approached the man to arrest him, leading protesters to leave the auditorium, chanting "Let him go."

Meanwhile, Coulter did not answer his question. ▼



Hey, **ERIC HIMAN**, we can still see skin: The well-tattooed singer, songwriter and musician heads back to the Sawmill Campground and Resort on May 28.

HEADLINE NEWS



MR. MIAGI showed up dressed in his finery for Sarasota Pridefest. Photo by Trina Gregory

PRIDEFEST BREAKS RECORDS

Organizers are already focused on planning 2006's event By Steve Blanchard

SARASOTA – The vendors have all packed up their booths and have headed home. The grills are extinguished and silent and the colorful rainbow-flavored banners have come down. It's hard to believe another Sarasota Pridefest has come and gone.

But just because the fairgrounds are quiet once again doesn't mean that Sarasota Pride is silent. Executive director Leslie Dawley is already looking toward next year.

"This is what the people who aren't

actively involved in don't have a clue about," Dawley laughed following the 2005 event. "You finish one up and you have to start setting up the framework for the next one, plus there's a shit-load of follow up."

Dawley said that he tries not to compete with past years' events, but admitted he was pleased to hear that the 2005 Sarasota Pridefest broke attendance records with more than 2,000 attendees and 70 vendors both inside the Robarts Arena and outside on the Sarasota Fairgrounds. Booths

ranged from massage therapists and mortgage brokers to magazines and singing groups. But all had one thing in common – they cater to the GLBT community.

"As far as I could tell, everyone enjoyed themselves, and that's really the bottom line," Dawley said. "If the attendees and the vendors have fun and we end up covering everything financially – and maybe even have seed money for next year – then it's all good. That's basically how this year's event turned out."

While a new attendance record was set, Dawley admitted it wasn't by some astronomical figure. "Maybe 30 to 50 more attendees" made it out this year, and Dawley contributed the increase to advertising, word of mouth and the overall population increase of Sarasota and Sarasota County.

"We're a growing community," Dawley said. "A lot of people move here every year, and they may have attended pride events in New York, Los Angeles or wherever they're moving from. They want to keep that feeling of pride with them so they join our event, and it gives everyone a sense of community."

Dawley said he hasn't heard of any negative feedback from attendees or vendors yet, although he does realize it is impossible to please everyone. Each year's event, he said, is different because you get different people involved in the planning and organizing. They key issue to planning this year's event was to look at it with fresh eyes.

"When we came together to piece Pridefest 2005 together, my attitude and message to those coming together to work on this was this," Dawley explained, "Let's not get into a game of competition with last year or try to outdo last year." What is important is that we focus on the reality of what we're dealing with, and its no secret we were dealing with the biggest challenge of them all – finances."

After three hurricanes blew past Sarasota in 2004 last summer and fall, the ability for many business's to contribute financially to this year's festival went with them. On top of the outrageous hurricane season, several of the group's fund-raisers had their funds diverted or were cancelled all together.

Through the commitment of the board and more than 50 volunteers, Sarasota Pridefest 2005 went off fairly smoothly, according to Dawley.

While the expo event at the fairgrounds stayed larger than ever, some supporting events were consolidated. Namely, the Southwest Florida Community AIDS Quilt was on display during Pridefest. The kickoff parties that were once separated were combined into one event sponsored

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Continued on page 7

HEADLINE NEWS



The St. Petersburg Righteously Outrageous Twirling Corps kept the colors flying at Sarasota Pridefest. Photo by Steve Blanchard

PRIDEFEST from page 6

by the Southwest Florida Business Guild and Adobe Realty.

Changes to Pridefest can be viewed as good or bad, depending on whom you ask. But overall, according to Dawley, the year was a successful one for Sarasota as a community.

"We've made a lot of progress here," Dawley said. "We passed an amendment to the city charter to include sexual orientation in the non-discrimination policy that won with 72% of the vote. That's a landslide as far as I'm concerned."

Before the entertainment began at Pridefest, Sarasota Mayor Mary Anne Servian took the stage and read the proclamation of "United in Pride Day in the City of Sarasota," – a proclamation she said made her even more proud to be the city's mayor.

"It is my honor and privilege to read this here today," Servian told the crowd. "We've come a long way."

The support of politicians in Sarasota has been overwhelming, especially this year. Not only did the city council unanimously approve the non-discrimination policy including sexual orientation, they also recognize the GLBT community's input when it comes to other areas as well – namely, the police chief's advisory board.

"Personally, that's what I'm involved in," Dawley said. "It's important for everyone to realize that GLBT people are no different than everyone else. We all have the same American dreams and we all have the

same work ethic – and no one should be denied any facet of citizenship."

And those citizens seem to be getting younger, Dawley laughed. Dawley said Pridefest has come along way as well with younger GLBT community members and their supporters.

"It's really exciting to once again see more and more members of the younger crowd out at pride," Dawley said. "And it's not like people my age (53) aren't attending, but more members of the younger crowd boost our overall numbers."

After stellar performances by Jasmine Skiies' Queens of Pride and a concert by Vernessa Mitchell and Kim English, Pridefest-goers had the opportunity to attend several post-pride events. Club Tri-Angles hosted the after-party well into the night and the Ringling School of Design was the site for the alcohol-free Lite Party.

"When you put on an event this big, the mainstay is the volunteers," Dawley said. "There were no major hurdles that we came up against and that's because the planning was very solid. You have to be flexible when you're dealing with something as large as Pridefest, and any little quirks we encountered were handled quietly, efficiently and properly. I was very pleased with the amount of work that the volunteers and staff put into Sarasota Pride's Pridefest 2005. They should all be very proud of their work this year."

While he is pleased with the success of the 2005 event, Dawley has already begun planning the May 2006 event. The tradition will continue on with more supporters and new organizers joining the existing one.

"It takes an act of love and believing in the importance of an event to put so much time and energy into it," Dawley said. "Everyone involved brings their ideas and skills to the table, and that's what we work with. That's why every year's event is just as exciting as the year before and also why so many changes occur through its evolution."

Dawley invites all who are interest in helping with the 2006 pride celebration to attend the next committee meeting June 14 at 6:30 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church on Fruitville Road. More information can also be found online at www.sarasotapride.com or by calling Sarasota Pride's information line at (941) 364-2115. ▼



The Gulf Coast Men's Chorus entertained visitors outside Roberts Arena on May 14. Photo by Steve Allen

PRIDEFEST APPEALS TO VISITORS FOR MANY REASONS

SARASOTA – Megan Lighton was definitely impressed with Sarasota's annual pride event held at Roberts Arena May 14. The 2005 event was a first for Lighton.

"It is just such a neat feeling knowing that there are so many of us," Lighton said. "And with all these booths, I definitely know where to take my business now. I had no idea we had such a strong community here."

The Baltimore, Md., native moved to Sarasota in August, shortly after Hurricane Charley ripped through Southwest Florida. The move, she said, was to help her great-aunt rebuild her home, which received a hefty amount of damage. Lighton found she liked the area so much it was time to find her own place to call home.

"My family knows I'm a lesbian, and they're cool with that," Lighton said. "But I've never actively participated in any pride event. Now, I'm already looking forward to next year."

Lighton was among several thousand attending Sarasota Pridefest. Not only were vendors offering flyers, key

chains and beer cozies emblazoned with their logos, there was plenty of food and entertainment for everyone.

"Today is definitely not the day to stick to any kind of diet," said Scott Higby, who was enjoying a meal of hamburgers and beer he purchased from volunteers. "The money goes to a good cause and this is a celebration. It would be like dieting during Christmas dinner. It just doesn't make sense."

While entertainment and beer flowed freely outside, a more respectful, quiet space was created for the Southwest Florida Community AIDS Quilt. According to volunteer Norman Carmel, more than 100 quilt panels were on display, honoring local AIDS victims.

"We've dedicated a few more new ones this year," Carmel said. "It is important to remember that this disease is still out there and the families of these victims have lost someone very special."

Others were equally stirred. "This is the perfect way to end the day," Lighton said. "I'm exhausted, but I've never felt more proud of myself or of our community." ▼ Steve Blanchard

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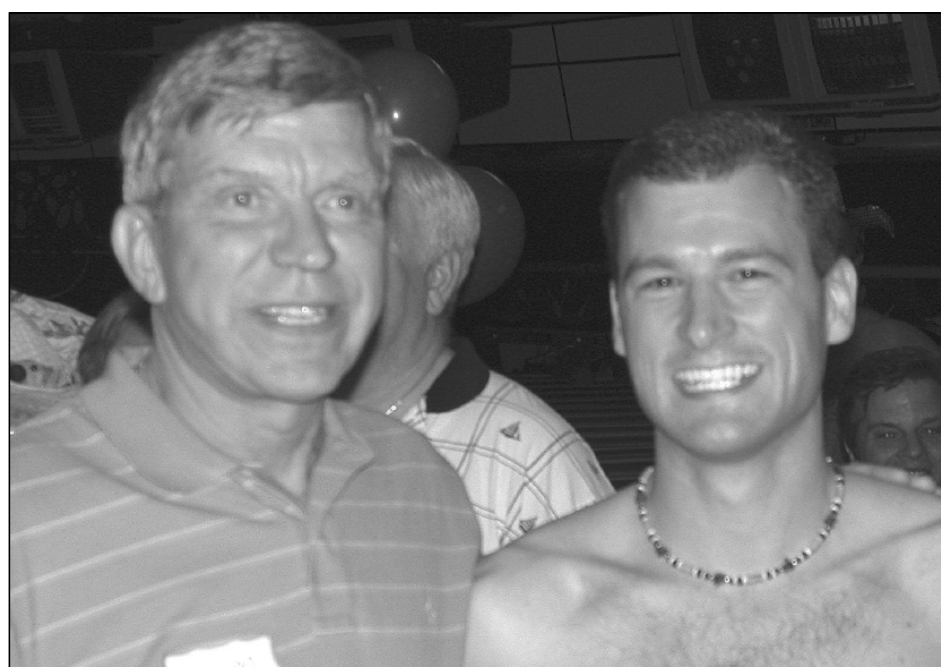
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**BEST IN BOXERS**

A League of Our Own raised \$6,200 at this year's Bowling in Boxers benefit in April. The money will be split equally between the Gulf Coast Men's Chorus and ALSO Out Youth. In addition to the bowling, auctions and cocktails, the league named the 2005 Mr. Boxers, NEALE BRINDLEY, above right as he poses with event organizer JIM JABLONSKI and the 2005 Ms. Boxers, IRENE MIRKOVIC, at right in the photo to the right with Jablonski.



QUEER COMEDIANS TO RAISE MONEY FOR AREA CHARITIES

SARASOTA - Several comedians are slated to appear in benefits for Sarasota area organizations this summer.

Two openly gay comics, Eddie Sarfaty and Michele Balan, will appear in a July benefit for ALSO Out Youth. The concert will be held at Church of the Trinity MCC Monday, July 18, at 7 p.m.

Sarfaty, a member of the Funny Gay Males comedy troupe, is currently appearing on Comedy Central's hit series *Premium Blend*. Balan has been dubbed "The Comic Princess" by *Provincetown*

Magazine. Tickets start at \$20 and are available at (941) 951-2476 or online at alsoyouth.org.

The Sarasota-based Tramp Productions is pleased to bring comedian Amy Boyd to the Catherine Hickman Theater in Gulfport Saturday, June 11 at 7:30 p.m. Boyd is a sworn police officer in Northern California and a regular performer on Olivia Cruises. The performance will benefit the Sonia Plotnick Health Fund. Tickets are \$20 and available at (941) 747-1789. ▼ Staff reports

SARASOTA BRIEFS**BUSINESS GUILD MEETING TO BE HOSTED BY METRO COFFEE**

The Southwest Florida Business Guild will meet next on Monday, June 20, at the Waterside Room at The Quay. The meeting will be hosted by Metro Coffee and Wine. Networking will begin at 6 p.m. with a cash bar and appetizers, followed by a panel discussion at 7 p.m. The cost for members is \$10, and \$15 for non-members. There will be no July meeting. For more information, visit Swfbg.com.

TRINITY MCC TO THANK WILSON WITH AN AUG. 13 SOIREE

The Church of the Trinity MCC will host a party to thank and honor the Rev. Nancy Wilson for her four years in service to the Sarasota community as senior pastor. Wilson will be named as the moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches later this summer. The \$100-per-person dinner will be held on Saturday, Aug. 13, at the Longboat Key Club. For tickets or more information, call the church office at (941) 355-0847.

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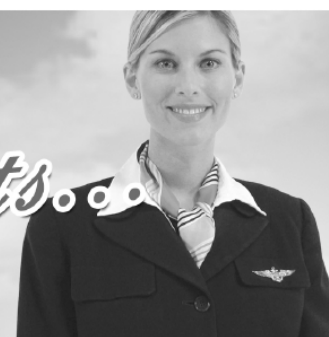
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TAMPA BAY

NEW HRC PRESIDENT STUMPS IN TAMPA BAY, ORLANDO

TAMPA — Something is happening in Florida and throughout the U.S. If you look behind the news headlines about same-sex marriage and gay adoption, there's a much broader movement taking place says Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign.

Solmonese, who assumed the leadership position at the nation's largest and most powerful GLBT lobbying organization just last month, introduced himself during a meeting of HRC Federal Club members and other supporters at the home of Terry Knight and Rick Woods on May 9.

"I've had many people come up to me and say, 'Joe, I'm very concerned about same-sex marriage and our right to wed,'" Solmonese told more than 100 packed into the Hyde Park residence. "And there are others who say, 'Hey, gay marriage is not an issue for me, but I do have other concerns.' It's important to remember that social change feeds off one event and leads to another."

At the meeting in Tampa, and at gatherings in Orlando, Sarasota, Bradenton and St. Petersburg, Solmonese described his plan to "reintroduce" the GLBT community to the American people.

"I want to look for new sources of support, for ways to expand our universe," Solmonese said the night before, at a gathering of some 75 HRC members at the Lake Eola Yacht Club in Orlando.



Senate candidate BETTY CASTOR (left) addresses a group in Tampa as HRC president JOE SOLMONESE listens intently May 9. Photo by Steve Blanchard

His focus will be on large corporations, straight allies and communities of faith.

"Big companies are where we've had our most consistent and most concrete successes," he said. "And there are great obstacles, but also great opportunities with potential allies whose vote is guided by faith."

In Tampa, Solmonese encouraged HRC members to put defeats in perspec-



Orlando HRC gathering: (L-R) HRC senior field organizer BO SHUFF, community co-chairs JENNIFER FOSTER and JOHN RUFFIER, HRC president JOE SOLMONESE. Photo by Tom Dyer

tive, and be encouraged by under-reported victories, including the failure of anti-gay forces to pass same-sex marriage prohibitions in 15 states.

"We need to lift up our work above the most immediate challenge and the next election, and look at our long-term sustainable goals," Solmonese said. "It's time to move hearts and minds in our direction."

Before joining HRC, Solmonese was the executive officer of EMILY's List, one of the nation's largest progressive advocacy groups. He spent a total of 11 years with the organization, whose mission is to elect pro-choice Democratic women to federal and state office.

"I knew Joe from the beginning of EMILY's List," former U.S. Senate candidate Betty Castor said at the Tampa gathering. "He may be from Massachusetts, but he knows Florida. He brought his organizational expertise to EMILY's List and made us the number one group in America for women. He'll do the same for HRC. He's an excellent strategist and he has great integrity."

Solmonese told *Watermark* that it was not a difficult decision to accept the offer to head HRC. After spending years in Washington, D.C., he said he was ready to get out on the road and meet the people that matter rather than sitting in the nation's capitol.

"It only took one request from HRC for me to accept the position," Solmonese said. "My first trip was to a place you don't really associate with gays and lesbians — Topeka, Kan."

Over some giggling and snickering, Solmonese explained that if the GLBT community wants to obtain equal rights, the entire country — every single community — must unite in the fight.

"You know, we are one community —

gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender — and we will only move forward if we act with unity and resolve," he said.

Solmonese's early stump through Central and West Florida was no coincidence.

"This is ground zero in terms of politics in our nation right now," he said. "There's a laser lock focus of attention on Florida and the I-4 corridor."

HRC recently gave \$5,000 to Equality Florida to help facilitate polling that will guide the Tampa Bay-based statewide lobbying organization on same-sex marriage initiatives.

"You'll see a lot more of us in the next few years, working with local groups, trying to fit into the existing structures for change," Solmonese said in Orlando.

"Some times will have the same agenda, some times it will be different, but either way there will be a lot more talking and communication."

He also acknowledged growing support for HRC throughout the region, including more than 120 new Federal Club memberships (\$1,200-per-year minimum donation) in Tampa Bay and Orlando in the past 12 months. HRC announced recently that it will hold its December 2005 board of directors and board of governors meeting in Orlando.

Solmonese said his recent road trips have energized him, including meeting a woman who's worked for Hallmark for 32 years — 31 years in the closet.

"She just now feels safe and secure enough to share her real life with her co-workers," he said. "There are still great strides, great steps forward, being taken."

But Solmonese is also ready to spend some time at home. "I've learned a lot in the last month or so," he said. "I'm ready to implement some of it." ▼ Steve Blanchard

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TAMPA BAY

GAY BASHER GETS TWO YEARS IN PRISON

TARPON SPRINGS – Three men charged in a gay-bashing incident in November 2003 have copped a guilty plea in return for reduced sentences. One will serve two years in prison, while the others were sentenced to probation.

"I'm pissed off," said 23-year-old Peter Malamoutsis, who agreed to the plea after being advised by state's attorneys that conviction at trial was not assured. "I didn't want them to walk away free, but Florida is screwed up. Someone can beat the crap out of you and you don't know if they'll go to jail."

The charges resulted from a violent altercation outside Zorba's Restaurant and Lounge in Tarpon Springs, which has a large Greek community. Malamoutsis had taken his boyfriend, Greg Hall, and straight brother, Theo Malamoutsis, out for a slice of local culture. At Zorba's they encountered, John Himonetos, now 23, an acquaintance of Malamoutsis, along with Stamatis Kannis and Michael Kitsos, also both 23. A casual conversation became tense when Malamoutsis shared that he now worked at a Ybor City club.

According to Malamoutsis, Himonetos then said, "Oh, that's a faggot bar."

"I'm gay," Malamoutsis responded. "Do you have a problem with gays?"

Malamoutsis recalled that the awkward encounter was unexpected, and that he had advised his Hall that they should avoid public displays in the conservative surroundings. Hours later, when they left Zorba's, Himonetos, Kannis and Kitsos reportedly attacked, hitting and kicking

them repeatedly. Malamoutsis reported that Himonetos yelled, "You fucking poustis (a derogatory Greek word for homosexual), never come to Tarpon Springs."

Malamoutsis suffered broken teeth, as well as trauma to his eyes, stomach and back. He has since lost 50 pounds, and claims that changes in his physical appearance and vitality have cost him modeling jobs. "If it weren't for my boyfriend and my brother, I'd be dead," he said.

Himonetos actions were labeled a hate crime, thus elevating them from third to second degree felonies with a maximum sentence of 15 years. He will begin serving two years in prison later this month. Kannis and Kitsos, seen as accomplices, will serve two years and one year of probation respectively. All three have been ordered to avoid contact with the victims, and to pay restitution to cover their medical expenses.

Although his family still lives in Tarpon Springs, Malamoutsis said that he and Hall would soon move to Canada.

"I'm afraid to go out, and I don't stop in Tarpon anymore," he said. "I think Vancouver will be safer." *Tom Dyer with wire and other news reports.*



PETER MALAMOUTSIS (left) and GREG HALL prior to being gay-bashed in Tarpon Springs in November 2003.

GINGRICH TO KEYNOTE ST. PETE PRIDE PROMENADE

ST. PETERSBURG – When Candace Gingrich first came out publicly in 1995, her brother Newt Gingrich was one of the most recognizable people in America.

Although he left office amidst charges of ethical violations, the former Speaker of the House is now being touted as a potential 2008 Republican presidential candidate.

And his little sister? She's worked with the Human Rights Campaign since, and will come to Tampa Bay next month as the grand marshal of the 2005 St. Pete Pride Promenade on Saturday, June 25. She'll also be the keynote speaker at the street festival directly following the parade.

The announcement of a high-profile speaker is just one of many upgrades to St. Pete Pride in just its third year. Last year the Promenade and Street Festival alone attracted 20,000 to the Grand Central District.

The Human Rights Campaign sent Gingrich out on a tour of 50 U.S. cities. She will help man the HRC booth at St. Pete Pride, and is scheduled to deliver her address at 12:40 p.m.

Those who wish to participate in the promenade and street festival are encouraged to register now at www.stpetepride.com. The promenade is free, but registration is required.

Organizers have also announced an initiative to get area businesses and residences to fly rainbow flags throughout June. Commemorative "What So Proudly We Hail" flags are available at Spirit Graphic at 2414 Central Ave., and can also be downloaded at the St. Pete Pride web site. Likewise, there will be a mass singing of the *National Anthem* at the beginning of the Street Festival.

"We're hoping that everyone will see the symbolism that St. Pete Pride's participation in this national project represents," said co-chair Greg Stemm.

On Saturday, June 18, one week before the parade and festival, the Gulfport Merchant's Association will host a full day of pride-related activities.

For the full schedule of St. Pete Pride activities scheduled throughout June, visit www.stpetepride.com. *Tom Dyer*

TAMPA BAY BRIEFS

PASTOR SAYS CHURCH ARSON WAS HATE CRIME

An April 22 fire at St. Mark United Church of Christ was likely an anti-gay hate crime, according to its pastor. The United Church of Christ denomination has recently run national advertising promoting the church's policy of welcoming all worshippers, including gays and lesbians. In conjunction with the campaign, St. Marks had hung a banner proclaiming "God is still speaking." The banner was shredded and then burned. "The fact that the banner was slashed back and forth multiple times would indicate that someone was upset by what it stood for," said the Rev. Dr. Garry Scheuer.

CENTRAL FLORIDA BLACK PRIDE TAKES SHAPE

Plans for the upcoming Central Florida Black Pride celebration are formulating. The theme for the uplifting event is "Discover Our Destiny." It takes place in Tampa July 14-17 and features a business expo and a full schedule of parties, presentations and life enhancement workshops. The Embassy Suite Hotel @ Westshore will be the host hotel. Budget Car Rental, American Airlines, *Clique Magazine* and *Watermark* have signed on as sponsors. "It's our hope and vision that attendees will leave Tampa renewed and refocused," said organizer Ricc Rollins. Visit www.floridablackpride.net for info.

COOK NAMED FILM FEST PROGRAMMING DIRECTOR

Joseph J. Cook has been named programming director for the Tampa International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. Cook is an adjunct faculty member at the University of South Florida, University of Tampa and Hillsborough Community College, where he teaches courses in sociology, sexuality, popular culture and film. As a senior programmer, he assisted former festival programming directors Keven Renken and Margaret Murray. Also named to the 2005 Friends of the Festival board are: Mariruth Kennedy, president; Christopher Constantinou, vice-president; David Gonzalez, secretary; Cameron Wetzel, treasurer; Chuck Wilhelm, Steven Anderson, Robert Akins, Leigh Ann Mills and John Thomas, at large. TIGLFF is currently seeking a full time executive director. The festival, now in its 16th year, takes place Oct. 6-16. Visit www.tiglff.com for more info.

GYPSY PRODUCTIONS EXTENDS 'TORCH SONG'

Due to popular demand, Gypsy Productions has extended Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy* for two more performances, Friday, May 20, and Saturday, May 21, at 8 p.m. at the Suncoast Theatre. The company has announced that it will present the stage version of *Sordid Lives* in late August. Call (727) 456-0500 for tickets.



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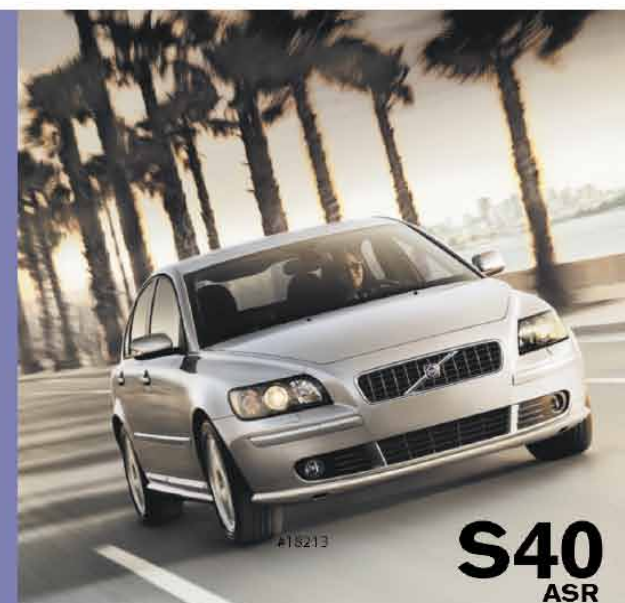


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ORLANDO

CHORUS BIDS FAREWELL TO ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

ORLANDO - Terry Thomas, artistic director of the Orlando Gay Chorus since 2000, has announced that he will leave the Chorus at the end of his current contract. Thomas, a cast member with the Walt Disney Co., will lay down his conductor's baton after the June 18-19 concert and the production of a new CD recording in July.

A recent promotion with his work at Disney has led Thomas to take what he calls "a sabbatical" from the chorus. He has agreed to stay on to help the organization find a new director.

Thomas served as the group's original accompanist and recalls its first concert at the Orlando Museum of Art fondly. His personal highlights include performing in front of audiences of more than

1,000 people at both the San Jose and Montreal GALA festivals. The festivals, which are held every four years, gather GLBT choral groups for a mass concert.

Jeter Walker, president of the chorus, echoed what many of the members feel.

"Terry brought so much to OGC. The quality of our productions and the increased entertainment value are things we could not have done with anyone else," Walker said. The Orlando Gay Chorus has about 125 members, 80 of which perform.

They're Playing Our Song will be Thomas' last concert. Fittingly, the show will feature songs from the chorus's entire 15-year history. Tickets are now on sale at OrlandoGayChorus.com. ▼ Kirk Hartlage

FRIENDS, FAMILY MOURN LOSS OF LONGTIME BEARS MEMBER

ORLANDO - One of the founders of Orlando's Bears of Central Florida, passed away during the evening of Sunday, May 8.

Barry Farmer, 45, helped initiate the North Florida Bear Hunters Club, a group of Jacksonville men that held its preliminary bear event, Bear Fest, in Orlando in the early 1990s.

In later years with the BOCF, Farmer worked as a stage designer for the group's annual Bear Bust, which has grown to be one of the largest gathering of bear men and their admirers in the country. Orlando's Bear Bust became known for its innovative themes, incorporated in shirts and brochures and in stage set-ups at the Full Moon Saloon, the host of the event. Farmer

served as the event's artist from 1997 to 2000.

Farmer was not only active in the local bear community, but internationally as well. Twice he was featured on the cover of *Kerle Magazine*, a German bear magazine.

"Barry is irreplaceable," said Justin Homer, Farmer's close friend and former roommate. "He was a very loving and caring man and will be missed by many people."

Farmer's parents and sister, who live in Jacksonville, and his partner, Stewart Hopper, who lives in Orlando, survive. A memorial service was held at Baldwin-Fairchild Funeral Home in Orlando. ▼ *Staff reports*

ORLANDO BRIEFS

ORLANDO HOSTS COUPLES NATIONAL NETWORK CELEBRATION

The Greater Orlando Couples group will host the Couples National Network Celebration and an informal evening networking mixer then continues on May 28 with the annual business meeting, afternoon activities, silent art auction and dinner party. The celebration ends on May 29 with a brunch and closing ceremony. This event is open to organization members and guest couples. For more information about Celebration 2005, visit Couples-National.org or call (407) 246-4726.

BELL RINGERS TO PRESENT SPRING CONCERT

The Central Florida Ringers will give a Spring Benefit handbell concert for Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church on Sunday, May 22, at 4 p.m. The concert will be held in the sanctuary of the church located at 13600 Caspian Lane, Clermont, which is two miles south of S.R. 50 and on the west side of US Hwy 27. A free-will offering will be taken for the church in gratitude for providing the ensemble with rehearsal space and storage.

GROUPS SHOW INTEREST IN THE JUNE 18 FAMILY PICNIC

Several GLBT and gay-friendly organizations have committed to taking part in the June 18 Orlando Family Reunion Picnic at the Bill Frederick/Turkey Lake Park Pavilion No. 4 in Orlando. Among the groups that have taken part in some of the planning efforts include Dignity, Equality Florida, the Orlando Front Runners and Walkers, Gay Orlando, the Greater Orlando Couples, the Human Rights Campaign, the Orange County Young Democrats, the Orlando Youth Alliance, PFLAG, the Prime-Timers, the Queer Art Collective, the Rainbow Democratic Club, the Sistahood of Ebony Lesbians, Trans Central Station and Trident. For more information about the picnic, call the GLBCC at (407) 228-8272.



JEANNE WHITE-GINDER speaks at the International AIDS Candlelight Memorial as a video about her son, Ryan White, plays in the background. Photo by Dave Wiethop

WHITE'S MOM, 120 OTHERS HONOR VICTIMS OF AIDS

ORLANDO - The mother of the late Ryan White, Jeanne White-Ginder, brought tears to the eyes of many attending International AIDS Candlelight Memorial on May 15 as she reflected on the years that he battled the deadly disease.

"I had always been a very strong Christian and I asked for only one miracle. I wanted my son to live," White-Ginder said, as she stood at a podium at Orlando's Joy MCC. Despite the prognosis that the 13-year-old boy had only three to six months to live, Ryan celebrated his 18th birthday before dying.

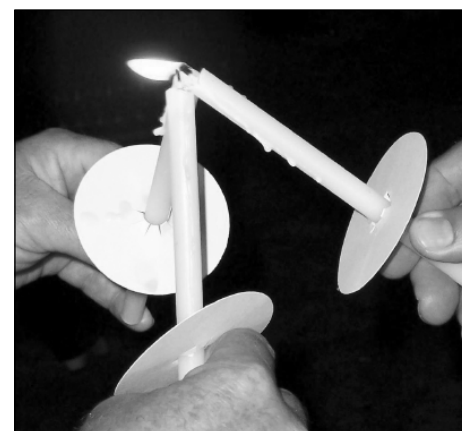
Ryan was diagnosed in 1984, the result of tainted Factor 8, a compound used to treat his severe hemophilia. The teenager became the subject of much media attention at the beginning of the AIDS crisis when he was kicked out of his Kokomo, Ind., school because of his affliction.

Ginder-White said that while Ryan knew many celebrities in his short 18 years, "The greatest people I will ever know are the people like you. I understand the pain and the frustration that you've been through because I have been there too."

"Ryan didn't want to be known as the 'AIDS boy,' even though he had appeared on four *People* covers."

Acknowledging that Ryan will likely be known best for the 1989 TV-movie based on his life, his mother asserted that this shouldn't be his legacy.

"But Ryan should be remembered for lending his name to the Ryan White CARE Act," Ginder-White said. The bill has provided millions of federal dollars for AIDS care, prevention efforts and research. "He left this positive message that AIDS is not just about dying. Still, society will not let go of that stigma. I cannot believe that today, people with



About 120 people gathered at Joy MCC's courtyard to light candles in remembrance of those who have succumbed to AIDS.

AIDS are still discriminated against. We can't discuss it in the schools — but we have to. We have to get it out and get it into the open and find an end to this disease."

She added that even though there are more advanced drugs available to allow PWAs to live longer, "There are no miracle cures. People are dying because they cannot get the drugs they need because of waiting lists and there are no reasons for those waiting lists. Ryan doesn't know about the CARE Act ... well, maybe he does."

White-Ginder and Joy MCC copastor the Rev. Jim Merritt lit candles in remembrance of those who have died from the disease and led the assembly into the church's courtyard. Beneath the evening sky, the group sang *Amazing Grace* and said aloud the names of friends and family members who have passed away.

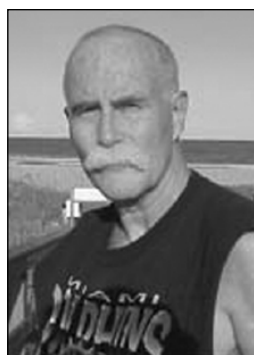
Centaur, one of the Orlando area's three AIDS service organizations, also took part in the remembrances. ▼ Dave Wiethop

ORLANDO

GAY RIGHTS ICON, EARLY GLBT PRESS EDITOR NICHOLS DIES

COCOA BEACH - One of the pioneering members of the gay rights movement in the U.S., Jack Nichols, died May 2 at Cape Canaveral Hospital in Cocoa Beach. Nichols, who was 67, had battled cancer for 20 years.

Nichols helped found chapters of the Mattachine Society, an early support group for gays, in Florida and Washington, D.C., in the early and mid-1960s. He also helped plan some of the nation's first organized, annual gay and lesbian civil rights demonstrations, including a protest outside Philadelphia's Independence Hall on July 4, 1965.



JACK NICHOLS co-founded the Mattachine Society in the 1960s and remained active in the gay rights movement as late as last year.

In addition, Nichols was among the first gay activists to challenge the American Psychiatric Association's position that homosexuality was a mental illness.

In 1967, he appeared as a self-identified gay male in a groundbreaking CBS documentary on gays, entitled, *The Homosexuals*.

Historians and gay activists credit the assertiveness and perseverance of Nichols, his partner, the late Lige Clark, and their friends for laying the groundwork for the GLBT rights movement today.

"Jack was among the gay pioneers who stepped out of a debilitating closet and helped crack the cocoon of invisibility," said Malcolm Lazin,

executive director of Equality Forum, a Philadelphia-based GLBT rights group.

From 1969 to 1973, Nichols and Clark edited *GAY*, America's first gay weekly newspaper. The two also wrote a nonfiction memoir called *I Have More Fun with You Than Anybody*.

"To those of us who came of age during the Stonewall period, he is probably best known as one-half of a couple known simply as 'Lige and Jack.' They were the quintessential gay lib lovers and their byline and photos seemed to appear in every early gay lib publication," wrote Douglas Beach in the *New York Native*. "They became so familiar to us — as a couple — that they became cultural icons."

Nichols wrote several other books, including *Men's Liberation: A New Definition of Masculinity* and *The Gay Agenda: Talking Back to the Fundamentalists*. His most recent book, published last year, was *The Tomcat Chronicles: Erotic Adventures of a Gay Liberation Pioneer*.

For the 35th anniversary of Stonewall, veteran activists led the New York Heritage of Pride parade, and they were cheered by thousands.

"Three of the most distinguished activists of all time sat in the front of the first float, a veritable Mount Rushmore of movement icons — Frank Kameny, Jack Nichols, and Dr. George Weinberg," reported New York's Gay City News in 2004.

He, his friends and Clarke, who worked in the Office of the U.S. Army Chief of Staff, became immersed in the work of the Mattachine Society. It was Nichols' idea to first picket the White House in the early 1960s.

"The U.S. government persecutes us and so does the Cuban government," Nichols told Kameny, as reported in David K. Johnson's book, *The Lavender Scare*. Nichols was suggesting that they combine their grievances against the two governments.

"That night they called other Mattachine members and got ten people to agree to picket," Johnson's book described.

Nichols is survived by his mother, Mary F. Lund, 90, and several cousins. ▼ *Staff and wire reports*

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NATION/WORLD BRIEFS

TWICE AS MANY LESBIANS MARRY IN MASSACHUSETTS

Lesbians are marrying in Massachusetts at twice the rate of gay couples, according to state figures detailing the first year of same-sex marriages. According to the state's Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, 5,382 same-sex couples got married between May 17, 2004. This accounts for about 12% of all marriages performed in the Bay State during that time. The data showed 3,421 of the same-sex couples that got married were female, compared to 1,961 male couples. Observers say that lesbian couples are more than twice as likely to have children as gay male couples, and marriage offers benefits and financial incentives to children, including health insurance and inheritance rights.

GAY MARRIAGE DEBATE STIMULATES STRONGER DIVORCE BILL

Religious conservatives who succeeded in rewriting Ohio's constitution to ban same-sex marriage are pushing state lawmakers to make divorce more difficult. The new covenant marriage bill says couples who want such a marriage must go through counseling and sign a contract saying they understand they would have to go through a yearlong "cooling off" period with counseling before getting a divorce in most cases. The idea was inspired during the gay marriage debate, supporters said.

CLASSMATE VANDALIZES WYOMING LESBIAN'S PICKUP

The Sublette County, Wyo., Sheriff's Department is investigating anti-gay slurs spray-painted on the pickup truck of an openly gay Pinedale High School student. Kourtney Kellen, 16, said she has been open about being a lesbian, and that most people at school were OK with it, but that she'd recently had a disagreement with a boy in her class. She said the boy's father offered to pay for the damage to the truck.

UPDATED WEB PROFILE LEADS TO ROBBER'S ARREST

A broken remote control in a hotel room and an updated profile on a gay Web site led police to the man they believed robbed the Mountain West Bank here and a Salt Lake City bank, court records said. Jay Vaughan Gregory Jr., 48, appeared afternoon before U.S. Magistrate Leif Erickson on charges that he robbed Mountain West Bank of \$2,430. Police officers arrested Gregory, of Manville, N.J., at a hotel in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, at about 3 a.m. Thursday, on a warrant for the robbery of a Wells Fargo bank in Salt Lake City. Gregory admitted robbing the banks, prosecutors said in an affidavit.

STUDY: GAY, STRAIGHT MEN SMELL THINGS DIFFERENTLY

WASHINGTON - The sexual area of a gay man's brain works a lot like that of a straight woman when exposed to a particular stimulus, researchers say.

In an experiment, men and straight women sniffed a chemical from the male hormone testosterone. The gay men's brains responded differently from those of straight men, and in a similar way to the women's brains.

"It is one more piece of evidence ... that is showing that sexual orientation is not all learned," said Sandra Witelson, an expert on brain anatomy and sexual orientation at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada. Witelson, who was not part of the research team, said the findings clearly show a biological involvement in sexual orientation.

The study, published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, was done by researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden. They exposed straight men and women and gay men to chemicals derived from male and female sex hormones. These chemicals are thought to be pheromones — molecules known to trigger responses such as defense and sex in many animals.

Whether humans respond to pheromones has been debated, although in 2000 American researchers reported find-

ing a gene that they believe directs a human pheromone receptor in the nose.

The Swedish researchers divided 36 subjects into three groups — straight men, straight women and gay men. They studied the brain response to the chemicals. When they sniffed scents like cedar or lavender, all of the subjects' brains reacted only in the olfactory region that handles smells.

But when confronted by a chemical from testosterone, the male hormone, portions of the brains active in sexual activity were activated in straight women and in gay men, but not in straight men.

In a separate odor-specific study, researchers in Philadelphia found sharp differences between gay and straight men and women.

"Our findings support the contention that gender preference has a biological component that is reflected in both the production of different body odors and in the perception of and response to body odors," said neuroscientist Charles Wysocki, who led the study.

It's hard to see how a simple choice to be gay or lesbian would influence the production of body odor, he said. Wysocki's team found that gay men preferred odors from gay men, while odors from gay men were the least preferred by straight men and women and lesbians in the study. (AP)



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NATION / WORLD

KERRY PANS GAY MARRIAGE ON STATE PARTY PLATFORM

BOSTON - The Massachusetts Democratic Party adopted a party platform that includes a provision supporting same-sex marriage when it met on May 14.

Such marriage is now part of the legal and social fabric of the state and the measure is not seen as controversial by most local politicians. But not to Sen. John Kerry.

"I'm opposed to it being in the platform. I think it's a mistake," the former Democratic presidential candidate said on May 5 in Baton Rouge, La. where he was hosting a forum on children's health care. "I think it's the wrong thing, and I'm not sure it reflects the broad view of the Democratic Party in our state."

State party chairman Philip W. Johnston respectfully disagreed.

"It is important that the State Democratic Party support civil rights. We need to take a stand," he said.

A March poll showed that 71% of Democrats in the state support same-sex marriage, though support was lower among Republicans and Independents.

The state's senior senator, Ted Kennedy, supports the platform plank. Boston Globe columnist Eileen

McNamara criticized Kerry for being out of touch with politics in Massachusetts; for spending time in Louisiana and not at the state party convention, which Kerry does not plan on attending.

"As he courts heartland conservatives, Kerry is falling more and more out of step with the state party that nurtured his political career," McNamara wrote.

"It is Sen. Kerry's statements that are wrong, a mistake, and surely do not reflect the views of Massachusetts Democrats," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "It is important that the state Democratic Party support civil rights."

Kerry is not the only liberal "friend" of the GLBT community who is gun-shy about gay marriage. Even while California Democrats, led by openly gay Assemblyman Mark Leno are pushing legislation to make same-sex marriage a reality in that state, national party chairman Howard Dean urged them to put on the brakes.

California gay donors have expressed frustration at being used as ATM machines, without any attention being paid to issues such as gay marriage by the national Democratic Party. **W Bob Roehr**

FBI TO LEAD INVESTIGATION OF GAY MAYOR SCANDAL

SPOKANE, Wash. - The state of Washington will defer to the FBI in an initial investigation of Mayor James E. West, who has been accused of using his office to seek sexual

favors from other men, Attorney General Rob McKenna says.

Responding to a request from City Attorney Michael Connelly, McKenna said he plans to wait for the outcome of a preliminary FBI investigation into whether any crimes had actually occurred.

"Upon completion of its preliminary investigation, the FBI will share its conclusions with the State Patrol," McKenna said.

Patrol officials will then decide whether to begin a full investigation into any violations of state law and the FBI will decide whether to pursue any violations of federal law, McKenna said.

McKenna said he discussed his options with State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste and Spokane County Prosecutor Steven Tucker.

Christine O. Gregoire expressed sympathy for residents of Spokane who are

dealing with the scandal. Gregoire, who attended law school at Gonzaga University in Spokane, said the outing of West as a gay man and reports by *The Spokesman-Review* that he used his office to pursue sexual favors were "unfortunate" for the city.

"My heart goes out to the people of Spokane and what must be for them a very difficult time," Gregoire, a Democrat, said.

Meanwhile, Penny Lancaster, leader of the anti-gay rights group Community Impact Spokane, said the West case shows the danger of efforts such as a recent campaign to extend domestic partner benefits to city employees.

"We hope that the Spokane City Council will now realize that endorsing homosexuality through domestic partner benefits gives social approval to the very behavior that has led to public and private shame from Mr. West's actions," Lancaster said. The domestic partner ordinance, which West opposed, was passed by the council on April 25 with enough votes to overcome any veto. Lancaster said her group plans to try to overturn the law, through a referendum.

Lancaster's group has also opposed private efforts to create a so-called "gay district" in the city.

West, a conservative Republican and longtime gay-rights opponent who became mayor in January 2004, has taken a leave of absence. (AP)



Spokane Mayor JIM WEST has taken a leave of absence since his "outing."

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About 3,000 AIDS protestors lined up shoes along Washington's Pennsylvania Avenue to symbolize those lost to the disease. Photo by Bob Roehr

AIDS PROTESTORS RALLY OUTSIDE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON - The biggest AIDS demonstration in more than a decade surged through the streets of Washington, D.C., on May 5, fueled by the energy of some 3,000 people.

They placed 8,000 pairs of shoes in rows on Pennsylvania Avenue in front of the White House, symbolic of the people who die each day from HIV. Many of the participants carried shoes of friends or lovers who have died of AIDS, or tucked a note with their name into a shoe.

The group then moved across Pennsylvania Avenue to a rally in Lafayette Park.

"I am one of nearly a million Americans living with HIV/AIDS," said Terje Anderson, executive director of National Association of People with AIDS. "We are here today to say very simply, this epidemic can end, this epidemic must end, and we do know how to end it. But our leaders must lead in order for that to happen."

"Our leaders must show more than just lip service. They must provide the policies and the money that it takes to end AIDS, through research, through care and treatment, through prevention, through housing, through drug treatment, through international debt policy.

"We know that we can end this epidemic. We have the tools at our disposal and it is up to our leaders to choose to make it happen."

Anderson said that more than 600 advocates from all 50 states "visited virtually every congressional office" during the just concluded AIDSWatch, "to deliver to the members of Congress, who work for us, a message about what the real face of AIDS is in this country.

"This week they saw real faces of real people who will be impacted by their decisions. And those people told them,

you must show the leadership, you must find the resources, you must have the courage to end this epidemic.

"We are fed up with begging for crumbs from this administration," shouted Asia Russell, the fiery voice of ACT-UP Philadelphia. "Eight thousand deaths and 15,000 new infections every single day throughout the world, these are avoidable tragedies. We are standing up today as the Campaign to End AIDS to say, no more.

"I've been living with AIDS since 1985," said Charles Sessoms with Prevention Works. "What moves me forward is all of the people that I miss that we've lost, and all of the people that we are going to continue to miss if this administration, if this government doesn't begin to recognize that science is the way to move forward. A morality based philosophy is not going to end this epidemic."

Other speakers echoed those remarks. "We are here today not just to fight a virus but to change our world," said Charles King, executive director of Housing Works and cochair of the Campaign to End AIDS. "We are here today because we believe and we know in our hearts that if we join together as one voice, as one movement, we can transform our world and bring an end to this epidemic."

He urged those gathered together to organize back in their communities and to return to Washington next October as part of the Campaign to End AIDS. He led the demonstrators in a chanted pledge.

"I pledge to fight AIDS in my community and around the world; to fight for access to quality treatment and care for everyone; to fight for honest AIDS prevention; to fight for a vaccine and a cure; to fight against stigma against people for AIDS everywhere." ▼ *Bob Roehr*

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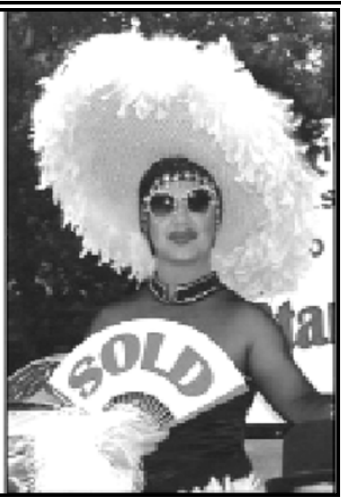
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BUSINESS

FREEDOM RESORT OPENS NEAR WALT DISNEY WORLD

KISSIMMEE - Central Florida's newest resort, Freedom Resort and Spa, has quietly opened in the last few months in the tourist-enriched area of S.R. 192 near Walt Disney World with hopes of attracting GLBT visitors who seek a home away from home.

"The GLBT community needed a place that they don't have to worry about people who question the gay community, and there are not very many places like that in the area," Benny Lacks, vice president of sales and marketing for Freedom.

He explained that research proved that there were very few vacation options given to the GLBT community. The 10-year-old property is in a prime location that has ample parking and can host events for 3,000 to 5,000 people including their Gay Days coming-out event, Splash Bash. The three-day party will feature high-energy music, pool parties, entertainment and surprise appearances. Freedom is also a presenting sponsor of this year's Gay Days festivities.

"People don't have to wait for Gay Days once a year for a relaxing retreat. They can relax here 365 days a year and not worry about being judged," Lacks said.

The resort began opening rooms to visitors around Valentine's Day and the nightclub, Club Freedom, has been active for several weeks. While currently open to the public, the master plan for the resort involves making it a members-only getaway, similar to a timeshare.

"The members we have now just love what we are doing here. We really just want to take our time and do this right," said Lacks.

There are two types of memberships that allow guests premier access to the club's many amenities. Interested patrons can take a private property tour allowing them to experience the life of a member and all the advantages it entails.



Freedom Resort and Spa will host Splash Bash during Gay Days Weekend June 3-5.

"Members are marketing back. Forty-six percent who have taken the tour have purchased packages," Lacks said. The members are not just from the Central Florida area either. Gays and lesbians from New York to Iowa have joined the ranks.

The individual membership packages will eventually include a variety of benefits, including a seven-day-a-year stay at the resort and use of the resort's planned amenities from a health spa with his and her steam rooms, massage therapy and even facials, not to mention VIP access to the obvious gem of the resort — Club Freedom.

The intensity and high energy of the city were all part of the club's design theme, but it also caters to those who simply want to sit back and have a martini.

Gorgeous marble flooring, ambient lighting and the custom-created art painted by New York artist Danny Henigman fill the upscale entertainment complex. Henigman's art is sophisticatedly placed

throughout the club adding to the already classy mood. There is room to dance until you drop as well as a lounging area for relaxing, which will ultimately be further transformed into a piano bar.

Lacks boasted about the club's originality and classy-appeal.

"We have an over 5,000-square-foot nightclub, which has an ultra lounge, VIP section and nightly entertainment," he said.

The entertainment is most important to resort owners and for a very good reason.

"Because of our location, we have to make sure that we have talent to draw the crowds out," Lacks said.

The entertainment seems never-ending and ranges from the best New York and Miami DJs and MCs to drag shows, comedians and fashion exhibitions.

Completely gated, the resort offers nearly 300 rooms that have been remodeled and given a fresh face-lift, with a refreshed landscaping enhancing the property. Patrons can choose rooms equipped with king or double beds. All rooms are outfitted with a refrigerator and microwave and cherry wood furniture. For those who splurge on a suite, a connecting room offers all of the amenities of home and maybe more. The flat screen television in the "living room" of the suite is inviting enough, but the brightly colored paint, art and flower arrangements only add to the resort's relaxing ambience.

These are only the beginning steps: Plans are in the works to open an on-site restaurant, concierge service, wedding services — even a 24-person hot tub and tiki bar for the pool area. Other plans include building condos and townhouses on the properties remaining 10 undeveloped acres.

For more information on becoming a member at Freedom Resort and Spa or to obtain a list of 2005 Gay Days events visit freedomresortandspa.com or call (800) 327-9151. **Victor Leiner**

MICROSOFT REBOOTS, NOW SUPPORTS GAY RIGHTS BILL

SEATTLE - After Microsoft Corp. was denounced for quietly dropping support for a gay rights bill in its home state, CEO Steve Ballmer has told employees that the company would publicly back such legislation in the future.

Ballmer's newest e-mail came two weeks after activists accused the company of caving to pressure from an evangelical pastor who had threatened to launch a nationwide boycott of the software company.

"After looking at the question from all sides, I've concluded that diversity in the workplace is such an important issue for our business that it should be included in our legislative agenda," Ballmer wrote.

In late April, Lorri L. Jean, the CEO of the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center, asked Microsoft to return a civil rights

award the group had given the company four years ago. She has since called Microsoft saying the company should keep the honor.

"Few of us have not made a misstep. This was a misstep. It was a big one. But Microsoft has done the right thing, and we would be proud to have them keep our award," Jean told.

Ballmer said he would not discuss what prompted Microsoft to take a neutral stance this year on a bill it had actively supported in the past.

Microsoft, one of the first companies to extend domestic partner benefits to same-sex couples, has claimed that its decision came before a meeting with Ken Hutcherson, pastor of a local church who has organized anti-gay-marriage rallies in Seattle and Washington, D.C. (AP)

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SPIRITUALITY

SPIRITUALITY BRIEFS

TAMPA MCC OFFERS PANCAKE BREAKFAST BENEFIT MAY 22

Tampa MCC will host an all-you-can-eat pancake breakfast from 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m. Sunday, May 22, at the church. Proceeds from the suggested \$5 donation will help the church's delegates pay for the travel expenses to the denomination's 2005 general conference July 21-26 in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. For details, call (813) 239-1951.

TRINITY MCC RAFFLES A 2005 MUSTANG CONVERTIBLE

Drive to church services in style as Church of the Trinity MCC is raffling off a 2005 Mustang convertible. Tickets are \$50 each, with a limit of 1,250 available. For details, call the church office at (941) 355-0847. For details, call (941) 355-0847.

LIVE AUCTION AT JOY MCC TO FEATURE ANTIQUES, VACATIONS

Antique furniture, artwork, vacation packages, dinners and other big-ticket items will be part of the Joy MCC live auction at 7 p.m., Saturday, May 21. The church is located at 2351 S. Ferncreek Ave., in Orlando. For details, call the church at (407) 894-1081.

SPIRITUALITY LISTINGS

DAYTONA BEACH / SPACECOAST

COMMUNITY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Open and Welcoming congregation is located at 1124-FF Beville Road, Daytona Beach. Contact Chris at (386)441-8431.

HOPE MCC

All faiths welcome at 500 S. Ridgewood Ave. Services are Sundays at 11 a.m., Wednesdays at 7 p.m. (386) 254-0993.

ORLANDO

CONGREGATION OF LIBERAL JUDAISM

Shabbat evening services Fridays: 1st Fridays, 7 p.m., preceded by a 6 p.m. dinner; 2nd, 3rd and 4th Fridays, 7 p.m. Rabbi Steven W. Engel. Wwww.cjorlando.org.

DIGNITY/ORLANDO

Meets for Mass and social hour, held at 5 p.m. Sundays at the GLBCC, 946 N. Mills Ave. www.dignityorlando.org.

FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ORLANDO

Worship in a gay-friendly environment every Sunday morning at 10:30 a.m.. Downtown location at 1901 E. Robinson St. (407) 898-3621. Rev. Marri Harmony.

GATEWAY FOR INTEGRATED CONSCIOUSNESS

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GOOD SHEPHERD HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUP

Nondenominational support group. Meets 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m. at Good Shepherd Catholic Church, 5900 Oleander Dr. (407) 277-3939.

HOPE UNITES CHURCH

Meets at 9 a.m. Sundays at the Chapel at Rollins College in Winter Park. Call (407) 247-5294 for more information.

INTEGRITY

Monthly meetings for gay Episcopalians. Newcomers always welcome. Call lrv at (407)895-4749.

JOY MCC

Meets Sundays at 8:30 a.m., 10 a.m., 11:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. at 2351 S. Ferncreek Ave. Call (407) 894-1081 or visit www.joymcc.com for more information.

NEW HOPE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Meets at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays at 406 E. Amelia St. Call (407) 648-8880 or visit www.new-hope.info for info.

ORLANDO CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE

Sundays 10:30 a.m. at the Maitland Civic Center, 641 S. Maitland Ave. (407) 673-3030. Cath DePalma & John DePalma, ministers.

PATHWAYS MINISTRIES & CHURCH

A non-liturgical bible-based church for all, held at the GLBCC Center every Sunday at 6 p.m. (407) 425-4527.

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UNIVERSITY UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

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UPLIFT MINISTRIES, INC.

Minority-focused ministry meets Sundays at 10:50 a.m. at House of Power, 750 S. Orange Blossom Tr. Discussion Tuesday at 8 p.m. HIV counseling/testing

Wednesday at 6 p.m. (407) 839-5051 or email upcenter@bellsouth.net.

TAMPA BAY

A.M.ERIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Gay-affirming church meets for Sunday Mass at 10:30 a.m., 7813 N. Nebraska Ave., Tampa. (813) 238-6060.

BETH RACHA.M.I.M SYNAGOGUE

Growing reform congregation with special outreach to the GLBT community. Sabbath services Fridays at 8 p.m., 719 Arlington Ave. N, St. Petersburg. (727) 822-7503 or www.bethrachamim.org.

BREATH OF LIFE FELLOWSHIP COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sundays at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. 6424 N. Armenia Ave. (813) 873-1888 or www.breathoflifefcc.org

CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE CHURCH

All are welcome at this Christian church. 1025 7th Ave. N., St. Petersburg. (727) 823-1806 or www.christ-cornerstone.com. Rev. Joyce Stone, Pastor.

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Part of the "More Light Presbyterians" seeking full participation of GLBT people of faith. Services are Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at 5 Patricia Ave., Dunedin. (727) 733-2956 or www.faith-pc.org.

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For information, call (813) 494-5736.

FRANCISCAN CENTER

Mass for the lesbian/gay community on Sundays at 7 p.m. at the Franciscan Center, 3010 Perry Ave., Tampa. (813)229-2695.

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A non-profit, interfaith day respite center for those affected by HIV/AIDS. (813) 237-3066 or www.francishouse.org.

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A fully affirming and inclusive Catholic community for all people of faith. Sundays at 10am at the Quality Inn at 20162 US Hwy 19 N (Druid Rd-south of SR 60) in Clearwater. Call (727) 709-1542 or visit www.holyspiritcch.org.

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Sunday Mass, 10:30 a.m. 10623 106th Avenue North, Largo. (727) 709-1542 or www.holyspiritcch.org

INTEGRITY OF TAMPA BAY

All are welcome at this support group for members of the GLBT community within the Episcopal church. Meets the 1st Sunday of each month at 6 p.m. at St. Catherine's Episcopal Church in Temple Terrace. (813) 988-5283.

INTERWEAVE OF CLEARWATER

Giving support to GLBT Unitarian Universalists and their heterosexual allies. (727) 531-7704.

KING OF PEACE MCC

Worship services are at 9:30 a.m. and 11:07 a.m. each Sunday at 3150 5th Ave N., St. Pete. Prayer/Communion service is at 6:30 p.m. each Thursday, followed by dinner and bingo. (727) 323-5857.

MCC OF TAMPA

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Rev. Phyllis E. Hunt, Pastor.

POTTER'S HOUSE FELLOWSHIP

Spirit-filled ministry offering hope and the love of Christ for all people. Sunday services at 10 a.m. at 3702 W. Kennedy Blvd. (813) 238-6330. or www.pottershous-fellowship.com or PoHoFellow@aol.com.

RAINBOW PROMISE MCC

Meets at 10:30 a.m. at 1145 U.S. 92 East, Auburndale. The Rev. Karen Ducham officiates. Call (863) 802-6769.

SPIRIT OF LIFE MCC

Worship service at 10:30 a.m. each Sunday at 4133 Thys Road, New Port Richey and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. (727) 849-6962 or www.jord1.com/Spirit .

ST. GEORGE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

Evangelical Anglican Church — a progressive gay-affirming church in the Anglican tradition. Call (813) 258-0750.

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Welcoming congregation worships Sundays at 10:30 a.m. at 2470 Nursery Road, Clearwater. (727) 531-7704.

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Sunday mornings at 10:30 a.m. at the Pines Conference Center, 7029 Cedar Lane, Brooksville. Call (352) 796-4457 or rbkeim@gte.net. Chaplain Bob Keim.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF ST. PETERBURG

Worship services are at 11 a.m. each Sunday, 719 Arlington Ave. N. (727) 898-3294.

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Sunday meetings at 9:45 a.m., service at 11 a.m.. 710 Crenshaw Lake Rd, Lutz. (813)909-9590 or visit ctampa.tripod.com.

UU RAINBOW OUTREACH OF TAMPA BAY

Outreach by Unitarian Universalists to the local GLBT community. For more information call (727) 531-7704.

SARASOTA

CHURCH OF THE TRINITY MCC

Traditional worship services at 9:15 a.m., and a contemporary service at 11 a.m.. Friday services at 7 p.m. with a 6 p.m. social. 7225 N. Lockwood Ridge Road. (941)355-0847 or Trinity1srq@aol.com.

DIGNITY OF SARASOTA

Mass for GLBT Catholics Sundays at Unitarian Universalist Church of Sarasota, 3975 Fruitville Road, Sarasota. (941)359-9504 or www.dignitysarasota.com.

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Open and affirming congregation. 1031 S. Euclid Ave. Dr. John Syster, Senior Minister, and Rev. Donna Papenhausen, Minister for Education (941) 953-7044 or (941) 365-4463; uccsarasota@aol.com

SOULFORCE

Meets the first Tuesday of each month at the ALSO drop in center, 1624 Ringling Blvd. Contact Luann Conaty at (941) 493-9036, e-mail Soulforce.swflorida@verizon.net, or visit www.soulforce.org.

SUNCOAST CATHEDRAL MCC

9 a.m. traditional services and 11 a.m. contemporary services on Sundays with Rev. Dr. Sherry L. Kennedy. 3276 East Venice Avenue, Venice, FL (941)484-7068 or e-mail scmcc@mindspring.com.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SARASOTA

Welcoming congregation with openly gay minister. Services at 10:30 a.m. each Sunday, 3975 Fruitville Road (941) 371-4974. Rev. Don Beaudreault.

METHODISTS SEEK RIGHT TO BAR LESBIAN MINISTER

PHILADELPHIA - The United Methodist Church will ask its highest court for the right to defrock a lesbian minister who told her congregation that she was in a relationship with another woman.

Irene "Beth" Stroud was ousted last year for violating the denomination's ban on "self-avowed, practicing homosexual" clergy. A church appeals panel voted to set aside that decision.

The Rev. Thomas Hall, the counsel for the church, said that he consulted

with Bishop Marcus Matthews, who decided to move forward with an appeal. The church will craft a letter of appeal to be submitted to its Judicial Council.

"We're just saying that we felt an egregious error was committed at the appellate level," Hall said.

The case, which likely won't be reviewed until October, stems from Stroud's announcement two years ago to her Philadelphia congregation that she was living in a committed relationship with a woman. (AP)



Openly lesbian pastor REV. BETH STROUD has appealed to the Methodist Church's courts to be reinstated.

500 PROTEST DOBSON'S FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. - At least 500 people braved cold temperatures and light snow in front of the Focus on the Family campus recently to protest the conservative Christian group's campaign against gay rights and same-sex marriage.

The protesters held rainbow flags, multicolored balloons and signs reading "God Loves Justice" and "Love Thy Neighbor." An American Indian group played drums and some protesters sang *We Shall Overcome*.

Focus on the Family, founded and led by James Dobson, has vigorously opposed gay rights and same-sex marriages, urging voters during last year's election to vote for President Bush and in favor of same-sex marriage bans that passed in 11 states.

"We are here to say, Jim, we love you enough to stop you from doing the damage you are doing to families across the nation," said Mel White, executive director of Soulforce, a national interfaith organization that supports gay rights.

Thomas Minnery, the group's director of public policy, denied that Focus delivers a message of hate but reiterated the organization's belief that homosexuality violates Biblical scripture. Dobson missed the protest, choosing to travel to Washington, D.C.

In an odd twist, a group from the staunchly anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church of Topeka, Kan., protested Focus on the Family for being gay-friendly because it encourages gays and lesbians to become heterosexual. (AP)

SPIRITUALITY

NEW WEB SITE OFFERS GAY CHRISTIAN'S PERSPECTIVE

RICHMOND, Ind. - An Earlham University student has launched a Web site, TruthSetsFree.net, to counteract the Religious Rights anti-GLBT messages — and to offer the gay Christian's perspective to conservative churches.

Site founder Justin R. Cannon created the site in March. Cannon began his own personal quest for knowledge in the same way that many gay Christians work to reconcile their faith with their sexuality.

With more and more states passing laws to prohibit same-sex marriages and increasingly anti-gay and rhetoric emerging from conservative churches, Cannon said he decided to take on those who distort biblical verses to condemn homosexuality. He was raised in an Episcopal household and plans to attend seminary to become an Episcopalian priest.

Cannon's Web site also offers free

copies of the study entitled *The Bible, Christianity and Homosexuality*.

This study shows how the Bible has been misinterpreted and in fact distorted to condemn and marginalize gays, often leading them away from the church and sometimes to such extreme measures as suicide. Cannon also revisits many of the verses that activists quote in their condemnations of gays and lesbians. ▼ *Staff reports*



College student JUSTIN R. CANNON says his Web site is a response to anti-gay messages.

TRINITY MCC'S WEEKEND FOCUSES ON RELATIONSHIPS

SARASOTA - Church of the Trinity MCC will host a Community and Friends Weekend June 4-5 featuring a seminar on relationships, a barbecue and honors for two of the church's members.

On Saturday, June 4, the Rev. Ken Martin, the pastor of Freedom Oaks MCC in Austin, Texas, will lead the seminar entitled, *10 Building Blocks to Successful Relationships*.

The church's board of directors will

then honor John Dorr and Billy Bruce Wagener. The pair have been active with Soulforce and PFLAG as well as in the development of the Palms of Manasota. Dorr and Wagener have also worked to care for the homeless and dying over the years.

For more information about the Community and Friends Weekend, call the church office at (941) 355-0847. ▼ *Staff reports*

BISHOPS TO SPANIARDS: JUST IGNORE GAY MARRIAGE LAW

MADRID, Spain - Spanish Roman Catholic Bishops urged Spaniards to disobey a new law legalizing same-sex marriage and to be conscientious objectors.

"Catholics, like all people of upright moral character, cannot be indecisive or complacent in the face of this law, but must oppose it in a clear and incisive way," the Spanish Bishops' Conference said in a statement.

The bishops also said in the state-

ment, released on Friday, that the law "is an authentic subversion of the most basic moral principles of social order" and called on Catholics to heed their consciences and refuse to apply the law.

"It's unacceptable," Socialist parliamentary deputy Diego Lopez Garrido said. "A democratic, secular state cannot accept that its powers are substituted by decisions from bodies that do not have legislative or executive powers according to the Constitution." (AP)

NO COMMUNION FOR SASH-WEARERS

ST. PAUL, Minn. - Archbishop Harry Flynn has told GLBT rights supporters they can't receive Holy Communion while wearing rainbow-colored sashes because it is seen as a protest against Catholic teaching and unacceptable to the Vatican.

Flynn's decision, conveyed in a letter this week to the Rainbow Sash Alliance USA, reverses his four-year policy of not interfering with sash-wearers receiving Communion at the Cathedral of St. Paul.

The Rainbow Sash movement is an

organization of GLBT Catholics and their families and friends.

Rainbow-sash supporters in St. Paul and a handful of other dioceses have organized their presence around the Christian celebration of Pentecost, which this year was May 15.

Brian McNeill, Minneapolis organizer of the Rainbow Sash Alliance, made the letter public Thursday and said it would not prevent people from wearing the sash a week from Sunday at the Cathedral. (AP)



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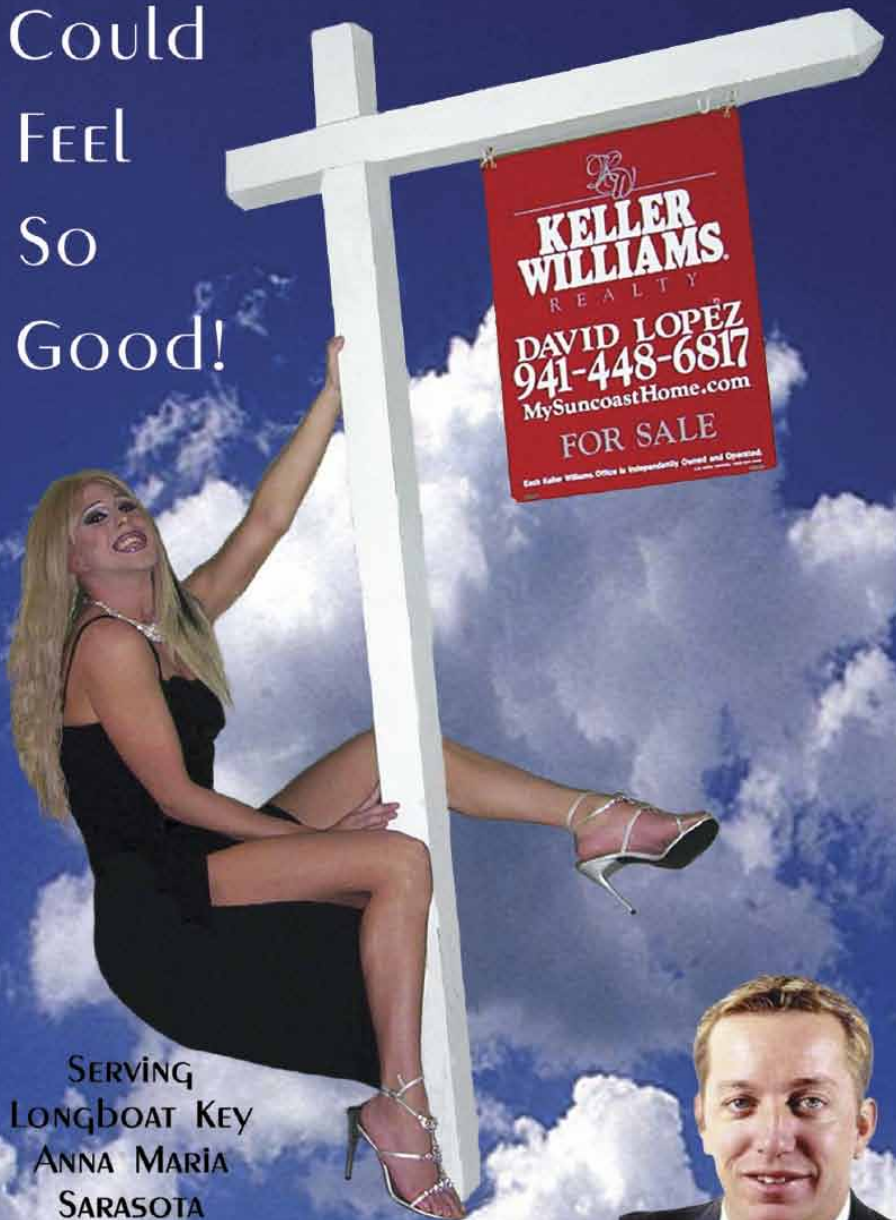
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LATE-BREAKING

JUDGE STRIKES DOWN NEBRASKA'S ANTI-GAY LAW

OMAHA, Neb. - A federal judge struck down the Nebraska constitutional amendment that banned same-sex marriage and recognition of any other type of relationship between such couples.

The May 12 decision called the amendment overly broad and restrictive of gays' access to the political process. It will be appealed.

In 2000, 70% of voters passed what became Section 29 of the Nebraska Constitution. It declared: "Only marriage between a man and a woman shall be valid or recognized in Nebraska. The uniting of two persons of the same-sex in a civil union, domestic partnership, or other similar same-sex relationship shall not be valid or recognized in Nebraska."

In 2003 at the request of a state legislator, the Nebraska Attorney General issued an opinion that the amendment prohibited the legislature from adopting a bill to allow a domestic partner with power of attorney to dispose of that partner's remains.

U.S. District Judge Joseph Batallion found "that Section 29 is indistinguishable from the Colorado constitutional amendment" that the U.S. Supreme Court struck down in *Romer v. Evans*. That landmark 1996 equal protection decision found that Colorado's anti-gay Amendment 2 excluded gays from the political process

and thus was unconstitutional.

"Like the amendment at issue in *Romer*, Section 29 attempts to impose a broad disability on a single group," he wrote. "Also, as in *Romer*, the lack of connection between the reach of the amendment and its purported purpose is so attenuated that it provides evidence that Section 29 has no rational relationship to any legitimate state interest."

"Moreover, the court finds that Section 29 was designed against the class it affects, making it status-based ... (It) goes so far beyond defining marriage that the court can only conclude that the intent and purpose of the amendment is based on animus against the class" of people known as gay or lesbian.

Battalion also concluded that the amendment "operates to prohibit persons in a same-sex relationship from working to ever obtain governmental benefits or legal recognition, a right they had before the passage of Section 29." He agreed with plaintiffs' argument that it was "an unconstitutional bill of attainder."

David Buckel, an attorney with Lambda Legal, one of the groups that filed the lawsuit, said the amendment was "in its own class as the most extreme, anti-gay law in the entire nation. This anti-gay-union law, in effect, hung a sign on the

door of the legislature saying 'same-sex couples not allowed.'"

Opponents of the amendment are, of course, elated.

"The judge was clear that states can't enact amendments that bar gay people from the democratic process," said Amy Miller, the attorney with the ACLU of Nebraska who helped to argue the case. "This decision doesn't mean that gay people can marry, get a civil union, or a domestic partnership, but it guarantees gay people the right to lobby their state lawmakers for those protections."

Social conservatives wasted no time in criticizing the decision.

"This is a blatant display of judicial arrogance where a non-elected federal judge has shown total disregard for what 70% of Nebraska voters stated, marriage is between one man and one woman," said Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council.

"The democratic voice of the people of Nebraska was muted today by a federal judge," said Matt Daniels, the president of the Alliance for Marriage, which is pushing for the Marriage Protection Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. He said it is coming down "to a race between the (MPA) and the American courts."

Local editorials, if not wholly embracing the decision, sought a workable political compromise.

The *Lincoln Journal Star* called Battalion's decision "a classic illustration of why federal judges are not elected — because 70% of those who voted in the 2000 election supported the amendment doesn't make it automatically constitutional. The law is not simply about majority rule."

"Politicians were quick to bloviate," began an editorial by the *Omaha World-Herald* in urging everyone to "just take a deep breath and consider all of the options."

It urged the legislature's dominant Republicans to "spare the taxpayers the expense of an appeal" and it outlined a compromise that would "keep the definition of marriage as it stands one man and one woman" even while negotiating a domestic partnership law."

That outcome might not be as remote as the 2000 vote suggests. The same day

POLL: HALF OF AMERICANS SHUN GAY MARRIAGE

BOSTON - Half of Americans disapprove of same-sex marriages and do not want their states to recognize gay marriages from Massachusetts, a new survey by the *Boston Globe* shows.

The poll released May 15 found that 50% of Americans disapprove of gay and lesbian marriages, while 37% approve and 11% are neutral.

The poll also found that half of Americans believe gay marriages from Massachusetts, where same-sex marriages are legal, should not be recognized in their state. Forty-six percent said they should be recognized.

Massachusetts began granting same-sex marriage licenses a year ago after a landmark decision by the state Supreme Judicial Court that declared the state could not prohibit gay marriages. More than 6,000 same-sex couples have since tied the knot in the state.

Although the poll found that half of Americans disapprove of gay marriages, 46% of those surveyed said they support civil unions that would provide gay couples with "some, but not all of the legal rights of married couples." Forty-one percent opposed civil unions.

Americans older than age 65, Republicans, Protestants, regular churchgoers and Southerners were more likely to oppose gay marriage. People under age 35, Democrats and people who do not attend worship services or attend sporadically were more likely to support gay marriages. (AP)

that the court decision came down, the legislature fell only one vote short of adding sexual orientation protection for all state employees to the state budget bill. But by a 25-to-11 vote, it did add that protection for employees at four state research institutions. ▽ Bob Roehr

SPECIAL LOOKS AT GAY TV


NEW YORK - In a late scheduling move, TV Land has announced that a new special on June 1 will look at gays and lesbians on television.

The special, *Inside TV Land: Tickled Pink*, will be aired at 11 p.m., featuring clips from shows ranging from *Maude* and *The Golden Girls* to *Xena, the Warrior Princess* and *Batman*. The hour-long program will take a look at Paul Lynde, who refused to suppress his sexuality on *Bewitched* and *The Hollywood Squares*, the lesbian appeal of shows like *Laverne & Shirley* and

Cagney & Lacey, and the influence of *Ellen*.

"Several TV shows and characters that the country has embraced — from 'Uncle Arthur' on *Bewitched* to the ladies of *Sex and the City* — have also meant a great deal to gay Americans," said Larry W. Jones, the president of TV Land and Nick at Night.

Desperate Housewives creator Marc Cherry, Diahann Carroll, Kelsey Grammer, Judy Gold and Jason Stuart are among the celebrities interviewed for *Tickled Pink*. ▽ Staff reports



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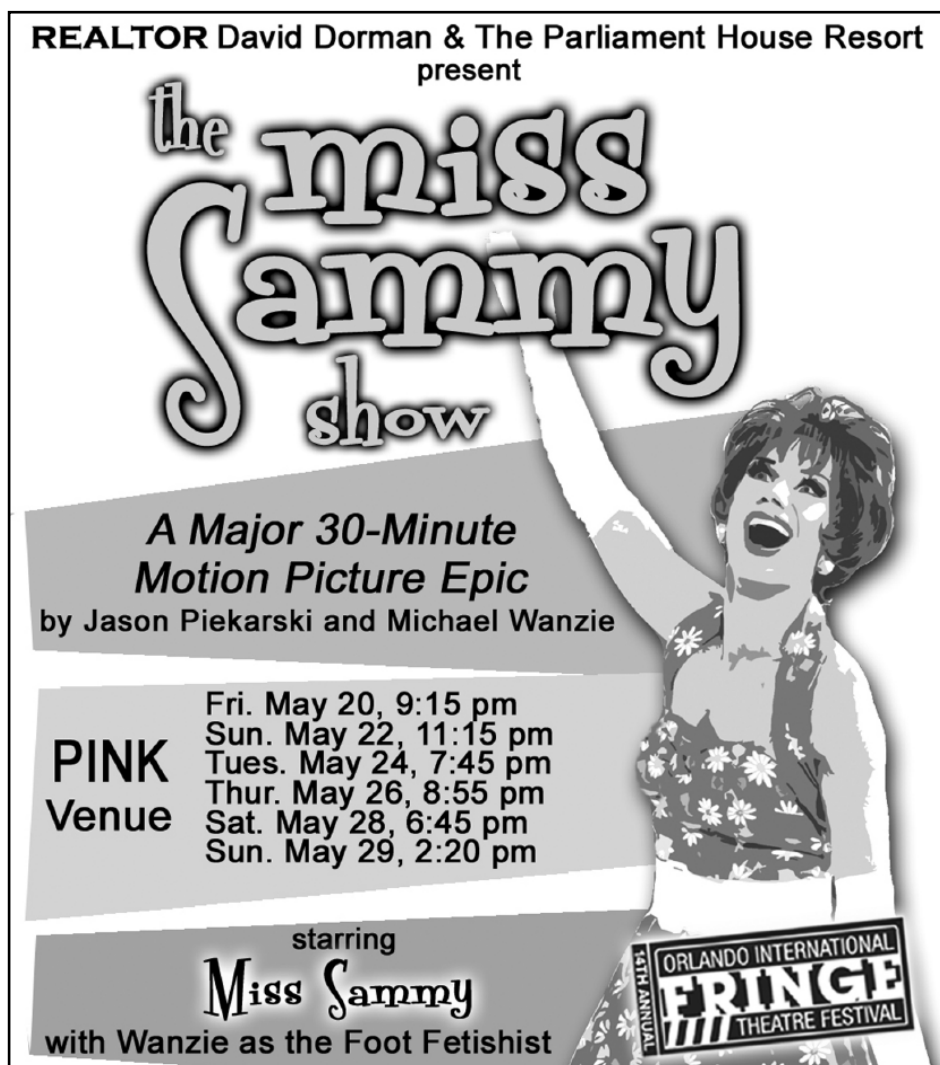
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VIEWPOINT



PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED THE BEAUTIFUL DISASTER OF THE GENTLEST 'BEN'

By Ken Kundis

During the course of my life, I have known or known of through friends, four people who have taken their own lives. Three of them were gay men. Two weeks ago, the fifth – a bar acquaintance I last spoke to three years ago – joined the inauspicious group. While the circumstances around his death remain vague, the one certain thing is that he's gone, he has left far too young, and by any measure, it is a loss.

In 1996, I was spending far too much time at the Full Moon Saloon. Shortly after discovering the bar where I would ultimately leave a large chunk of money and a larger chunk of my liver, I met a man who had, quite simply, the most beautiful eyes I had ever seen. The lightest of blues, but practically iridescent in their gleam.

He was someone who would have been called a "bear of a man" long before that phrase took on a very specific meaning in our community. Taller than most, broad as a refrigerator and with a not-insignificant belly, he personified to me the best of what "bear" meant at a time when the concept was just coming

into focus for the entire community.

He was blue-collar-masculine and imposing, and yet had a virile beauty to him. On top of everything else, he had one of the most singularly sweet natures I've ever encountered – perhaps a real-life Gentle Ben. Say what you will about bears, but they can be just as bitchy and catty as anyone else. "Ben" was pointedly different. I spent a decent amount of time around him during that period and I cannot remember a single disparaging word leaving his lips.

Lots of other stuff left his lips, however, and most of it was self-deprecating to an almost painful degree. He was the sort of man who would openly flirt with you but then ensure that his flirtation wouldn't go anywhere by insulting himself.

He was the sort of man who would openly flirt with you but then ensure that his flirtation wouldn't go anywhere by insulting himself.

"You're so handsome, but you'd never have me," he must have said to me 300 times during the three years we crossed paths weekly. In a way it was infuriating, and not just because of the repetitiousness. If I had wanted to have him, the point was already moot. I certainly hadn't ruled it out, but he cut the conversation short and in a way that almost left you speechless by how nakedly low his esteem was.

Of course, it may have been a slight ruse masquerading as harmless flirtation, but once I got to know Ben better, it took on a deeper dimension. While quick to smile and likable to the extreme, there was always an underpinning of sadness to him. He didn't

seem to heal from emotional wounds as easily as the rest of us, and each new disappointment would result in a blow upon a bruise. I remember remarking to my roommate at the time – someone with whom I shared this man's acquaintance – that he just seemed too sensitive for this world.

Regrettably, I was more right than I

could know. Ben and I had lost touch in the past six years, not that we were ever what you would call friends, exactly. But when I would see him, he was always quick with the ego stroke and an easy smile that added an extra twinkle to those astonishing eyes. In the time since I last saw him, I would hear snippets from his history through mutual friends, but I can't say I know the man he had been for the last six years of his life. I have no way of knowing what drove him to such an end.

But I do know that for most of us, being gay is not always easy. Some of us develop a thicker skin. Others are peeled bare by lost opportunities and unmet expectations. Some struggle through to a greater understanding, while others seemed crushed by the fight.


Through those beautiful, sad eyes, Ben must have seen a world he could no longer be a part of, a world with more disappointment than a sensitive, gentle man could take. Whether it is because we are victims of society's intolerance or if it is a world of hurt we have created for ourselves, we lose too many gay people – young and old – to suicide.

What we do about changing that is the only legacy we can offer to those who leave us to soon.

Good night, Ben.

Ken Kundis is an Orlando writer and native who can be reached at pavlovich0131@aol.com.

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VIEWPOINT



CURRENTS GOD COULD SOLVE SO MUCH WITH A GOOD SMITING

By Georgia Jenkins

There's a biblical device that you don't see enough of anymore: smiting. You know, as in "The angel warned the idolators that the Lord would smite them down."

People were always getting smote for one offense or another back in the olden days. Between the pharaohs and the Philistines and contrary women like Lot's wife, God was so busy that He had to have the angels step in sometimes and do some smiting in His name.

God must have been crankier back then. Today, we have a profound absence of smiting. We've got people killing people left and right in the name of someone's God. We've got self-righteous nutcases thundering that theirs is the only truth, not on street corners or in churches but in our legislative chambers.

We've got self-professed Christians who gathered at a cold Wyoming funeral to shout to a murdered gay boy's family that their faggot son will rot in hell.

We've got priests who solicit sex with children, ballplayers who shoot steroids before the game and praise Jesus after, and militant preachers who encourage their followers to "execute" doctors who perform abortions. And we're about to have the Unholy Trinity: a fundamentalist president, a fundamentalist pope and a fundamentalist chief justice (Scalia may not be a lock, but he's a pretty good bet) soon to be installed.

Clearly, this is all a sign that God has wandered off to other projects. My rationale for this is that if God were here or paying attention, there'd be some serious smiting going on. A little smiting from on high could go a long way toward answering some pressing questions for us mortals. Especially if the smiting were carefully timed and executed.

Like at Gay Days, for instance. Thousands of homos happily enjoying the theme parks of Orlando, dozens of protesters outside with their signs proclaiming to know the will of God, rabid evangelists railing that the whole rainbow tribe is headed to hell in a handbasket — now there's a perfect opportunity for a good smiting. Smite us or smite them, dammit — either way, the matter will be closed once and for all.

The last presidential election would have been a lot simpler if God had decided to weigh in and simply smite somebody. That campaign made it clear

that the country was completely divided about what mattered most to us. On one side of the line: environmentalist peaceniks who make less than \$100,000 a year, believe fundamentally in the principles of "live and let live," see the pursuit of sustainable energy technology as important, and know that insurance is necessary, but not their friend.

On the other side: very wealthy, older, mostly white folks who believe that the environment (and most people) are there to be conquered and plundered, that prayer (only Christian, of course) belongs in public schools and courts, that America has the right to keep nuclear weapons but that nobody else does, and that an increase in the wages of the lowest-paid workers will result in an economic meltdown.

Man, one side of that polarized equation could have gotten a hell of an education from a well-timed smiting.

Or what if God decided to smite ethically bankrupt, morally reprehensible, special-interest-owned elected representatives all at once while Congress was convened? Now that would get the American people paying attention to politics.

And wouldn't it just give

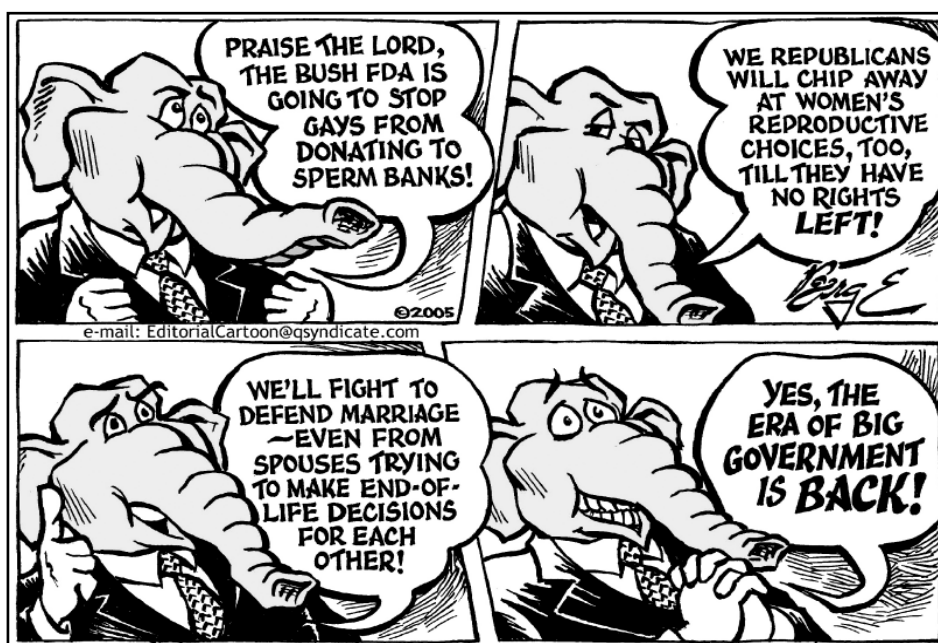
you warm fuzzies to see Reps. Tom DeLay and Rick Santorum erupt into balls of fire on the House floor? C-SPAN's session coverage, ordinarily watched only by journalists and people in hospital rooms who can only get one channel, would suddenly become the best-selling reality TV ever.

Of course, no matter which representatives were smote, you know their well-oiled spin machines would go into high gear: "Insiders insist reports of the vice-president being smote into a pillar of salt have been exaggerated. According to a White House source, Mr. Cheney is simply undergoing a therapeutic salt spa treatment at an undisclosed location." Or, "Preliminary investigation suggests the senators who burst into flames during yesterday's budget hearings may have used a particular soap in the men's room which may have had an inadvertent incendiary interaction with their clothing."

A good round of smiting might inspire the surviving Republican legislators to reclaim their political party from the right-wing zealots who have co-opted it. It might inspire the surviving Democrats, period.

One can only hope.

Georgia Jenkins can be reached at gjenkins1@cfl.rr.com.



THE VILE WORDS FROM ROME MAY ONLY GET WORSE

Since my first participation in a GLBT march on Washington, I am still trying to figure out what the "gay agenda" is all about. I think that our agenda includes just being ourselves and loving our life partners forever.

But this "gay agenda" is just a fabrication tossed out by those who terrorize our community — just like the threat of gay marriage. We only need the right same rights of legally married heterosexuals.

I think about this in light of the Catholic church's angry stances on same-sex marriage. As a leader in a Catholic gay community, I am bound to express an apology to the gay community for the pain and suffering that my church levies on us. In all honesty, the vile lan-

guage from Rome will most likely get worse, but I believe that to be a good thing. I have faith that good Catholics throughout our nation will once again ignore Rome and take the more Christian approach and acknowledge the dignity of their brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, pastors and all those whom they love and who work hard to make this temporal life a good thing.

I believe that a true Catholic agenda is to honor all of God's creation without exception and I trust that good Catholics everywhere will honor that creed. I know also that I am not about to give up my faith either for Rome or for the GLBT community. I am what I am.

**Bart T. Coyle
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ENTERTAINMENT & DIVERSIONS

IN YOUR FACE

Is it just us, or is the 2005 Orlando Fringe Festival the queerest one yet? By Dave Wiethop

"Oh, Jesus," Michael Wanzie muttered as he emceed a special one-night-only preview of the Orlando Fringe Festival recently. "Is every show this year gay?"

The showman may have been the first person to say that aloud this year — and he won't be the last. As the Fringe Festival moves into its 14th year with 52 productions, it boasts some 10 productions of particular interest to gay and lesbian theatergoers — and another dozen with real queer sensibilities to them.

And among the those GLBT-specific offerings, at least three suggest that they will have lives beyond the Fringe Festival. As regulars understand very well, securing a spot at the playfest doesn't necessarily equate high quality. But if the reputations of those

involved — and the snippets offered during that late April preview — are indication, we'll see more of a few of these shows. Among them: *Thrill Me: The Story of Leopold and Loeb*, *Pie-Face: Adventures with Anita Bryant*, Amy Steinberg's *Oh My God, Don't Stop*, and Michael Wanzie's *Dragness of God and the Naked Holy Ghosts*. (See the sidebar on page 44 for other promising shows.)

Continued on page 44



DAVID LEE plays Miss America 1959 in *Pie-Face: The Adventures of Anita Bryant*, premiering at the Orlando Fringe Festival.

GIRLS WILL BE 'GIRLS'

Betty White chats about Rose Nylund's big lesbian romance By Lawrence Ferber

They say that gold withstands time and the elements, remaining, well, golden. For proof, just look at *The Golden Girls*, which continues to sparkle in Lifetime reruns and on home video more than 10 years later. Bringing further (digital!) shine, *The Complete Second Season* is now available on DVD.

"The fun of it is it's such a generational show," muses Betty White, who played the ditzy Rose Nylund. "When we first went on the air the network wanted to address an older audience that hadn't been addressed before, but the kids picked up on it immediately and 75% of the fan mail came from kids. The mail comes in from

all over the world. Finland, Bangladesh."

Many episodes included queer content/characters, and the show broached surprisingly serious topics including menopause and HIV. The Second Season DVD set includes *Isn't It Romantic?*, an Emmy-winning episode about a lesbian

Continued on page 42



BETTY WHITE: "For 57 years in the business, I know so many gays and lesbians I don't even think about it. I take it for granted and enjoy them as friends."

WATERCOLORS



WATERCRESS I DEMAND A COCKTAIL NAMED 'WTERCRESS'

Salad by Jim Crescitelli

WELCOME TO THE 250TH edition of *WaterCress*. Imagine having 250 of anything? Dollars would be good, as would gallons of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream or consecutive days at a Mediterranean resort in northern Italy.

Two-hundred-and-fifty *not* good things would be: boyfriends (not all at the same time; I mean over the years), parking tickets, points on your driving record or days in jail. Two-hundred-and-fifty columns are a good thing, ready to be edited, proofed and sewn into a handy volume that you can read on the bus — think of *WaterCress* as inspirational and provocative musings, shaken, stirred and then steeped in vinegar with one olive.

Say! If you're a bartender reading this, I challenge you to come up with a drink called The WaterCress ... the best recipe gets published here with proper credit. Don't forget to mention where you work!

BURBANK WAS EVEN MORE FUN this time than last. Kirk and I flew out there for another autograph/celebrity show, and a good time was had by all. We communed with our friends Darin and Chris, bothering celebrities, buying signed photos of Norma Shearer, eating and gener-

ally acting like paparazzi on steroids.

The show at the convention center featured about 40 live people who were willing to sell autographed photographs, as well as let you be photographed with them. It wasn't Kirk's thing really, as he said a million times on the five-hour flight out to California. Once we got to the show, however, he became starstruck.

He was photographed with Ben Chapman, the creature from the Black lagoon, and his victim, the elegant Julie Adams; Alison Argrim, the actress who portrayed Nellie Oleson; Lee Meriwether — Catwoman to you; Diane McBain — she seduced Troy Donahue in *Parrish* as well as vexed Claudette Colbert; Elinor Donahue and Billy Gray from *Father Knows Best*; and Lainie Kazan! Lainie starred as matriarch Maria Portokalos in *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, yet she looks amazingly younger than her character. She also starred with Divine in *Lust In the Dust*.

I also bought a few autographs from dealers: Virginia Grey, who played "Pat" next to Joan Crawford's "Crystal" at the perfume counter in *The Women*; Dina Merrill, the Post Toasties heiress turned actress; and Anna Lee, who played the nosy

neighbor lady in *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane*. All in all, a very satisfying trip.

We even got to stare at the Mormons in the Salt Lake City airport during our layover and, believe me, they stared right back.

"Are you married?" an LDS lady asked Kirk on the plane. I wish I had been sitting next to her! We had dinner at Vitello's again, where that rascal Robert Blake allegedly didn't shoot his wife (not guilty, the jury said recently). There was nothing more exciting than the manicotti happening the evening we were there, but still; I'm just saying. Sunday we had brunch at a nice place in Glendale called Mimi's, and at the Hilton we ordered up room service like Maude and Vivian.

Our \$99-a-night celebrity show special was accidentally upgraded to a \$280 per night suite because we checked in early, but all was cheerfully straightened out when we checked out. It's good to be King!

SO THE VILLAGE PEOPLE are appearing at Hard Rock Live next month. Incredible! Are they the originals, or franchises like the Shirelles and the Marvelettes? I remember seeing the Sweat Quintet at the late, great Central Station in Casselberry years ago. Or maybe it was just two of them? Considering I was watching the show through a glass, dimly, who can say?

We had *such* fun with our Village People albums back in the 1970s, when dancing at clubs didn't yet entail competing for mirror space with poppers dealers in the restrooms. Back then, the People were trim,

slim, mustached and sexy, though we used always to shriek with laughter when construction worker David Hodo opened his mouth: He was just such a *girl*. But we loved them because we created them.

And the songs! Every track was a celebration of someplace gay; it was really weird seeing straight people dancing to YMCA at weddings a year after that song was a smash — Grandma rocked! Nowadays the group may very well be singing YMCAARP, but still — we love those boys!

DRAG NAMES continue to amaze me: Pepper MaShay, Shan De Leer, Bertha Venation, Frigia Dare, Tupper Ware, Ana Conda, Concepcion Annunziata Malnutrition, Dima Danz. I could go on and on, but I think I'll stop before I find myself challenged litigiously.

SUMMER IS HERE, PRACTICALLY, so could we do ourselves a favor? Let's get rid of the low-hanging, voluminous pantaloons and get ourselves into something a bit more flattering. Why hide and drape the Bahamas when so many people want to see where they might rest and dock?

There's nothing wrong with delineating your Tropic of Capricorn, so long as it's done modestly and with discretion. And always remember: Clever arranging will achieve so much more than a misplaced sock.

Jim Crescitelli is Watermark's oldest living contributor and he can be reached at WaterCressGuy@aol.com.

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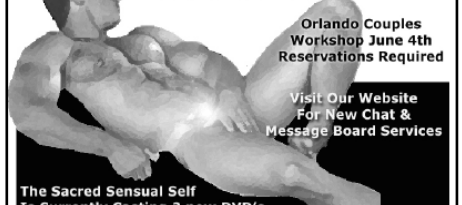
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WATERCOLORS



AMAZONS CENSORSHIP IS ALIVE AND WELL IN AMERICA

By Karen S. Murray-Parker

"Censorship: 1) The denial of freedom of speech or freedom of the press. 2) the review of books, movies, etc., to prohibit publication and distribution, usually for reasons of morality or state security."
— *Oran's Dictionary of Law*

Consider these two real-life scenarios. In 1929, Adolf Hitler was just another politician in a small country-state named Bavaria, proposing to ban what he considered objectionable reading material by and about a group of Semites. Hitler's ideology would mushroom into one of the most tragic eras of human suffering — the Holocaust.

In 2005, another politician, Gerald Allen who served a small country-state named Alabama has proposed to ban what he considered objectionable reading material about and by homosexuals. Books by gay authors such as William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Gore Vidal and Truman Capote — even William Shakespeare would be banned under a bill sponsored by Allen, whose ideology is that homosexuality is an unacceptable lifestyle.

Fortunately this time when it came time for a vote, there were not enough state legislators present for the vote, so the measure by this Republican died automatically ... until next time.

Censorship in American is an old pastime and nowhere has that more evident recently, than when Allen proposed a bill that would ban public schools from buying new copies of plays and books by gay authors or with gay and lesbian characters.

Originally, the lawmaker had even wanted to ban some of William Shakespeare's work, although under pressure from his peers he later rewrote his bill to exempt such classics. Tennessee Williams' *Cat On A Hot Tin Roof* and William Faulkner's *Death of a Salesman* — not to mention Nancy Garden's *Annie On My Mind* or Michael Wilhoite's *Daddy's New Roommate* — were all books Allen objected to based on what he called the "homosexual agenda."

Allen said that these books and their content were not healthy for America and didn't represent what this country stands for. I guess that means the U.S. Constitution no longer stands for "One Nation Undivided" or "Liberty and Justice for All."

Many First Amendment advocates spoke up against Allen's proposal including Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty

Law Center who said, "It's a Nazi book-burning. You know it's (the bill) a remarkable piece of work."

Banning books isn't anything new to American politics. Almost weekly somewhere in America, citizens and legislators try to ban material that they feel is objectionable by their personal standards.

What usually happens is that word of the banned books circulates, citizens protest and the proscription is lifted. Sad, but true, that in a land founded on the ideology of individual freedom to express and worship as they please, Americans are markedly aggressive in their desire to ban that which does not agree with their individual or religious opinions.

Whether the material in question promotes a contrary political ideology, a minority lifestyle or religion, or just an unpopular attitude, the American solution is often to legally ban the offending material.

"It's a Nazi book-burning. You know, the bill a remarkable piece of work."

Few people realize that the great Irish writer James Joyce's classic work *Ulysses* was prohibited in the U.S. and by the U.S. Postal Service from 1918 to 1930. Our government has also actively seized and banned distribution of many books including Voltaire's *Candide*, Shakespeare's *Twelfth*

Night — even *Little Red Riding Hood* by the Brothers Grimm (Big Bad Wolf was a pedophile, after all).

Now the Republican chairman of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting Service, is pressuring PBS executives to correct what he and fellow conservative party members perceive as a liberal bias on that station's programming. In particular he objected to the political leanings of guests on one program, *Now With Bill Moyers*.

That sort of censorship and pressure to direct PBS toward a more conservative ideology is directly in conflict with the federally funded mission with a stated mission is to ensure the vitality and diversity of public television and radio.

The fox is out among the hens, folks, and only you can put a definitive stop to this threat to freedom of speech and civil rights. Pick up those pens or dash off e-mails to your political representative and don't spare the rhetoric. Your future liberty may depend on just how vocal your voice is. Big Brother is at the door.

Karen S. Murray-Parker, a nursing student and writer who lives in Sarasota can be reached at dolphinwahini@aol.com.

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April's Shower

May 25th, 7:30 p.m.

Palladium Theater in downtown St. Petersburg
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4th Wednesday's: June 22nd (Pride Celebration) • July 27th • August 24th • September 28th

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April's Shower

Wednesday, May 25th, 2005

Palladium Theater

253 5th Avenue North, St. Petersburg, FL

6:00 p.m. Happy Hour

7:30 p.m. Film Starts

Ticket Price: \$8.50

April's "perfect" baby shower is marred by personal revelations and other surprises supplied by the guests.

Genre: Comedy, Romance

Official Website: AprilsShower-themovie.com

Audience Award: Philadelphia G & L Film Festival

Cinema Sponsor: **sundance**
CHANNEL

WATERCOLORS

POLLY WANTS A HOMO

When a parrot becomes jealous of one gender, a same-sex household may be the right move By Victor Leiner

ORLANDO - This off-white male cockatoo that shall remain nameless hates men. I mean, I can't personally relate to him, and there isn't time to anyway because this bird doesn't play.

He knows when a male has walked through the front door of his home. He immediately goes into defensive mode, feather's puffed and high-pitch squealing in progress before anyone is even near his cage. He can sense a male presence, and he doesn't like it.

Nameless was given to Corene Fry, parrot consultant and owner of Beak to Beak, after he developed an aggressive attitude toward the "real" man of his former house. His newly adopted mom, Corene, has helped to calm him of his deep-rooted hatred for the male species, and his real mom comes to visit him and

BEAK TO BEAK

For more information about Corene Fry, Beak to Beak, Parrots with Pride and other animal-friendly endeavors, visit BeaktoBeak.com or e-mail Fry at beaktwobeak@aol.com.

checkup on his progress. But, he has formed a bond with the fairer sex and will probably remain uncomfortable with males — no matter how much Corene works to socialize him.

This behavior is not uncommon. So, where lies the solution to handling birds with similar dispositions? Parrots with Pride. She wants to put parrots who hate men into lesbian households and misogynistic birds with gay males.

Corene has seen this sadly familiar

attitude before. The avid parrot and overall animal lover is ready to do something about it. Parrots with Pride will be similar to a matching service. Both sides of the family will have decisions to make about compatibility, but don't fear, Corene already has a game plan.

"I will look at what type of bird the couple wants," Corene said. "What type of a lifestyle do they lead and how big a bird do they want?"

She will then pursue a bird that is ready to be adopted and will fit your needs best.

"People are always bringing me birds, and I have people coming to me constantly who have birds that have become nippy with either the males or females of the family," Corene said.

"I want Parrots with Pride to appeal to same-sex couples for an adoption. To pair them with birds who have bonded to one sex over the other," Corene

Continued on page 37



Orlando-based parrot consultant CORENE FRY says she created Parrots with Pride to move birds with jealousy issues into homes where they'll feel more comfortable.

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WATERCOLORS

PARROT from page 34

explained.

If you are concerned you might not be ready up for the responsibility, Corene reassured, "I will walk the adopting same-sex couples into (creating) their new family."

She means business. Corene will work with the troubled bird and rid it of any bad habits it may have learned while living with its previous family. In exchange for adopting one of these treasured birds, which if purchased can set you back more than \$1,000, the new families will buy one of Corene's fairly priced after-care services as part of the adoption agreement.

The hands-on services include everything from behavioral training to actually helping same-sex couples choose the bird that will work best for them. She even has a group of parrot lovers who meet at the Downtown Farmers Market, Parrots in the Park, where Corene offers additional tips and stories as well as a magnificent atmosphere for socializing your new family member.

So how do these birds become so aggressive toward one sex and instantly fall in love with the other? Well, most birds will choose someone to bond with in the family, especially if they are not socialized and do not have interaction with various people and other birds.

But it was obvious by observing the 10 assorted species of birds throughout Corene's house — macaws, cockatoos, pigeons and doves — that interpreting this behavior in these interesting species brimming with personality and attitude would be dramatic and entertaining.

It is almost laughable to think that a bird could be jealous. But, as Corene explained, it is not only possible — it is the reason behind this aggressive behavior.

"They can bond very quickly to a particular person than they can or will to others. Then it becomes an issue of jealousy," Corene explained.

It gets even better because this bird behavior couldn't be more similar to a stereotypical heterosexual situation. Imagine, for a moment, a bar scene: Good-looking people are dancing and having a good time. An attractive woman is standing near the bar alone. She is hit on by a man — but oh, no — she isn't at the bar alone at all, and her muscle-bound boyfriend is ready to kick some major butt.

Strangely, not unlike the muscle-bound jealous lover ready to convey his dominance in a punch, the male birds gravitate toward the female of the family becoming aggressive to anyone who encroaches upon that bond — from biting the intruding male to belting out a high-pitched, almost unbearable screech when the competition is near.

Not all birds will have this problem, and curbing it or avoiding it completely is easier than one might think, "It is really great to socialize birds from the begin-

ning. Keep them around children, men and women allowing everyone equal time with the bird so they don't bond to one person only and become aggressive to others," Corene said.

In the meantime, Parrots with Pride is a great way to find homes for birds who were not lucky enough to be raised and trained correctly. Same-sex couples can offer these birds that prefer one-sex over the other a home where they will be comfortable and content.

The program is not yet in full-working commission.

"It's an idea right now that I am ready to get started," she said.

Her protective fine-feathered friends may well agree. ▼

Parrots, cockatoos and other birds can become very protective of humans — particularly those of one sex or the other, according to consultant Corene Fry. Photo by Victor Leiner



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WATERCOLORS

CALENDAR of Events

ART & EXHIBITS

ORLANDO

DURK ON DISPLAY

Dave Durk — also known as durkART — exhibits his latest works at the Herndon Branch of the Orlando Public Library through June. Durk says he listens to 1970s and 1980s disco while he creates his works — the upbeat, happy rhythms are reflected in the bright, perky colors of his works. "It's the music of a community coming together on a Friday or Saturday night," Durk says, "I remember those times well."

CURIOUS GEORGE AND FRIENDS

Celebrate the art of H. A. and Margret Rey at the Orlando Museum of Art through August 28. Art and stories, from early drawings and sketches to full-color illustrations and dummy pages from the books, will be on display. The summer long exhibition is designed to encourage kids to read — though it wouldn't kill you to put down that copy of *Honcho* or *On Our Backs* and pick up something of substance, now would it? Among the highlights are full-color drawings from the seven original *Curious George* titles. The museum is located at 2416 N. Mills Ave. For information, visit www.omart.org.

TAMPA BAY

JAIME AVILA: LIFE IS A CATWALK

The Museum of Fine Arts presents 16 compelling photographs by this gifted young Colombian artist in his first museum exhibition in Florida. In this series, Avila explores the world of the radioactivos, marginalized youth essentially living on the streets of Bogotá, and their relationship with the larger urban environment, especially the architecture around them. The show, which runs through June 12, is also the MFA's contribution to Arte 2005, Tampa Bay's Festival of the Americas. The museum is located at 255 Beach Drive N.E., St. Petersburg. For details call (727) 896-2667 or visit fine-arts.org.

UNDERSTANDING FORM AND FUNCTION: WHY WAS THIS MADE?

The first in a series of three exhibitions that thematically explore the highlights of the Museum's permanent collection, this show examines the ways in which cultures and civilizations view and subsequently respond to life challenges from antiquity through the mod-

ern era. Greek ceramic vessels produced in response to the needs of ancient Greek social customs — centering on the consumption and use of wine, water and olive oil — inspired shapes which are sometimes quoted in contemporary art, and which we may initially think of as new although they are not. The exhibition at the Tampa Museum of Art runs through July 10. The museum is located at 600 N. Ashley Drive; for more information call (813) 274-8130.

BALLET

ORLANDO

CINDERELLA

The fabled story of a girl who finds love when she loses a shoe — wait, didn't this happen to Sarah Jessica Parker on *Sex and the City*? — comes to life with the troupe's season-ender. Orlando Ballet School Director, Peter Stark, has choreographed a brand new full-length *Cinderella* for Orlando Ballet. This most popular fairy tale encompasses the essential elements that make up a great classic ballet; a helpless heroine, grotesque villains, mysterious magic and a handsome prince. The show premieres May 20 at the Bob Carr Performing Arts Center and runs through May 22. Tickets are available at the box office or by calling (407) 426-1739.

THEATRE

ORLANDO

AUNTIE AND ME (A K A VIGIL)

The tale of an old woman who refuses to do the decent thing and die. No, it's not the Phyllis Schlafly story; it's the tale of an eccentric bachelor with a comically miserable life who is summoned to the deathbed of an aunt he hasn't seen in many years. "I'm worried about your health," the man tells his relative at one point, "It seems to be improving." A comedy both outrageous and poignant, the Orlando Theatre Project production takes the stage at Seminole Community College's Fine Arts Theatre through May 22. For reservations and information, call (407) 328-2040 or visit Otp.cc.

THE LADIES OF EOLA HEIGHTS

Is it just us or has this show been extended as many times as Cher's alleged farewell tour? Actually, the play's been so successful, so well

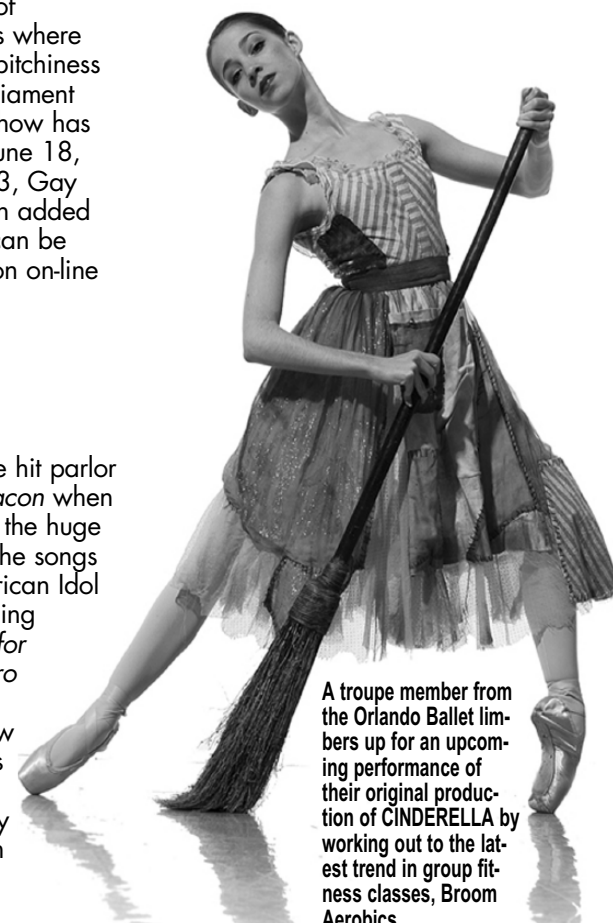
received and sold out each week they appear, Miss Sammy, Michael Wanzie, Doug Ba'aser and Tommy Wooten keep the shelf-life running on their hit so that all can get a chance to enjoy the bitter-sweet tale. It's the latest saga of Wanzie's Orlando anthologies where comedy, drama, lip-sync and bitchiness culminate at 8 p.m. at the Parliament House Footlight Theater. The show has now been extended through June 18, though a special Friday, June 3, Gay Days Weekend show has been added as well. Tickets are \$15 and can be reserved at (407) 540-0317 on on-line at Wanzieanddoug.com.

SARASOTA

FOOTLOOSE

Now you too can play the hit parlor game *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon* when you see this musical based on the huge hit movie of the same name. The songs covered by your favorite American Idol contestants are all here, including *Almost Paradise*, *Let's Hear it for the Boy*, *Holding out for a Hero* and *Footloose*. Music for the show was written by Tom Snow and Dean Pitchford, but there's additional music from the movie by Eric Carmen, Sammy Hagar, Kenny Loggins and Jim Steinman. The show opens at the Golden Apple Dinner

Theater May 31, and runs through July 24. Call (941) 365-6348 for more information or visit www.thegoldenapple.com. ▼



A troupe member from the Orlando Ballet limbers up for an upcoming performance of their original production of *CINDERELLA* by working out to the latest trend in group fitness classes, Broom Aerobics.

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ORGANIZATIONS



ORGANIZATIONS & MEETINGS

DAYTONA BEACH/SPACE COAST

BREAKTHROUGH

Networking organization for gays and lesbians in Seminole and Volusia counties. (407) 668-6112.

BREVARD LESBIANS

Lesbian social group. E-mail penny@digital.net or visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/BrevardLesbians>.

COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIP

Member of HIV/AIDS Florida Community Planning Group. Meets at Volusia County Health Department. (904) 238-4727.

DAYTONA BEACH REGIONAL BEARS ASSOCIATION

www.gaydaytona.com/DBRBA.htm or e-mail us for more information at gntlbear@comcast.net.

FUN COAST BEARS

Social group that meets the 3rd Suns each month at 3 p.m. at Rumors on Nova Road, Holly Hill. E-mail bears@funcoastbears.org or go to www.funcoastbears.org for more info.

GALBA

GLBT group. Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University student group. (904) 226-7222. www.db.erau.edu/campus/student/clubs/galba/index.html.

GAY/BI MARRIED MEN RAP GROUP

Peer counseling and support group. Meets the last Mon. (407) 777-9833.

GREATER DAYTONA BUSINESS GUILD

Guild of gay-friendly businesses. Meets every third Mon.; 7 p.m. (386) 322-8003; www.gaydaytona.com.

OUTREACH, INC.

HIV/AIDS service organization. Offers testing, counseling and support groups. (904) 255-5569; www.outreachinc.org.

OVER THE RIVER

GLBT and supporters social group for those living in Volusia and Seminole counties. Meets second Fri. (407) 400-2879; <http://hometown.aol.com/nolikehypocrites/index.html>.

PFLAG DAYTONA

Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians & Gays. Meets third Tues.; 7 p.m.; Hope MCC in Daytona, 500 S. Ridgewood Ave. (US1). (386) 322-4169; support@pflagdaytona.org; www.pflagdaytona.org.

SPECTRUM

Social group for GLBT and supporters. Meets every other Thurs. (904) 228-8187; rapunzel69@hotmail.com.

ORLANDO

AA WAKE UP CALL-FRIDAY

Twelve-step AA program geared towards diversity and fellowship. Meets Fri.; 7 p.m.; GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

AA WAKE UP CALL-SATURDAY

12-step AA group. Saturday evenings at 7 p.m.; GLBCC (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

AA WAKE UP CALL - SUNDAY

Twelve-step program. Meets each Sun.; 10 a.m.; GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

BEARS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Social group for bears and their admirers. Meets second Sun.; 4 p.m.; Full Moon Saloon. (407) 896-0239; www.bocf.org.

BMCO

Big Mens Club of Orlando. Social club for big men and their admirers. Visit communities.msn.com/BIGMANSCLUBO-FORLANDO/, whatsnew.msnw or call Ricky at (407) 422-6040 or (407) 310-7612.

BOOKLOVERS

American Association of University Women social group for those who love to read. Meets first Tues. (407) 677-1186.

CENTAUR

Central Florida AIDS United Resources. Offers counseling, support groups, educational programs and HIV testing. Phone (407) 849-1452. Hotline: (407) 835-4130.

CENTRAL FLORIDA GAY & LESBIAN LAW ASSOCIATION

Networking group for GLBT legal professionals. Meets second Thursday of the month. Contact Larry Smith (407) 838-4052; LSmith@Cabaniss.net

CODA

Twelve-step program dealing with codependency. Meets Tues. at 7 p.m. at the Center. (407) 228-8272.

COLAGE

Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere. A youth support group for ages 13-20. (407) 897-2266; BardMerlin@aol.com.

COUNTRY SATURDAY NIGHTS

GLBT country music, dancing, refreshments. For more info: visit <http://home.earthlink.net/~countrysaturdaynight/>

CRYSTAL CLEAR

Crystal Meth Anonymous provides support, fellowship, and creation of a safe environment in which to stay clean. Saturdays 4-5:30 p.m., GLBCC, 946 N. Mills Ave., Orlando. (407) 228-8272

DIGNITY

Meets every Sunday at 5 p.m. at the Center. Come and celebrate mass and enjoy a social hour afterward.

FLORIDA GREAT OUTDOORS

A social outdoor recreation group for the GLBT community. Check www.floridagreatoutdoors.org for a schedule.

GBT MEN

Meets at the Center every Weds. at 7:30 p.m. We are a support / discussion group for adult gay, bisexual, or transgendered men.

GLBCC-THE CENTER

Hosts various social groups and offers programs assisting the GLBT community. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

GLBT DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS OF SEMINOLE COUNTY

Meets at 7 p.m., second Thursday of the month at GLBCC; kenkaz@cfl.rr.com.

GLBT YACHT CLUB

Meet other GLBT boat owners for day trips to Disappearing Island and other destinations. Call John (407) 353-5529.

GNOMES

Gay Nativist Orlando Males Evolving Socially. For information visit www.naturalmales.org/gnomes or call (407) 540-9391.

GREATER ORLANDO COUPLES

A social group for same-gender couples. Call (407) 246-4726 or visit www.greaterorlandocouples.org.

HARBOR HOUSE

Orange County Center Against Domestic Violence. Crisis Line: (407) 886-2856. Community Outreach: (407) 895-6099. Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Hotline: (800) 500-1119.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

Meets fourth Tues of the month at The Center at 7 p.m. www.uniteHRCFL.org

LAMBDA CAMPING

Gay and lesbian campers. Camping rallies once a month. (407) 831-4926.

LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS OF ORLANDO

Inclusive, diverse Republicans. Meets first Tues.; 7 p.m.; Orange County Republican Headquarters, Royal Oak Village Shopping Center, 148 S. Semoran Blvd. (407) 896-7745; www.lcrlorlando.com.

LONG YANG CLUB ORLANDO

International social group for single men and couples of Asian and various ethnic backgrounds. Visit www.longyangclub.org, email orlando@longyangclub.org or call Billy at (407) 908-1122.

METROPOLITAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

General meeting first Thurs. (407) 420-2182.

NA RAINBOW RECOVERY

Twelve-step narcotics recovery program geared toward gay community. Meets Wed.; 7:30 p.m.; First United Methodist Church, 142 E. Jackson. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

OPEX

Pansexual support group. Meets first Saturday of each month at 2 p.m. at the GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

ORLANDO GAY CHORUS

Community chorus; welcomes everyone. Meets Wed.; John & Rita Lowndes building. (407) 841-SING; www.orlandogay-chorus.org.

ORLANDO GAY PARENTS GROUP

Play groups, social events, networking for parents. Meets first Saturday of the month. (407) 420-9955; boyds@earthlink.net.

ORLANDO QUEER ACADEMICS

O-QUAC. Social/resources group for GLBT academics and intellectuals. cschippe@mail.ucf.edu; tpugh@mail.ucf.edu.

ORLANDO SOCIAL CLUB

A gay men's group to network with other professionals meets monthly. Go to <http://hometown.aol.com/flausaguy/myhomepage/club.html>.

ORLANDO YOUTH ALLIANCE

Central Florida's GLBTQ youth group meets each Tuesday night at 6:15 p.m. For meeting location, call (407) 599-7453.

PFLAG

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Meets third Wed.; 7:30 p.m.; First United Methodist Church. (407) 236-9177.

POLY-CENTRAL

For the polyamorous, poly-curious, poly-friendly or those interested in the concept of loving more than one person. Meets once a month. www.polycentralfl.com, (321) 984-8463 or polycentral@mail.com.

POSITIVELY SOBER

A twelve-step recovery/support group for people living clean and sober with HIV. Sun. 7 pm at GLBCC. PozSoberOrlando@aol.com.

PRIME TIMERS OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

Social/support group for gay and bisexual men over 50 and younger men who admire them. Meets last Sat.; 3:30 p.m.; Parliament House Footlight Theatre. (407) 884-9834; PRIMETIMECFL@aol.com.

RAINBOW DEMOCRATIC CLUB

GLBT group of Democrats and Independents. Meets fourth Mon.; 6:30 p.m.; GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

RAINBOW SPIRIT

Discussion group for gay and bisexual men about lifestyle choice and spiritual development. Meets at Center of Light Church & Spiritual Center. (407) 228-0101.

REFLECTIONS

Social/support group for men and women of any gender or orientation ages 20-30. Meets Wed.; 7:30 p.m.; GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

S.O.E.L. — SISTAHOOD OF EBONY LESBIANS

African-American women come together to grow socially and emotionally. Meets first Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. at the Center. <http://lesbianlit.meetup.com/85>.

TRANS CENTRAL STATION

A transgender, transexual, transvestite, cross dressers, & gender benders discussion group meets first Tues., 7 p.m., The Center. (407) 228-8272.

TRIDENT INTERNATIONAL CENTRAL FLORIDA

Levi/leather/uniform social group. Meets first Sun.; 1 p.m.; GLBCC. (321) 549-0713; www.tridentcfl.org.

UCF GLBSU

University of Central Florida Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Student Union. Meets Tue.; 8 p.m.; Student Union Building on Main Campus. ucfglbsu@ucf.edu.

THE WOMYN'S EXCHANGE

Social/support group for all womyn of all orientations. Meets Thurs.; 7:30 p.m.; GLBCC. (407) 228-8272; www.glbcc.org.

TRIANGLE TEES

A gay & lesbian golfing group that works with area courses to get special tee times and group rates. www.triangletees.com.

TRIDENT INTERNATIONAL CENTRAL FLORIDA

Levi/leather/uniform social group. Meets first Sunday of the month; 1 p.m.; GLBCC. (321) 549-0713; www.tridentcfl.org

WILLOW

Social group for Lake County women. Meets 2nd Sunday, 4 pm at Tangerine Improvement Society Bldg, 7101 Wright Ave., Tangerine. Contact Box 1047, Sorrento, FL, 32776 or FloridaWillow1@aol.com.

WOMEN HERE AND THERE

A group of lesbians and gay-friendly women. To learn more about WHAT, visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/W-H-A-T>.

ZEN SITTING GROUP

A place for GLBT Zen Practitioners. Second and fourth Tues. of each month at 7 p.m. at Avalon on Hillcrest. For more info visit www.lonekimono.org/ZenAtTheCenter.

POLK COUNTY

FOUR CORNERS RAINBOW FAMILY SOCIAL

Dining out, meditation, movies and more. For more info, visit: www.geocities.com/caulhunter_98/BNAS.html

POLK COUNTY GAY LESBIAN ALLIANCE

Check its Web site, www.pcgl.org, for activities and announcements.

POLK COUNTY GAY AND LESBIAN INFO LINE

For the GLBT community in Polk County, (863) 229-8126.

POLK COUNTY HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUP

Meets on the second and fourth Wednesdays at 7 p.m. at The Mission, 180 E. Central Ave., Winter Haven. Call Gary (863) 401-3204 or Merry at (863) 606-9288.

SARASOTA/BRADENTON AREA

ALSO OUT YOUTH

GLBTIQ group for youth between the ages of 13-21. Drop-In Center. Email: program.coordinator@alsoyouth.org, (941) 951-ALSO (2576). Youth crisis pager (941) 951-ALSO (2576)

CHICK HAPPY HOUR

Women get together monthly for cocktails and socializing. Call (941) 544-0945 or write to ChickHappyHour@aol.com for details.

DYKE NIGHT LESBIAN DISCUSSION GROUP

Lesbians ages 21-35 and friends gathering. Meets first Sun. of each month. program.coordinator@alsoyouth.org or call (941) 951-2576.

GAY & LESBIAN INFOLINE

Provides information about local faith, social, support organizations and events to the GLBT community. (941) 923-INFO.

GLAD

A Manatee Community College social and support group. <http://hometown.aol.com/mccglad/myhomepage/gaylesbian.html>.

GULF COAST LOG CABIN CLUB

"Inclusive, diverse Republicans." GulfCoastLogCabin@iname.com or jimbofla@yahoo.com.

GULF COAST MEN'S CHORUS

Meets Mon.; Universalist Unitarian Church, Sarasota. (941) 377-9043; [gulfcoastmenschorus.org](http://www.gulfcoastmenschorus.org).

PFLAG SARASOTA

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. Meets third Tue.; 7:30 p.m.; Unitarian Church. (941) 378-3536.

PRIMETIMERS SARASOTA

Social group for mature gay and bisexual men and those younger men who admire them. (941) 359-8212; ptimes@tampabay.rr.com; <http://home.tampabay.rr.com/ehurley/ehurley/>.

READING GROUP

Gay men's reading group; fourth Weds. each month. (941) 359-8212.

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA BUSINESS GUILD

Meets third Mon.; 6 p.m.; Quay. (941) 953-8419; www.swfbg.org.

SUNSET BEACH WALK

Meet Wednesdays by 6:30 p.m. (Daylight Savings Hours only) at the Siesta Beach Pavilion.

TRINITY CHARITIES, INC.

HIV/AIDS service organization. (941) 355-0847; www.trinitycharities.org.

AIDS AWARENESS

An HIV education group. (727) 502-0188 for more information.

BA.M.ACT

Local chapter of the National Organization of Black and White Men Together. Call (727) 461-2617 or visit www.geocities.com/bamact.fl.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT GROUP

Meets second and fourth Thurs.; 7 p.m.; The Center of Tampa Bay. (813) 871-2232.

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ORGANIZATIONS

Meets the first Weds of the month. Visit www.boatand-scubawest.com.

BROTHAS SPEAK

Discussion group for same-gender-loving men of color. Meets second Sun., 5 p.m. at the Equality Florida Offices. (813) 236-8809.

CRESCENDO: THE TAMPA BAY WOMEN'S CHORUS

Lesbian, feminist chorus. Meets Sun. 6:15 p.m. MCC Tampa. (813) 679-7585; CrescendoSings@aol.com.

THE CENTER OF TAMPA BAY

Located next to Equality Florida, 3708 Swann Ave. (813) 875-8116; www.tampacenter.org.

EQUALITY FLORIDA-HILLSBOROUGH

Meets third Thurs. 6:30 p.m. 3708 W. Swann Ave. (813) 870-3735.

EQUALITY FLORIDA-PINELLAS

Meets last Thurs. 7 p.m. at Positive Expressions. (727) 527-3197.

EZRA GROUP

S.A.G.E. sponsored support group for GLBT persons who have experienced a recent death or loss. Meets second Sat. (813) 932-4359.

FACT HIV/AIDS SUPPORT GROUP

Meets 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Tues. from 6:30-8 p.m. at 136 4th St. N., St. Petersburg. (727) 895-4439.

FACT SPANISH-SPEAKING HIV/AIDS GROUP

Meets 1st and 3rd Friday at 136 4th St., N., St. Petersburg. (727) 895-4439.

FACE TO FACE YOUTH GROUP

Youth group for GLBT and their supporters ages 14-21. Meets Sun. 7 p.m. (813) 935-4101; Fce2FceYouth2aol.com.

FAMILY BRIDGE CLUB

Playing card variety. (813) 832-2999.

FLAMINGO AUTO GROUP

Central Florida Region Lambda Car Club International. www.hometown.aol.com/flamingoautogr/.

FLORIDA GENDER EQUALITY PROJECT

An education and advocacy organization for the trans/gender community and our allies. Meets 2nd Sat. at Equality Florida. (813) 870-3735 or www.forge.8m.com.

FLORIDA GULF COAST COUPLES

Social group for same gender couples. P. O. Box 7925 Tampa, FL 33679-7925 email: chaircouple@fgcc.com web: www.fgccouples.com

FREEDOM RINGS ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Pasco County's only AA meeting for GLBT individuals. Meets Sun. 7 p.m. Spirit of Life MCC. (727) 849-6962.

FRIENDS CLUB FOR GAY MEN

Gay men's social club. A wholesome, healthy atmosphere to make new friends. (813) 960-1664.

FRONT RUNNERS OF TAMPA BAY

Not-for-runners only GLBT club. Meets Sat. 9 a.m. Old Hyde Park Village and Wed. 6:45 p.m. Fred Ball Park. (813) 891-7098.

GAY & BISEXUAL MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Meets Wed. 7 p.m. at The Center, 3708 W. Swann Ave.

GAY & BISEXUAL SENIOR MEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP

Meets Fri. 10 a.m. at The Center, 3708 W. Swann Ave. (813) 875-8116.

GAY AND LESBIAN ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

Meets every evening; 8:15 p.m.; 3644-A Henderson Blvd. (813) 273-8741.

GAY FUN CLUB

Movies, amusement parks, dining out, water parks, beaches, picnics, etc. 18 and up. Contact Steve at (727) 344-0512.

GAY MEN'S OUTDOOR GROUP

Biking, hiking, canoeing, diving. (813) 961-6871

GAY SKATE

Tue. 9 p.m. United Skates of America. (813) 876-5826; members.aol.com/tampagayskate.

GIRL TALK

Tuesdays at The Center, 3708 W. Swann Ave. (813) 645-2213; Girtalkers@aol.com.

GLBT PARENTS OF TAMPA BAY

Social group for GLBT parents (custodial and non) and their children. Meets monthly. Cathy_James@yahoo.com.

GLSEN TAMPA BAY

Organization working to end anti-gay bias in Hillsborough County schools. Meets third Fri. (813) 258-8817; GLSENTB@aol.com.

HIV TAMPA BAY

A Web site devoted to helped those living with HIV and AIDS in the Pinellas and Hillsborough counties area. www.hivtampabya.net.

INTERWEAVE/ST. PETERSBURG

Meets at UU Church of St. Petersburg. (727) 898-3294.

KAPPA XI OMEGA SORORITY

Natiowide community-based sorority for professional adult lesbians headquartered in Tampa. Meets every other Monday 9 p.m. online. membership@kappaxiomega.org or www.kappaxiomega.org.

L.I.G.H.T./FACT

Free dinner on the first Tues. of the month. 140 4th St. N at the St. Petersburg Cathedral Parish Hall. (727) 895-4439.

THE LINE

Gay & Lesbian Crisis/Service of Tampa Bay, Inc. Phone volunteers 7-11 p.m.; computerized system 11-7 p.m. (727) 586-4297.

LOG CABIN REPUBLICANS OF TAMPA BAY

Meets 3rd Weds of each month. 7 p.m. at HoHo's chinese, 9 p.m. at Different Grind. (727) 455-9866, lctampabay.com

L.O.L.A.

Lesbians On the Lookout Association. Social club for womyn. pianolez@aol.com.

METROPOLITAN CHARITIES

A community services organization offering HIV/AIDS case management, counseling services, referrals and thrift store. In Pinellas and Hillsborough counties. (727) 321-3854. metrocharities.org.

THE METRO CENTER

Pinellas County's GLBT center. Metrocharities.org/ or call (727) 321-3854.

NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

Open meeting for gays and lesbians. Meets Thurs.; 8:15 p.m.; GALAA Club. ecg@tampabay.rr.com.

OUT OF THE CLOSET THRIFT STORES

All proceeds benefit AIDS and breast cancer patients in St. Petersburg and Tampa Bay areas. 631 4th St. North, St. Pete. (866) 250-1959.

PFLAG TAMPA

Meets second Tues.; 7 p.m.; The Center in the Equality Florida Building, 3708 Swan Ave. (813) 239-2070; PFLAGW@aol.com.

OPERATION H.O.P.E. OF PINELLAS, INC.

St. Petersburg AIDS organization dedicated to the needs of the minority community. (727) 822-2437; POCAS@aol.com.

PFLAG PINELLAS

Meets fourth Sat at 10 a.m. at Saffron's Restaurant, 1700 Park St. N. St. Pete. (727) 345-7688 or email Pflag@tampabay.rr.com.

POSITIVE EXPRESSIONS

Empowering HIV+ individuals by supporting their self-expression. www.positiveexpressions.org.

PRIDE AL ANON FAMILY GROUP

Meets Wed. and Fri.; 6:30 p.m.; King of Peace Church. (727) 323-5857.

PRIDE ALLIANCE

Meets second and fourth Thurs. during the summer; every Thurs. in fall; 8 p.m.; USF Marchall Center. (813) 974-4297.

PRIME TIMERS OF TAMPA BAY

Social group for mature gay and bisexual men and those younger men who admire them. (813) 231-8817; http://www.primetimerswww.org/tampabay/PTTB_c.html.

PWA COALITION OF TAMPA BAY

AIDS service organization. (813) 238-2887; www.pwac-tampa.homestead.com.

RAINBOW CHIPS INVESTMENT CLUB

Investment club for the GLBT community. Meets monthly. (813) 962-8459.

RAINBOW FILM SERIES

GLBT films. 7 p.m., 2nd Sat. of each month except Oct., in the social hall of the Unitarian Universalists of Clearwater, FMI (727) 531-7704.

RAINBOW READERS

Discusses a new book each month. Meets second Mon.; 7:30 p.m. (813) 221-1423.

RAINBOW TRAVEL CLUB

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ROTC - RIGHTEOUSLY OUTRAGEOUS TWIRLING CORP

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SEX AND LOVE ADDICTS ANONYMOUS (SLAA)

(727) 896-SLAA or www.tampabayslaa.com.

SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Gay male non-sexual nudist group. Meets monthly. (813) 237-2436.

ST. PETE PRIDE

For updates on upcoming events, visit www.stpetepride.com.

STARBURST OF PINELLAS PARK

Support group for cross-dressing and transgendered persons. Meets at 7 p.m. on the third Sat. of each month. Call Georgia (727) 523-8760.

SUNCOAST SQUARES

Tampa Bay GLBT square-dancing. Classes Tuesday evenings at the Suncoast Resort, Room C-104. Call John and Leo at (727) 343-8466; suncoastsquares@yahoo.com

TAMPA BAY BEARS

Bears social club. Meets second Fr.; 7:30 p.m.; Suncoast Eagle Bar. TampaBayBears.com.

TAMPA BAY BUSINESS GUILD

Meets second Tue. (813) 237-3751; www.tbbg.org.

TAMPA BAY GAY MEN'S CHORUS

Meets Mon.; 7 p.m.; Suncoast Resort. (727) 865-9004.

TAMPA BAY LESBIANS

Social, sporting, cultural activities. <http://escape.to/TBL>

TAMPA INTERNATIONAL GAY AND LESBIAN FILM FESTIVAL

Committees include planning, finance, marketing/PR, programming and development. Information on volunteering or events and screenings at (813) 879-4220 or www.tiglff.com.

T.A.N.G.L.O.

Tampa Area Naturists Gay and Lesbians Outdoors. Gay and Lesbian and bisexual naturists outdoor activity club. (813) 962-8459.

TROPICAL RAINBOW ALLIANCE FOR THE DEAF

Socials for both hearing & non-hearing gays. (813) 236-3123.

TRUE EXPRESSIONS

Tues. 2 to 6 p.m., Thurs. and Fri. 6 to 9 p.m., Sun. from 4 to 9 p.m. (727) 898-TRUE or visit www.true-expressions.org.

UNA-VOCE: THE FLORIDA MEN'S CHORALE

Meets Thursdays from 7 to 10 p.m. at MCC Tampa, 408 Cayuga Street. Anyone is welcome to join. Una-Voce.com.

WESTCARE TRANSGENDER SELF-AWARENESS

Educational group. Meets Wed. at 7 p.m. at 1735 MLK St. S. in St. Pete. For information call (727) 502-0188.

WEST FLORIDA GROWLERS

Bear club. Meets first Sun.; DTs. (727) 824-7810 info@west-florida-growlers.com; Westfloridagrowlers.com.

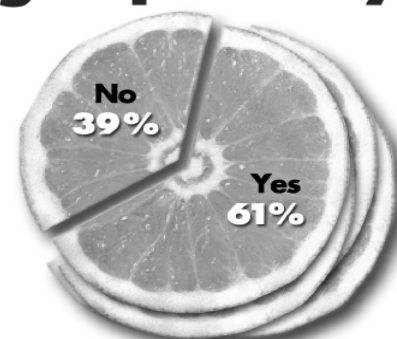
WOMYN'S EXCHANGE TAMPA BAY

A womyn's mix. Sundays, 3p.m. at Gulfport Beach. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WomynsExchangeTampabay>.

YES (YOUTH EDUCATION SERVICES)

Provides free HIV testing. In Pinellas, at WestCare Florida, 1735 Martin Luther King Jr. S., #125, St. Pete. (727) 502-0188. In Hillsborough, at THAP, at 712 W. Ross Ave., Tampa. (813) 226-2141.

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WATERCOLORS

GIRLS from page 31

who falls for Rose.

An author and animal welfare advocate, Betty White, talked about that episode, the show's appeal with gay fans — and the lesbian in her family.

WATERMARK: Isn't It Romantic? was just one of many episodes to feature gay or lesbian characters. What do you remember about making that one?

BETTY WHITE: Well, the whole show, the series, was a fave with the gay community so it was fun to give back when you know they were sympathetic and we were sympathetic. The show was on Saturday nights and the gay bars around town would stop the music when the show came on and

they'd all watch *Golden Girls* and they'd start the music up for dancing after the show was over. We just loved that!

Do you think Rose should have taken Jean up on some lesbian lovin'?

I don't think so. I think the fun of it was the fact Rose didn't have a clue what was going on!

What sort of behind-the-scenes discussion of gay content went on? Ever a concern it might go too far?

I don't think so. The writing was just pure gold, and I think they went through discussions before it ever got to us. Of course as far as we were concerned it was good writing. We weren't making fun of

anything.

Did you ever bring story ideas to the table?

You were always given the privilege of throwing in ideas but we never would presume to say, 'Why don't you do this or that.' We just, in the course of conversation or the cold reading of the script, would say 'that would be funny if so and so...' And another script would come out a week later that incorporated it.

The pilot episode featured a gay character, Coco the housekeeper/cook, played by Charles Levin. Yet Coco, without explanation, disappeared after that. What's the story?

Yes, he was delightful and our hearts

all ached for him. Everybody thought they deleted him from the series because he was gay but that's not true. Nobody dreamed Estelle would come in and make such a place for herself. She came in and a bunch of our activity took place around a table in the kitchen and (Coco) was just another body that got in the way of the four of us, like four points on a compass.

So they decided to get rid of the housekeeper. Our hearts all ached for him because can you imagine thinking you got a job and the pilot sells and you find out you're not part of it! He was such a nice guy.

The *Golden Girls* really helped pave the way for more gays on TV and pop culture awareness. Yet isn't it strange that as we move forward there are big strides backward with, say, the whole anti-gay marriage backlash in the federal government?

Well, I get impatient with a lot of things the government gets into these days. For so many years in the business, 57 years, I know so many gays and lesbians I don't even think about it. I take it for granted and enjoy them as friends. To each his own.

Do you have gay family members?

Yes, I do. My stepdaughter is gay. She and her partner have been together in Chicago for 10 years, they have a wonderful relationship. I adore her. She's been my stepdaughter since she was 9 so we have a very good family relationship.

What sorts of strange moments have come out of *The Golden Girls*' enduring success?

A very young gay man will come up (with a photograph to sign) and say, "Would you write to the four *Golden Girls*?" and then give us four (male) names. It's so cute and such fun, I always giggle and ask, "Which one of you is Blanche and which is Rose?"

In the season 5 episode, *72 Hours*, Rose gets tested for HIV after learning she may have contracted the virus during a blood transfusion. Did making that episode have an effect on you personally?

Not personally. I was just glad to see the show deal with it. Especially with Rose's innocence, to see that it can happen to anybody. Her panic and all that were well done.

Have you ever played a gay role?

Nope, never have. It never came up.

Would you?

Why not?

Where would the *Golden Girls* be today?

Everybody used to ask us, "Would you like that situation of four friends all living together?" and we would all as a chorus go, "No!" But I think they would still all be living together. ▼

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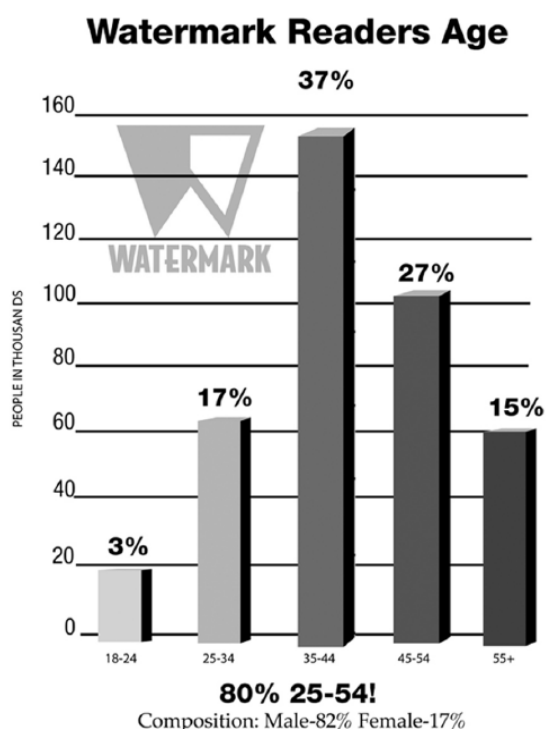
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PROMISING QUEER-ISH FRINGE SHOWS

A complete listing of all 52 Orlando Fringe Festival shows for 2005 is available at OrlandoFringe.org.

Tickets require the purchase of a Fringe button.

HURRICANE ME

BY: Tod Kimbro.

VENUE: Margeson Theatre.

STORY: A tale of sweaty songwriters, soggy reporters and televangelists with a rock score.

TICKETS: \$10.

THE INCUBUS

BY: Air-O Dynamic Productions.

STORY: Seances and sex.

VENUE: Tupperware.

TICKETS: \$10, \$2 off for psychics, mediums, the undead, carnies, cat ladies, Fringe artists and Cher impersonators.

THE MISS SAMMY SHOW: EPISODE 1, A DAY IN THE LIFE OF MISS SAMMY

BY: Miss Sammy, Wanzie-Vision and Lantern Light Studios.

STORY: Exactly what it sounds like, and it's on tape.

VENUE: Studio D.

TICKETS: \$7, \$2 off for cute male film students.

OH MY GOD, DON'T STOP

BY: Amy Steinberg.

STORY: Do orgasms bring you closer to God?

VENUE: Studio B.

TICKETS: \$10, \$2 off for Fringe artists.

THRILL ME: THE LEOPOLD & LOEB STORY

BY: Excellent Adventure Productions.

STORY: The true-life "perfect crime" by two male lovers, set to music.

VENUE: Margeson.

TICKETS: \$10.

WORKING HARD

BY: Bay Street Irregulars.

STORY: A look at the adult film industry with lesbian lovers, porn star wannabes and mistaken identities.

VENUE: Orlando Phi.

TICKETS: \$8, \$2 off for Fringe artists. W

DRAGNESS OF GOD AND THE NAKED HOLY GHOST

BY: Fall River Productions and Michael Wanzie Presents.

VENUE: Margeson Theatre.

STORY: A shivering nun, a dead baby, a Mother Superior and gratuitous male nudity.

TICKETS: \$10, \$2 off for nuns.

INEXCUSABLE FANTASIES

BY: Susan McCully

STORY: One-woman show involving hot girl-on-girl action, conjugal visits with Martha Stewart and women who love their vibrators too much.

VENUE: Tupperware.

TICKETS: \$10.

PIE-FACE: THE ADVENTURES OF ANITA BRYANT

BY: David Lee and the Naked Orange Theatre Co.

STORY: A mockumentary about the much-maligned 1959 Miss America.

VENUE: Goldman Theatre.

TICKETS: \$10, \$2 off for Fringe artists, volunteers and anyone wearing a Naked Orange shirt.

FRINGE from page 31

That's not the only thing that could draw larger audiences to the Fringe this year; thanks to a newly imagined marketing campaign and a compact campus of six venues all located in Loch Haven Park (though the downtown locales will be sorely missed by some), the festival has become more convenient than ever.

In fact, the new "sushi menu"-style sheet that lists all 52 productions makes the Fringe feel almost grown up.

PIE IN THE EYE

The Naked Orange Theatre Co. has emerged as a major contender in Orlando's

theatre scene, based almost entirely upon last year's thrilling run of *Nirvanov*, the Kurt Cobain-Frances Farmer musical that somehow involved vampires. Co-written and directed by Yale Drama School-trained performer (and *What Not to Wear* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* veteran) David Lee, *Pie-Face* offers a pastiche of themes that surrounding the political life of the infamous former Miss America 1959.

Bryant was responsible for the Save Our Children campaign that led to the 1977 ban on adoptions by gays and lesbians through the Florida Legislature.

The former Florida Sunshine Tree spokesmodel became, as Lee described,

Continued on page 45

WATERCOLORS

"the first modern Right Wing bigot to receive a pie pan of banana cream in the kisser!" The 1977 incident, occurring at an Iowa anti-gay rally, has been seen as a pivotal moment in the GLBT rights movement, thanks to the efforts of activist Tom Higgins.

Lee describes his show as a "mockumentary musical pastiche, ripped from the pages of the queer history textbooks" with live and recorded music, multi-media elements and utilizing the talents of Dr. Laura, Adolf Hitler, the Boy Scouts of America and the Queer Truckers for Jesus. Chad Lewis directs.

BLOOD AND LUST

If any Fringe show is guaranteed life beyond Loch Haven Park, it's *Thrill Me: The Leopold and Loeb Story*. The show begins a separate run Off-Broadway in New York May 26 and is scheduled to run through June 26.

Seemingly another "dark" musical in the vein of moderately successful *Jekyll & Hyde* and *Dracula* (which was not successful), *Thrill Me* tackles the remarkably complex story of lovers Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold. The pair attempted to commit the perfect crime the spring of 1924 by kidnapping Bobby Franks, a 14-year-old boy, suffocating and beating him before disfiguring his body with hydrochloric acid. After stuffing Franks' body into a drain, the pair sat in one another's arms at home, watching their plans unravel. (The story has been adapted freely in several other productions, such as the films *Rope* and *Swoon*.)

Criminologists and others have debated why this murder occurred — perhaps because Loeb demanded the murder in exchange for sexual contact with Leopold, who tells the story in *Thrill Me*.

Stephen Dolginoff wrote this difficult score that earned praise by *Show Music* magazine and TheaterMania.com. The brief scene at the preview, with Mathew Schwartz and Kyle Harden as lovers Leopold and Loeb covered in blood and hiding weapons, suggests a complex, unnerving — and possibly beautiful — production.

THE STORY OF 'O'

Amy Steinberg remains a favorite on

the women's music scene locally with her eponymous band, but the singer may surprise many with her new tale of the female orgasm, *Oh My God, Don't Stop*.

Steinberg moved closer to Fringe respectability with last year's show, *Me, Me, Me, Me*, and now aims at an all-acting solo venture. Her three-minute segment during the preview offered a glimpse into the sexual life of a modern Jewish doyenne, one of several new and evolving characters who are as horny as hell.

Directed by Tommy Wooten, *Oh My God* may well plumb the depths of Steinberg's talents — and could prove to be yet another career field for this self-proclaimed "theater geek."

MOTHER KNOWS BEST

Last year's runaway hit, *The Oops Guys' The Naked Guy*, left more than one producer grumbling that a show needs gratuitous nudity to fill seats. Long-time Fringe denizen Michael Wanzie pokes a little inside-baseball fun at that concept with *Dragness of God and the Naked Holy Ghosts*.

Wanzie's productions have become increasingly solid over the years, culminating in 2003's broad-beyond-belief *Carolina Moon* and this year's heart-tugging *Ladies of Eola Heights* (which continues to sell out at the Parliament House's Footlight Theater).

The playwright clearly understands his audience when he produces *Dragness*. Inspired on the once-evocative *Agnes of God*, this production assembles three-quarters of the *Eola Heights* cast in a show that Wanzie insists will not be sweet or sensitive.

Doug Ba'aser plays the meek novice nun who may or may not have birthed a baby into a trash can and Tommy Wooten assays the role of the psychiatrist charged with determining the young woman's sanity. Yet some audience members may show up for the vision of Wanzie as Mother Superior — and young, naked James Kersey as a naked holy ghost.

This seems like a likely heir to *Eola Heights*' space at the Footlight Theatre, if and when it ever closes. Kenny Howard directs. ▽

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FLORIDA GAY RODEO ASSOCIATION FORMS

DADE CITY - The international gay rodeo association is quickly growing to become one of the largest participated gay sports. Though, until now, Florida has not had its own official gay rodeo association - one of the last Southern states to do so.

Paperwork is currently being filed to form the Florida Gay Rodeo Association as a member of the International Gay Rodeo Association.

The group's formation was announced at a recent organizational meeting held at the Sawmill Camping Resort in Dade City. Gay rodeo includes all the events that are present in other formal rodeo organizations. Gay rodeo also allows men and women to compete in events that are typically reserved for a single gender.

Women may compete in bull-riding and men may compete in barrel-racing.

Gay rodeo also includes several events that are designed to increase participation by the general public.

These special activities include goat-dressing (where a team has to race to put jockey shorts on a goat), Steer-decorating (where team has to control a wild steer and place a ribbon on its tail) and the popular wild drag race (which involves a cowboy, a cowgirl and a drag queen in costume trying to mount a wild steer).

The FGRA expects to host its own gay rodeo as part of the IGRA circuit sometime in March 2006.

To become a member of FGRA or for more information, visit fgra.org. **▼ Staff reports**

SUNSHINE INVITATIONAL SEES CLOSE MATCHUPS

ORLANDO - The annual Sunshine Invitational Tournament was held for the first time at the Boardwalk Bowl May 6-8, with winners in the various divisions often winning by less than four pins. The 14th annual contest saw 60% of its 168 bowlers come in from out of town, some as far as Washington, California, Ohio and Georgia. At the tournament's banquet, it was announced that directors Scott Zirbes and Scott Garstka would step down after this year's competition and Michael Thomas and Brian Fine were announced as the new co-directors for 2006.

In the singles event, R.T. Higgins of Tampa won with a score of 784. In second was Larry Filson of Orlando with 782, and in third was Alex Anderson of St. Petersburg, with 772.

In doubles, Dana Beasley of Holly, Mich., and Ron Cottrell of Atlanta, took first with 1438, Kevin Halesworth of Cape Coral and Jerry Kaput of Naples won second with 1436, and Paul Stofa and Jeff Vandenburg of Orlando placed third with 1429.

In team play, Leave it to the Beavers, Jan Kuchenbecker, Rane Oylar, Lisa Brown and Dawn Kallio of Orlando, won first with 2758. Second place was won by

Thefirmin.com, Maurice Beasley of Tucker, Ga., Calvin Fujimoto of Long Beach, Calif., Dana Beasley of Holly, Mich. and Ron Cottrell of Atlanta, with 2732. Third place was won by The Gutter Gals, Markus Turner of Deland, Jason Spielberg of Orlando, Sean Coffey of Orlando and Jon Yanagihashi of Winter Park, with 2728.

In all event scoring, Kevin Halesworth of Cape Coral took first with 2177, Jonathon Buckely of Fort Lauderdale took second with 2160 and Doug Seward of Oviedo placed third with 2159.

The Men's High Scratch Game winner was Orlando's Thomas with 278 and the Men's High Scratch Series was won by Tony Wallner of Fort Lauderdale with 733. The Men's High Handicap Game was also won by Thomas with 316 while the Men's High Handicap Series was won by Tampa's Higgins with 784.

The Women's High Scratch Game winner was Orlando's Brown with 239 and the Women's High Scratch Series was won by Clearwater's Cindy Hall with 675. The Women's High Handicap Game was also won by Brown with 291 and the Women's High Handicap Series was won by Orlando's Lorrie Hansen with 748. **▼ Kirk Hartlage**



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SPORTS BRIEFS

PRO BASEBALL PLAYER ACKNOWLEDGES LESBIAN MOMS

In an interview last month with New York's *Newsday*, Joe Valentine, a relief pitcher for the Cincinnati Reds revealed his parents are a lesbian couple who are retirees in North Port, just south of Sarasota. Despite the "outing" in the traditionally homophobic world of professional baseball, the news has been received with near-total apathy. His parents, Dee Price and Deborah Valentine, were living in Las Vegas, where gay couples were less likely to cause a stir, when Deborah gave birth to Joe in 1979. Joe Valentine, 25, is a right-handed reliever coming off a solid rookie season who was recently sent to Triple A.

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