Friends For Life, has received a program was named after Nancy The program distributes over 16 persons affected by HIV/AIDS.

The Nancy Fletcher Food Pantry, one of the oldest and most widely utilized programs offered by Friends For Life, has received a $5,000 grant from Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS.

The program, named in her honor after her death in 2006, is the largest food pantry in the Mid-South and the largest pantry in the Memphis Food Bank 32-county system, where the majority of the food is acquired. The program distributes over 16 tons (38,000 pounds annually) of nutritious food each month to persons infected and affected by HIV/AIDS, with more than 300 children served annually.

Fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products and nonperishable food items are distributed along with vitamins and personal hygiene products twice per month to all eligible persons affected by HIV/AIDS.

The program is also supported with funds from the United Way of the Mid-South, FEMA, the City of Memphis, Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS and the Ryan White Care Act. In addition, Calvary Episcopal Church and Idlewild Presbyterian Church support the program.

Broadway Cares Grants $5000 to Friends For Life Food Pantry

The conference presented workshops on a broad range of subjects from fundraising to dealing with the media to including youth as participants and volunteers and involving those not yet comfortable with their sexuality.

Mid-South Pride won the bid for the conference in 2006 when it was held in Norfolk, Va. Members made their initial plans, and presented the host hotel, the Memphis Hilton, to the conference delegates in 2007 in Columbia, S.C. “We have been working diligently since October to present quality workshops to help not only Pride organizers, but to help most non-profit organizations in our community,” said Sean Alexander, president of Mid-South Pride.

Prides of the Southeast Meet in Memphis

Nobel Laureate Al Gore Endorses Gay Marriage

Former Vice President Al Gore has become the highest-ranking former government official to have come out for gay marriage.

In an online video Jan. 17, the Nobel Peace Prize winner said, “I think that gay men and women ought to have the same rights as heterosexual men and women—to make contracts, to have hospital visiting rights, to join together in marriage, and I don’t understand why it is considered by some people to be a threat to heterosexual marriage.” The Baptist Press reported that Gore’s video, available on Current.com, also had Gore stating, “Shouldn’t we be promoting the kind of faithfulness and loyalty to one’s partner regardless of sexual orientation?”

Gore has been moving toward marriage equality since the end of the Clinton Era. In March 2006, at a Human Rights Campaign gala in Los Angeles, he admitted that there are “many kinds of love” and referenced the marriage ceremonies presided over by San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom. “Some reacted with hatred and anger,” Gore said at the time. “What I saw that was just overwhelming was the love, the joy, the parity of the excitement that that love was being honored.”

Since leaving public office, Gore and wife Tipper wrote Joined at the Heart: The Transformation of the American Family, a book that includes profiles of gay couples.

Schering Says Its Drug Subdues HIV

Schering-Plough Corp’s new AIDS drug, designed to block the virus from entering human cells, suppressed infections in patients who don’t respond to older medicines, according to research presented in early February.

A combination of drugs including Schering-Plough’s vicriviroc held back the virus better than the combination of older medicines alone, the study sponsored by the Kenilworth, N.J.-based company found. The findings were presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Boston.

Vicriviroc may become the second medicine after Pfizer Inc.’s Selzentry in a new family of drugs that work by blocking the CCR5 receptor, a chemical doorway the virus uses to enter human cells. The drugs promise to give doctors a new weapon against resistant forms of the human immunodeficiency virus that causes AIDS.

“This is a potent oral CCR5 antagonist that has significant potential for treatment of HIV,” said Barry Zingman, professor of infectious disease at Montefiore Medical Center in Bronx, N.Y., during a presentation at the meeting.

Vicriviroc, like Pfizer’s drug, works by altering the shape of a protein on the surface of healthy human cells, making it impossible for HIV to get a good enough grip to enter. Before Selzentry won US approval in August 2007, the only so-called entry inhibitor available was Fuzeon.

Fuzeon, made by Roche Holding AG and Trimeris Inc., is an injectable therapy. Vicriviroc and Selzentry are pills.

In a 48-week study, 56 percent of patients on a 30 milligram dose of vicriviroc combined with older drugs had the virus reduced to undetectable levels, compared with 14 percent taking only the older medicines. Also, 52 percent of patients on 20 milligrams of vicriviroc combined with other drugs had the virus lowered to undetectable levels in the blood.

HIV has proven to be a formidable foe for drug designers because of its ability to mutate, develop new strains, and change its shape to force its way into human cells. The virus’s attack begins when it attaches itself to a cell surface molecule, called a receptor, and uses one of its proteins to force its way into the cell.

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POSE
Continued from page 1

The conference attendees also voted on what cities would host the POSE conference for 2009 and 2010. The 2009 conference will be held in Mobile, Ala. and the 2010 conference will be in Richmond, Va.

The Board of Mid-South Pride put in countless hours of thought and effort as did the presenters and they should be commended for their participation. The conference was a tremendous service to the communities represented and they all went home armed with insight, enthusiasm and the tools needed to make their own events even better.

Southeast Cities Announce Pride Dates

In case you were trying to decide on a destination for a fun gay getaway this year, here is a list of some of the cities who attended the POSE Conference and the dates of their pride events for this year. Most of them are just a day’s drive or a short plane ride away!

Memphis — June 8–15
Atlanta — July 4–6
Richmond — Sept. 27
Mobile — Apr. 4–6
Gainesville, Fla. — Oct. 18
Ft. Lauderdale — June 20–22
(Featuring a night parade on Saturday)
Roanoke — Sept 21
St. Petersburg — June 28

Gay Soldier Discharges Drop

The number of homosexuals being discharged from the U.S. military has dropped, despite officials’ insistence that those who are open about such orientation will in fact be banned.

The number of discharge incidents that have occurred reportedly decreased from over 1,200 in 2001, to 612 in 2006. Government officials are insisting that this decrease in the number of discharges has nothing to do with any reconsiderations being done in terms of the law, and that the order is still being enforced.

Westboro Church Pickets SAG Awards

Members of the Westboro Baptist Church picketed an awards ceremony where fellow actors paid tribute to Heath Ledger.

Church members displayed signs reading “Heath’s in Hell” at all film stars attending the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

Heath Ledger died in New York of an accidental prescription drug overdose.

The location of a private memorial service was kept secret in order to avoid protests from the Westboro Baptist sect, who had vowed to picket his funeral. 28-year-old Ledger was best-known for his Oscar-nominated performance in the gay-themed cowboy movie Brokeback Mountain.

The Westboro Baptist Church, led by Fred Phelps, has generated publicity by protesting at the funerals of US service personnel killed in the war. The Phelps family argued that he created seemed to be almost like a uniformed being retreating from himself, retreating from his family, from his life, even retreating from us, and yet we wanted to follow him and yet were scared to follow him almost.

“I was unique, and then of course in Brokeback Mountain he was unique, he was perfect.

“And that scene in the trailer in the end of the film is as moving as anything I think I’ve ever seen.”

Anti-gay Church Sees Penalty for Protest at Soldier’s Funeral Reduced by Half

A federal judge in Baltimore substantially reduced the amount of damages a Kansas-based anti-gay group and three of its leading members must pay for their protest at a Marine’s funeral in Westminster, Md. The first church and its members will have to post while the appeal continues.

Church members have argued that they should not be required to post a bond during the appeals process. A hearing on the issue is scheduled for March 6, according to one of the defendants, Shirley Phelps-Roper.

Westboro church members say they believe soldiers are being killed in Iraq and Afghanistan as punishment for what they say is the nation’s tolerance of homosexuality. There was no evidence that Westboro members targeted the Marine’s funeral because they believed he was gay.

Still, the Phelps family argued during the trial that their often incendiary protests should be allowed under the First Amendment, which guarantees freedom of speech and religion.

Judge Richard D. Bennett af

firmed the jury’s verdict in favor of the father of Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder. Albert Snyder successfully sued the church for emotional distress and invasion of his family’s privacy after Westboro Baptist Church members waved signs denouncing homosexuality at his son’s funeral in March 2006.

“... [and] highly offensive to a reasonable person,” Bennett wrote.

But the judge also more than halved the $10.9 million award against the order is still being enforced.

Friends For Life

Feast for Friends
Mon., Mar. 3 & 17
6 p.m., Dinner at 6:30 p.m.
St. John’s United Methodist Church
(Peabody & Bellevue)
Male Circumcision No Aid to Women in Study

A number of studies showing that circumcision among men reduces their risk of infection from the AIDS virus has raised the hope that the procedure would also benefit their female sexual partners.

But the expectations were challenged by a new study showing that male circumcision conferred no indirect benefit to the female partners. Instead, it increased the risk if the couples resumed sex before the circumcision wound was fully healed, usually in about a month.

The study did confirm the benefit of male circumcision in lowering the incidence of herpes and other genital ulcers among men.

Findings of the study, which was conducted in an area of high incidence of HIV, the AIDS virus, were reported at the 15th Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections. Although the findings did not reach statistical significance, they still underscore the need for more effective education among men who undergo circumcision and their female partners, the authors of the study said.

Dr. Hellman Resigns as Friends For Life Director

Dr. Ricci Hellman, executive director of Friends For Life Corporation, has announced her resignation from the top role of the Mid-South’s oldest and most comprehensive AIDS service organization after about 18 months.

“I have enjoyed working with Friends For Life and believe that I have left the agency better situated financially and organizationally. My choice to resign my position is based in personal reasons. I look forward to new opportunities in life. I know that Friends For Life will remain an exemplary community-based AIDS services organization,” Dr. Hellman states.

Ben Duke, chair of Friends For Life Board of Directors, says, “Ricci will be missed; her leadership helped strengthen Friends For Life in many ways, particularly the agency’s financial stability. We certainly wish her the best in her future endeavors.”

Dr. Hellman’s resignation takes effect February 29, 2008. Serving as co-interim executive directors until the Board of Directors secures a permanent replacement for Dr. Hellman will be Kim Moss, MS, and Kim Daugherty, CMSW.

Moss is the former director of the agency and has remained employed with the agency as a grant writer since his departure in 2006 from the executive director role. Ms. Daugherty is the agency’s director of clinical services and has over 20 years of experience with health, government, and nonprofit services.

To learn more about Friends For Life visit the agency web site at www.friendsforlifecorp.org.

Scientists Create Sperm from Female Stem Cells

A research team at the University of Newcastle in England has created primitive sperm cells with female embryonic stem cells.

The breakthrough could lead to range sex couples producing children with both their genes.

Karen Nayernia, professor of stem cell biology at the University of Newcastle, said: “Until now, it was not possible to take a patient’s own body cells and turn them into sperm.”

We had the team of researchers who were ready to come up with a plan. The idea was to develop a way to create male sperm from female cells.

However, not all scientists agree that the creation of viable offspring from sex sperm and eggs will be possible. “The presence of two X chromosomes is incompatible with this,” Dr. Robin Lovell-Badge, a stem cell expert at the National Institute for Medical Research in London, told the (London) Daily Telegraph.

Moreover, they need genes from the Y chromosome to go through meiosis (DNA replication followed by two rounds of division). So they are at least double-damned.”

The Y chromosome is present in men only.

Leslie Cartier/Tim Deaver

1959-2008

Tim Deaver, a well-loved entertainer at numerous bars and even more numerous benefit shows since the mid-1970s, performing as Leslie Cartier, died Feb. 11 at Court Manor Nursing Home of complications from diabetes. Deaver was a former choir member at Calvary Episcopal Church and had a wonderful singing voice.

A memorial service took place Sun., Feb. 17, at Calvary Episcopal with Charles Billings performing.

Friends gathered for reminiscences and a reception at The Jungle following the memorial service. Prior to his illness, he had been a master of ceremonies and entertainer.

He was a 1977 graduate of Riverdale High School and attended the University of Memphis.

Memorials may be made to the American Diabetes Association or to Calvary Episcopal Church.
UCSF Apologizes for ‘Misleading’ Multidrug-Resistant MRSA Story

In response to headlines such as “A new gay disease?” (Newsweek) and “Strain of superbug may be new HIV” (Metro), the University of California at San Francisco’s (UCSF) Department of Public Affairs has issued an apology “regretting” that our recent news report about an important population-based study on MRSA USA300 with public health implications contained some information that could be interpreted as misleading."

In addition, both the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control have responded to the report and the widespread misinformation that followed. The original January 14th UCSF press release, entitled “Sexually-active gay men vulnerable to new, highly infectious bacteria” was based on a study due to be published in the Feb. 19 issue of Annals of Internal Medicine and was focused on a recently-identified strain of methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) that is resistant to most types of antibiotic, and which appears to be more prevalent in gay men in San Francisco than in the general population.

The UCSF press release was picked up by newspapers around the world, leading to some confusing and homophobic headlines, some of which suggested that this strain of MRSA was a “gay disease” or a “new HIV.” It also provided ammunition for anti-gay groups, including the conservative Concerned Women for America, which issued its own press release entitled, “Epidemic feared — ‘gays’ may spread deadly staph infection to general population.”

In addition, many of the news stories contained alarmist misinformation about the ease of the spread of this so-called “superbug,” also failing to report that it is still usually easily treatable, can be prevented by simple hygiene measures, and is rarely life-threatening.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which helped finance the study, issued a statement of its own, stressing “that the groups of MSM [men who have sex with men] in which these isolates have been described are not representative of all MSM, so conclusions cannot be drawn about the prevalence of these strains among all MSM. The groups studied in this report may share other characteristics or behaviours that facilitate spread of MRSA, such as frequent skin-to-skin contact.”

They also noted that, “MRSA is typically transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, which occurs during a variety of activities, including sex. There is no evidence at this time to suggest that MRSA is a sexually-transmitted infection in the classical sense.”

On Feb. 22, the UCSF Department of Public Affairs issued a brief statement: “We regret that our recent news report about an important population-based study on MRSA USA300 with public health implications contained some information that could be interpreted as misleading.”

“We deplore negative targeting of specific populations in association with MRSA infections or other public health concerns, and we will be working to ensure that accurate information about the research is disseminated to the health community and the general public.”

The same day, the website of Newsweek ran a major story, entitled “A New ‘Gay Disease’?” about the study and the world’s reaction to it, and quoted one of the study’s authors, Dr. Henry (Chip) Chambers, who stated bluntly, “This is definitely not the new AIDS.”

For more information, call Allen Cook at 229-5877 or e-mail allen@gazememphis.com
What Happened to Gay Black History?

**Guest Commentary**

by Michael Fifueroa

Langston Hughes, Benjamin Banneker, George Washington Carver, Harriet Tubman — gay? The LGBT Student Union, and the LGBT Student Union of Color's "Historically Black, Historically Gay" showcase in the student union has been getting quite a bit of attention. I'm the secretary of the LGBT Student Union of Color, and the co-designer of the showcase. As I was walking through the Student Center today, I noticed a small crowd around our display, so I stopped to see what was going on. I was there for a half hour answering questions.

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People just couldn't believe that so many of their historic black heroes were gay. I think that it is important that people know that throughout history, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have made huge contributions to the world.

Angela Davis, activist; Howard Rollins, actor in the film "Ragtime" and TV show "In the Heat of the Night"; Alice Walker, novelist; Billy Strayhorn, writer of "Take the 'A' Train" with Duke Ellington; Max Robinson, first black anchor on a national news program; Barbara Jordan, congresswoman; Benjamin Banneker, designer of Washington, D.C. — all are among the many who have made contributions to Black History Month.

It's the part of black history that tends to get lost in the celebration. Martin Luther King Jr. cemented his place in history with the "I Have A Dream" speech, but if not for the handling of the logistics and pulling together of the million details it required to conduct the March on Washington by his colleague, Bayard Rustin, it never would have happened. Rustin was a gay man and his homosexuality was hardly a secret. For black lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender, Black History Month must be somewhat bittersweet. They're invited to join in the celebration of black achievement and accomplishment, but only if they keep a discreet silence about their role in it.

Strange, isn't it, how this is a month where every library pushes its authors of color to the front window exhibits, but works by James Baldwin or Audre Lorde go missing. It's a good month to read Terry McMillan and Toni Morrison, but not so for Sapphire, E. Lynn Harris or Essex Hemphill.

Black History Month is kind of funny in the way it seems to self-censor what parts of our history should be told and what should be glossed over. There are gay black rights farther forward, regardless of whether the actual repeal is accomplished under his tenure," wrote Laura Douglas-Brown, editor of "Everybody's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a boy, you fall in love with a boy. The fact that many Americans consider it a disease says more about them than it does about homosexuality."

— James Baldwin

Obama Endorsed by Four Gay Newspapers

All across the country, gay newspapers are endorsing Senator Barack Obama.

In Newsweek (Boston), Gay City News (New York), The Bay Times (San Francisco) and Southern Voice (Atlanta) all decided to back the first viable black presidential candidate.

"If Obama is elected president, his principal willingness to advocate full repeal of DOMA — as opposed to Clinton's cautious pragmatism — will move the bar of gay rights farther forward, regardless of whether the actual repeal is accomplished under his tenure," wrote Laura Douglas-Brown, editor of Southern Voice.

Hillary Clinton received the backing of San Diego's gay and lesbian news source, The Gay and Lesbian Times, and has held an endorsement from The Washington Blade since late last year.
Trials of HIV+ Men in Egypt Reflect Ignorance, Injustice

Recent arrests and trials in Egypt of HIV-positive men endanger human rights, an international watchdog said, and called on authorities to release those in custody and stop criminalizing AIDS.

The New York-based Human Rights Watch also urged Egypt to overturn the convictions of four men sentenced for “habitual practice of debauchery,” a term used in the Egyptian legal system for consensual homosexual acts — and to free four others held pending charges.

“These shocking arrests and trials embody both ignorance and injustice,” said Scott Long, head of All Human Rights Watch also urged Egypt to overturn the convictions of four men sentenced for “habitual practice of debauchery,” a term used in the Egyptian legal system for consensual homosexual acts — and to free four others held pending charges.

“The shocking arrests and trials embody both ignorance and injustice,” said Scott Long, head of All Human Rights Watch, an international watchdog said and called on authorities to release those in custody and stop criminalizing AIDS.

In the Egyptian legal system for Police soon arrested two more men whose photographs and telephone numbers were found on the first two detainees. All four remain in custody pending a prosecutor’s decision whether to raise charges. The two men were subjected to HIV tests without their consent, HRW said.

In January 2007, HRW voluntarily agreed to enter a process of spiritual restoration. On Feb. 4, Brady Boyd, the pastor at New Life Church, sent a letter to parishioners updating them on Haggard.

The megachurch said Feb. 5 that Haggard made public an e-mail he had written confessions, held handcuffed to an iron desk for four days and subjected to forensic examination to prove they engaged in homosexual conduct, HRW said.

Haggard was the church’s senior founding pastor. In November 2006, he was fired from New Life Church and resigned as head of the National Association of Evangelicals amid allegations he had an affair with a male prostitute. The man also said he was subjected to HIV tests without their consent, HRW said.

In January 2007, HRW voluntarily agreed to enter a process of spiritual restoration. On Feb. 4, Brady Boyd, the pastor at New Life Church, sent a letter to parishioners updating them on Haggard.

New Life said that “the process of restoring Ted Haggard is incomplete and (New Life) maintains its spiritual restoration.”

Because spiritual restoration is a necessarily confidential process, the church does not anticipate that it, or its overseers or restorers will make further comment about it.

TEP Foundation Gets $40,000 Grant

The Tennessee Equality Project Foundation has announced it has been awarded a two-year grant for $40,000, as recommended by the State Equality Fund, from the Tides Foundation.

The Tides Foundation is a philanthropic partnership that includes the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, the Gill Foundation and other anonymous donors.

The purpose of the grant award is for the TEP Foundation to increase the awareness and usage of the Tennessee hate crimes laws that already includes sexual orientation but not gender identity.

According to project director Shawn Stewart, Ph.D., “It is one thing to have fought hard to be included in the laws and another for those laws to be enforced. Tennessee needs to take the next step of making the state safe from hate for everyone, including members of the transgender community who still aren’t protected. This is a challenging task and the TEP Foundation is excited to be at the forefront of the issue.”

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On Feb. 5, New Life said Haggard will maintain an undisclosed accountability relationship with Phoenix First Assembly of God and Pastor Tommy Barnett.

Barnett was one of three evangelical leaders who served on the restoration team.

New Life’s statement said Haggard’s leadership of the church had been extraordinary “for many years” and wished him and his family well.

Haggard was replaced in August by Brady Boyd, who had been an associate senior pastor at Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas.

In December, a gunman opened fire at New Life, killing two people before taking his own life.

That gunman had mentioned Haggard several times in his online rants. After he died, police found the book I Had To Say Something: The Art of Ted Haggard’s Fall in his car. The book was written by Mike Jones, the male escort in the Haggard case.

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It is one thing to have fought hard to be included in the laws and another for those laws to be enforced. Tennessee needs to take the next step of making the state safe from hate for everyone, including members of the transgender community who still aren’t protected. This is a challenging task and the TEP Foundation is excited to be at the forefront of the issue. We look forward to working with our partners like the TN Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence who have been making a difference and fighting the fight for many years now.”

A hate crime, go to tnep.org/hatecrime/report.php.

The Tennessee Equality Project Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in Tennessee to educate the public about gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues. Its board and funding are distinct from TEP.

Ted Haggard

Haggard’s Restoration Incomplete

More than a year after former pastor Ted Haggard resigned from his position at the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Haggard has severed his official relationship with the New Life Church Restoration Team.

The megachurch said Feb. 5 that Haggard has prematurely ended a “spiritual restoration” process begun when he was fired for sexual misconduct.

Haggard was the church’s senior founding pastor. In November 2006, he was fired from New Life Church and resigned as head of the National Association of Evangelicals amid allegations he had an affair with a male prostitute. The man also said he was subjected to HIV tests without their consent, HRW said.

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Ted Haggard
Gay Marriage is OK in New York State

Although lesbian and gay citizens of New York cannot marry, those who marry elsewhere in the world will be supported by the state.

According to The New York Times, "...the appellate court in Rochester held that a gay couple’s 2004 marriage in Canada must be respected under the state’s longstanding marriage recognition rule."

Filed by the New York Civil Liberties Union, it’s the first appellate court decision in New York — and the first known decision in the country — to hold that the state must recognize a same-sex union certified elsewhere.

The case, Martinez v. County of Monroe, was filed in 2005 in State Supreme Court on behalf of Patricia Martinez, an employee of Monroe Community College in Rochester, seeking health care benefits for her female partner whom she married in Canada in 2004.

"This is a victory for families, it’s a victory for fairness and it’s a victory for human rights," said Donna Lieberman, executive director of the N.Y.C.U. "Congratulations to all same-sex couples validly married outside of New York State: You are now husband and husband, wife and wife."

Anticipated ‘Slam Dunk’ AIDS Treatment Fails

A once-promising experiment to see whether treating genital herpes with a common drug could dramatically reduce susceptibility to HIV infection has found no protection whatsoever — a shocking setback for researchers hoping to find a pill that would slow the spread of the AIDS epidemic.

Results of the long-awaited study, which included gay men in San Francisco, Seattle, New York and Florida as well as women in Africa, were released in Boston Feb. 4 at the 15th Annual Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections, the premier annual scientific meeting of AIDS researchers.

Nearly 20 years of various studies on herpes had shown that herpes infection nearly tripled the risk of contracting HIV. The assumption was simple: Use acyclovir, a proven anti-herpes drug, to knock down that infection, and the odds of avoiding HIV would dramatically improve - by at least 50 percent, on par with the prevention benefit now attributed to male circumcision. (See related story on page 3)

Results of the experiment were shielded from researchers and subjects alike until the study was completed, but when statisticians tabulated their data, the answer was certain. Those who took acyclovir to suppress their herpes infections acquired HIV infections at exactly the same rate as those who took a placebo.

"This was a huge setback for HIV prevention," said Dr. Sharon Hillier, a researcher at the Magee-Womens Research Institute at the University of Pittsburgh.

Scientists had a lot of reasons to think that the results of this study could be as exciting as the findings in 2005 and 2006 that adult male circumcision — the surgical removal of the foreskin — reduced by as much as 60 percent the risk that those men would contract HIV.

"Many people thought this was going to be a slam dunk," said Dr. Connie Celum, the University of Washington professor who led the study since it was approved in 2004.

"It was definitely disappointing, but it was also very clear," she said of the result.

Her experiment was often compared to the circumcision trials, because the researchers were aiming for the same thing: to prove that the intervention could reduce HIV infections by half. Circumcision is believed to lower HIV risk because the foreskin is rich in infection-fighting white blood cells that are targets particularly favored by the AIDS virus. Similarly, there have been studies showing that the lesions created by herpes infection are portals of entry for HIV.

And as was the case with circumcision, this carefully monitored trial was based on years of prior studies that strongly suggested the idea would work.

"This was the study everyone thought they already had the answer to," said Dr. Eric Goosby, chief executive of the Pangaea Global AIDS Foundation in San Francisco. "So much for that."

Now, the long and difficult task is to find out why the approach did not work, and what might be done to come up with different outcome.

The theory that immediately jumped to the top of the list of possibilities is that suppressing herpes was not enough. Although acyclovir is a very effective treatment for herpes simplex 2, it does not eradicate it, and many of those who take acyclovir will continue to have occasional flares of genital ulcers.

One puzzle facing scientists is that the acyclovir treatments reduced herpes lesions by different percentages in different groups: 32 percent among African women, 41 percent among gay men in Peru, and 50 percent among gay men in the United States. But prior studies had shown the drug was capable of 80 percent suppression.

"This is the real crux of the problem," Celum said. "We need to try to understand it."

A possible solution would be to increase the dosage of the anti-herpes drug beyond the two tablets a day used in this experiment. However, Celum said that other experiments have shown no real improvement in herpes suppression with higher-than-standard doses.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute for Allergy and Infectious Diseases, said the results were disappointing. "I would have thought we would have seen at least some effect," he said.

Despite the experiment’s failure, Celum said that her team will continue its work on another major study testing whether the anti-herpes drug might block certain HIV infections involving couples. This one will treat herpes in HIV-infected men or women whose sexual partner is HIV- and may or may not have herpes. The experiment will attempt to show that by taking acyclovir, the HIV-infected person will be less infectious, and far less likely to transmit the AIDS virus to his or her partner. The study is winding up in June, and results should be ready in about a year.

Dr. Kevin De Cock, director of the department of HIV/AIDS at the World Health Organization, said he was disappointed by the results of the study, but not entirely surprised. "What we really need," he said, "is a herpes vaccine."

Such a vaccine has eluded drugmakers for decades, despite the clear need in societies that could afford to pay for one. Although a herpes vaccine tested by Chiron Corp. of Emeryville failed in clinical studies, the National Institutes of Health is sponsoring trials of other candidates.

HIV Has a New Enemy.

After a few years of a dry spell on the AIDS drug front, a much-anticipated new weapon in the arsenal to fight the disease has finally passed FDA approval.

Etravirine, to be marketed by Tibotec Pharmaceuticals, a division of Johnson & Johnson, under the name Inteligible, will become another in the cocktail of reverse transcriptase inhibitors.

The drug is important because it can be used by HIV-infected adults in whom the other cocktail drugs aren’t effective. Like other inhibitors, it helps block the enzyme that HIV needs to multiply. Without that, HIV remains stagnant or even becomes dormant in the human body. Etravirine will be used in combination with other drugs for maximum effectiveness in people who can tolerate the new cocktail.

Etravirine may reduce the amount of HIV in the blood and increase white blood cells that help fight off other infections, reported Dr. Fried, who fast-tracked the drug through trials.

Etravirine worked especially well with darunavir (brand named Prezista), also made by Tibotec. But it also interacted well with established AIDS drugs Kaletra and Norvir. Doctors will undoubtedly be trying the new drug in various combinations in their patients — especially those not responding well to previous cocktails.
Game Night at Mystic Krewe of MU Ball

The Mystic Krewe of Memphis United sponsored its ninth annual Mardi Gras Ball Feb. 2, the Saturday before Fat Tuesday.

By Vincent Astor

The opening whistle was sounded by krew founder Linda Jones who welcomed the crowd and acknowledged everyone present who had participated in the eight previous balls. After the National Anthem and presentation of the MU colors King and Queen Magique VIII, Richard Gilbert and Sharon Drake, make their final walk and received a court of nine debutantes and escorts. They then received the new King and Queen Magique IX, Richard Martin and Leighanne Reed. The new royalty were dressed all in white with silver, lace and fur accents, the capes ornamented with silver sequins in baroque patterns. The king wore a traditional tunic and boots and the queen wore white plumes in her hair, to one side in an antique style.

The new royalty performed their first official duties by collecting donations from each of the tables. The beneficiary this year was The Recovery Club, a meeting place for numerous 12-step groups. Ruth Ann Shelia gave a presentation on behalf of the club. Over $3,000 was raised.

The theme costumes represented nine games, everything from Checkers to Wheel of Fortune, many using red and black color schemes. Each had highlights; Dungeons and Dragons did not feature the usual profusion of ostrich plumes but a giant spider carried by the ball captain, Laurel Swearengen. She also did not use beads but a variety of hand-made throws which will become unique souvenirs of this year’s ball. Monopoly and Wheel of Fortune were the most colorful with Operation and Twister the most humorous (Twister had an operating spinner). Chess had a dark, competitive theme and Checkers confused me for a moment because the rear of the backpiece, the first side we saw, was Backgammon (the back side of many checkerboards). Poker featured a Royal Flush. My personal favorite was Clue, “Scarlett with the Candlestick” which was a sultry Scarlett in a formal gown. She carried an enormous (and lethal) candlestick. The backpiece was a towering fountain of red plumes as tall as the woman carrying them. The variety in all areas and large attendance made for a memorable evening.
Mystic Krewe of Pegasus
Stages 'Journey of Enchantment'

The Mystic Krewe of Pegasus Memphis held its 5th annual Mardi Gras Ball Sat., Jan 26 downtown at Central Station's Hudson Hall.

The theme for this year's ball was "Journey to Enchantment". This was the Krewe's third year working for the Memphis Child Advocacy Center, for sexually and physically abused children.

The Krewe's ball generated over $8000 that evening for the MCAC. Outgoing royalty King Pegasus IV Larry Tyger crowned Bill Zachary as King Pegasus V and Queen Pegasus IV Shari Walker passed her crown to Ashley LaMore, Queen Pegasus V.

The Krewe will be rallying its membership to start their fundraising campaign in April for the coming year.
Lesbian-Themed Documentary Nominated for Academy Award

A documentary about the end-of-life struggle by a New Jersey woman to give her surviving partner her benefits has been nominated for an Academy Award.

Freeheld: The Laurel Hester Story has garnered a nomination in the Documentary Short Subject category. It has already won awards at several film festivals, including the coveted Special Jury Prize at Sundance. It has also won awards at least 11 other festivals where it was shown. The film was produced by Vanessa Roth and Matthew Syrett.

The filmmaker, Cynthia Wade, was granted complete access to her subject at a delicate time. Hester was dying of cancer and knew it. She was a police officer working in the prosecutor’s office in Ocean County, which includes Atlantic City. She and Stacie Andree were domestic partners under the state’s just-passed law allowing such relationships to be official.

The freeholders of Ocean County, however, voted against it, with the Republicans on the governing body of the county voting as a block. One said a “yee” vote violates “the sanctity of marriage.”

The Police Officer’s Benefit Association was behind Hester, and Garden State Equality soon rallied to her cause. After an impassioned videotape from Hester and national pressure mounted, the freeholders reversed themselves.

Since then, the case has become a rallying point for the extension of full marriage equality in the Garden State. The documentary encompasses the larger issues, the media frenzy that built around the case, and the quiet domestic life the women lived in rural New Jersey.

Wade herself has directed the HBO documentary Shelter Dogs, Cinemax’s documentary Grist For The Mill, and worked on Take In, The Lives of America’s Foster Children.

Gay Couples as Committed as Straights

Gay and lesbian couples are just as committed in their relationships as heterosexuals and the legal status of their unions don’t impact their happiness, according to new research.

In two new studies that compared same-sex and heterosexual couples using different factors and methods to assess their happiness, scientists found few differences. “Among the committed couples, there were very few differences that we were able to identify either in terms of how satisfied these couples were, how effectively they interacted with one another or how their bodies responded physiologically while they were interacting with one another,” Glenn I. Roisman, of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, said in an interview.

He and his colleagues compared 30 gay male and 30 lesbian couples with 50 engaged heterosexual couples, married heterosexual couples and dating heterosexual couples.

They found that regardless of sexual orientation, as the level of commitment increased, so did the ability to resolve conflict — debunking the myth that same-sex relationships are not built on the same level of commitment as heterosexual ones.

In the second study researchers, who focused on how legal status affected relationship quality, followed 65 male and 138 female same-sex couples in civil unions, 23 male and 61 female same-sex couples not in civil unions and 55 heterosexual married couples over a three-year period.

The researchers from the University of Washington, San Diego State University and the University of Vermont found that same-sex couples, regardless of their legal status, were more satisfied with their relationships and reported more positive feelings toward their partners and less conflict than heterosexual married couples.

But gay and lesbian couples not in civil unions were more likely than same-sex couples in civil unions or heterosexuals who were married to end their relationships, according to the study.

Both studies were published in the journal Developmental Psychology.

English Fast Food Workers Could Learn from Memphis

The workers at a Pizza Hut in Blackpool, England obviously had not heard about the incident in Memphis involving some cross-dressing patrons and had service.

Even by the standards of Blackpool on a Saturday night, they must have been a sight to behold — nine gay men and transsexuals, several wearing women’s clothing.

The men were, it seems safe to say, a broad-minded bunch. They are, however, unlikely to say the same of staff at Pizza Hut.

When the group asked for a table, they claim they found themselves rapidly back out on the street.

Michael Kemp, 48, who was wearing a miniskirt and other female attire, said: “When we arrived at the Pizza Hut, we noticed people were staring at us and laughing.

“A male member of staff approached us with a big smirk on his face and, when we asked for a table, he told us that the restaurant had run out of pizzas and told us to try somewhere else.

“We couldn’t believe it. Who’s ever heard of a Pizza Hut running out of pizzas? It was clear they were embarrassed by us, especially because some of us were wearing women’s clothing, and didn’t want us in the restaurant.”

Now Kemp, Paul Barnabas, 47, and his partner Iain Buck, 38, are claiming up to £3,000 compensa-
tion from the worldwide chain, saying they were discriminated against because of their sexuality.

Their brief encounter with Pizza Hut staff came last summer, shortly after it became illegal for shops, bars or restaurants to refuse to serve anyone because of their sexuality.

Their claim, which is being funded by the Equality and Human Rights Commission, is thought to be the first under the legislation.

Kemp said they were enjoying a weekend away when they decided to go to Pizza Hut in Blackpool.

Some of the men, who were transsexuals, were wearing dresses or short skirts, women’s underwear and high heels.

Kemp said: “None of us had been drinking. I suppose we did look a bit odd, but no worse than any of the hen and stag parties that visit Blackpool every weekend.

“We felt humiliated and shocked by being refused a table... If this restaurant turned away a group of black men, there would have been an outcry.”

A spokesperson for Pizza Hut said: “We find discrimination of any kind completely unacceptable and are taking this allegation extremely seriously.”

Bush-Appointed Judge Upholds Gay Rights Law

In a huge victory for Oregon’s gay rights movement, a federal judge on Feb. 1 swept aside his earlier order and allowed same-sex couples throughout the state to register as domestic partners.

Jubilant activists predicted that hundreds of couples would line up at county offices to register. Soon after the ruling, the state announced that forms for domestic partnership applications were available online.

“We’re a family. We’ve been waiting for this for a long time,” said a beaming Kathy Kravitz, a Portland resident, of her partner of 21 years.

With the ruling from U.S. District Judge Michael Mosman, Oregon becomes the ninth state to approve spousal rights in some form for gay couples, joining Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maine, California, Washington and Hawaii. Massachusetts is the only state that allows gay couples to marry.

Gay couples who register as domestic partners will be able to file joint state tax returns, inherit each other’s property and make medical choices on each other’s behalf, along with a host of other state benefits given to married Oregonians.

Mosman lifted a temporary injunction he imposed in late December, just days before the domestic partnership law approved in the 2007 legislative session was due to take effect.

In his ruling, Issued from the bench, Mosman rejected arguments made by attorneys for the Alliance Defense Fund, an Arizona-based group that advocates for Christian legal issues, who said they would appeal his decision, is thoughtful that through the harm they have caused to same-sex couples across this state be cause of the delay they’ve faced for the past month.

Testimony turned on whether the state had a “common standard” to evaluate whether a voter’s signature on a petition was valid.

Mosman, though, said the state had supplied enough evidence — just barely — that a common standard existed in all of Oregon’s 36 counties.

Lawmakers approved the domestic partnership law last year, alongside another new law that took effect Jan. 1, outlawing discrimination based on sexual orientation.
**ABC Takes a Bow for Gay-Affirming TV Programming**

For the second straight year, ABC received the most nominations for gay-affirming TV programming.

The network landed nine nominations from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), while CBS garnered three nods, NBC two and Fox two.

ABC’s nominated shows include *Brothers & Sisters*, *Ugly Betty* and *Desperate Housewives*.

CBS was nominated for an episode of *Cold Case* and for a storyline on *As the World Turns*.

**Chi Chi LaRue Takes a Stand Against Barebacking in Gay Porn**

Over the past few years, a frightening new trend has been developing in the gay adult industry, and now, after some controversial publicity, porn director extraordinaire Chi Chi LaRue and the company heads at Channel One Releasing are taking a stand against barebacking videos. A new website and four minute PSA featuring some of the hottest boys in the business is reiterating the message that “safe sex is hot sex.”

LaRue has produced award-winning films on both the straight and gay side of the industry through out his career, and has been one of the strongest proponents for safe sex and the health of the models that he works with.

Earlier this year, his self-created studio became the largest gay adult company when it purchased both All Worlds Studio and the legendary Catalina line of films. The Channel One conglomerate has been vocal about the protection of the models in the industry, and after 20 years of directing and producing films, LaRue has become legendary for his success and his strong stance against unsafe sex.

He explains on the new safe sex promotional website, “I walked away from a lucrative contract with Viva Video when they decided to go ‘condom optional’, so don’t ever say I don’t put my money where my mouth is!”

Many supporters for barebacking argue that adult films are about creating fantasies and that most of the takers are taking it away from the moment.

Sam Dixon of Tipo Sesso told Out magazine, “We’re an adult industry. We’re not an educational industry.”

LaRue explains that in the past, “it was pretty obvious to most that the models ‘appeared’ to be HIV- and were having unsafe sex with what ‘appeared’ to be other HIV+ models” in barebacking films.

The trend, however, seems to have shifted, and more and more companies are relying on younger men who are willing to do riskier things for money.

LaRue also explains that he understands that it is not just barebacking porn that is leading to the current rise of HIV/AIDS cases among young gay youth.

“I think the lack of real sex education needs of the group because abstinence-only programs focus heavily on no sex until marriage and ignore homosexuality. This could lead to increased risk of infection among these youngsters, the investigators said.

In July the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, in New York, called abstinence-only programs dangerous to gay youth.

Napolitano’s rejection of federally funded abstinence education follows her approval in December of a $100,000 campaign to urge gay men to get tested for syphilis after state health officials warned the disease is reaching crisis proportions.

In Maricopa County, which includes the city of Phoenix, the number of cases for the first six months of 2007 was 25 times higher than it was seven years earlier. The majority of the cases were among men who have sex with men.

Despite Napolitano’s decision whether to teach abstinence-only is left up to individual school districts.

**An Unexpected Caller**

It’s a time-worn president’s trick: walk up to a congressman chatting on the phone and send your regards to the astonished person on the other end of the line, charming the listener with your regular-guy credentials.

That’s what President Bush did at the State of the Union address, when he approached Newton Democrat Barney Frank, who was talking on his cell phone in the House Speaker’s lobby before Bush’s speech.

What Bush didn’t know was that the congressman was talking to his boyfriend.

“Tell him I said, ‘Hello,’” Bush said, leaning in to pat the congressman’s shoulder. As Bush continued into the House chamber, Frank told his skeptical boyfriend that it had been the conservative Republican president sending his good wishes. Frank’s boyfriend didn’t believe him, so the Massachusetts lawmaker put one of the sergeant-at-arms on the phone to back up his story.

After the speech, Frank said, he felt he had to tell Bush what he had done. After all, the president opposes gay marriage, and gay rights groups do not see the president as an ally.

Frank sought out the president, who put his hand on the back of the congressman’s head to hear him more clearly in the noisy, crowded room.

“Mr. President, by the way, the person I was talking to when you said hello was my boyfriend,” Frank said he told the commander-in-chief.

“Well, I hope you said how much I’m glad,” Frank said the president replied.

“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

— Dr. Seuss
Study: Bisexuality Not Just an Experimental Phase

Bisexuality in women could be a lifelong sexual orientation, not a phase, a new study suggests. The finding runs counter to the idea that bisexuality is an experimental or transitional stage for women who, for instance, are uncertain or have fear of commitment.

In addition to debunking stereotypes about bisexuality, the research sheds light on the complex nature of sexual orientation in women.

"These findings demonstrate that the distinction between lesbianism and bisexuality is a matter of degree rather than kind," writes University of Utah psychologist Lisa Diamond in the January issue of the journal Developmental Psychology.

Lack of Research

To some, a finding of bisexuality as a separate sexual orientation may seem like a no-brainer. But among many scientists and members of the public, bisexuality has been defined by stereotypes and unfounded assumptions.

"There were clearly some theorists who suggested that bisexuality is a transitional stage, but that was largely based on anecdotal, rather than empirical, data," said psychologist M. Paz Galupo, director of LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) Studies at Towson University in Maryland. "This view is popularized, also, by the stereotypes that our culture holds regarding bisexual individuals."

Galupo continued: "This notion that bisexuality is just a transition identity has not been challenged much in the research literature, partially because there are only a few researchers investigating sexual orientation who fully take bisexual experience/identity into account."

Galupo, who was not involved in the current research, noted that Diamond's study is one of the first thorough looks at bisexuality using a sort of gold-standard method in which individuals are followed over a long period of time.

10-Year Survey

Diamond surveyed 79 women aged 18 to 25 who considered themselves bisexual or lesbian, or who refused any label for their sexual orientation. She interviewed the women five times over a 10-year period from 1995 through 2005. Respondents gave detailed information on their sexual identities, attractions, behaviors, and their social and familial relationships.

Diamond found bisexual and unlabeled women were more likely than lesbians to change their sexual identity over the 10 years. The bisexual or unlabeled women tended to switch between bisexual and unlabeled rather than to lesbian or heterosexual.

Nearly 20 percent of respondents switched from a bisexual or unlabeled identity to heterosexual, but Diamond said.

Bisexual Identity

Perhaps even more so than lesbians, bisexual women have more hurdles to clear before they can adopt a sexual identity. The women reported being involved in a variety of relationships for more than a year.

The Jungle*: 1474 Madison, Madison, 53760
CARDS AND GIFTS
Inez & Dottie*: 3028 East Towne Blvd, Madison, 53763

COMMUNITY GROUPS
Alliance: Lehigh/Levi club - Box 42174, Memphis 38174.
BGALA (Students for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian & Bisexual): 729-7055.
Bluff City Sports Society: Box 41803, Memphis, 38174-1003, 901-935-9588.
Holy Trinity United Church of Christ*: Worship Service: Sun. 11 am & 7 pm, Bible study Wed. 7 pm; 685 S. Highland, 320-9376.
Integrity Memphis: Meets the 3rd Tues., Healing Servico/Eucharist, 6 pm; Dinner, 6:45 pm, $4, Meeting 7:30 pm; c/o Calvary Episcopal Church, 102 N. 2nd, 625-6602.
Living Word Christian Church: Worship Service Sun. 9:30 am & 11 pm, 685 S. Highland, 320-9376.
Memphis Area Gay Youth (MAGY): PO Box 214852, Memphis, 38111, 265-0695.
Memphis Gay & Lesbian Community Center*: PO Box 214852, Memphis, 38111, 265-0695.
Memphis GLBT Resources Directory
The Memphis GLBT Resources Directory is printed as a public service, and its listings are not charged. All phone numbers are area code 901 unless otherwise noted. To be listed, mail a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Memphis GLBT Resources Directory, PO Box 214852, Memphis, TN 38111-0052.

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One challenge facing bisexually-identified women is that their identity might be challenged by others," Galupo told LiveScience, "and that identity becomes assumed based on the relationships that they form - either lesbian if in a same-sex relationship or heterosexual if in an other-sex relationship." Galupo mentions other misconstrued attitudes about bisexuality, including the idea that "it is adopted because it is trendy, or because bisexual individuals cannot make up their minds, that they are promiscuous, or that they have to be having multiple relationships with both women and men in order to maintain their identities."

In addition to mixing on-the-street prejudices, a more accurate understanding of bisexuality, Galupo noted, could have implications for the scientific field.

"Bisexuality is often defined by default - in terms of what it is not - bisexual individuals are neither heterosexual nor gay and lesbian. So understanding bisexuality can tell us a lot about our general definitions of sexuality," Galupo said.
Wow! So much happens in a month. The Republican presidential clown car has shrunk, Rudy Giuliani and “Multiple-Mitt” Romney are out of the race leaving Libertarian-Republican Ron Paul, Christo-Fascist Mike Huckabee and the new front-runner John McCain, the lone champion of Bush’s illegal occupation of Iraq.

While Mitt Romney was competing with Huckabee and McCain to be the most anti-gay, McCain’s campaign may have derailed the Romney campaign with anti-gay robocalls in Florida that reminded voters that Romney “told gay organizers in Massachusetts he would be a stronger advocate for special rights than even Ted Kennedy.” While the anti-gay robocall said it was “prepared and paid for by John McCain for President,” McCain denied knowledge of it.

It looks like the gay Log Cabin Republicans, many of whom supported Rudy Giuliani, are now supporting John McCain. They defended John McCain and claim he did not support the anti-gay robocall that was “paid for by John McCain 2008.” Gay Republicans don’t have much choice now, since Mike Huckabee wants to amend the U.S. Constitution to limit gay rights and insert God and religion into our secular constitution. (Of course, they could support the Democratic nominee who would be more supportive of equality, social justice and civil rights.)

The right-wing-nuts are not too happy with John McCain. He’s not conservative enough for James Dobson (who endorsed Huckabee), or Rush Limbaugh (who is raising money for Hillary Clinton to encourage Republicans to vote for McCain), or Ann Coulter (who says she will campaign for Hillary Clinton!). You have to be very right-wing to believe John McCain is a “liberal!” He’s just as opposed to gay rights and abortion as Huckabee, and he has been the strongest supporter of Bush’s failed neo-con foreign policy in Iraq.

Speaking of the Iraq “war,” the Center for Public Integrity released a study that documents 935 “false statements” about Iraq by the Bush administration between 2001-2003. Bush alone accounts for “more than 200 lies about ‘mass destruction’ and false claims about Iraq’s links to al Qaeda. There have been many more lies since 2003, including Bush and McCain’s claims that the “surge” is working in Iraq. It looks like John McCain will carry on with the neo-con lies to support the continued illegal U.S. occupation of Iraq and probably an attack on Iran.

On the Democratic side, my candidate John Edwards dropped out of the race. I supported Edwards because of his populist campaign against corporate greed, growing economic inequality and poverty. I joined with many former LGBT Edwards supporters to endorse Barack Obama. We like Obama’s campaign of hope and change and think he has the best chance of beating John McCain.

I’ve received a few angry emails from people who support Hillary Clinton. First let me say that Obama and Hillary are both great candidates. Based on voter turnout and enthusiasm, Democrats are excited about both of our candidates, unlike Republicans who do not like their choices. I will support Hillary or Obama if they are nominated. But the reality is that Obama has a better chance of winning the general election.

Several polls show that Obama has a clear advantage against John McCain. A CNN poll shows Hillary Clinton three points ahead of McCain (50 percent to 47 percent), which is statistically tied. A Time magazine poll also shows a dead heat between Clinton and McCain, each winning 46 percent of the vote. But in the CNN Poll, Obama leads McCain by 8 points (52 percent to 44 percent) and the Time poll has Obama leading McCain by 7 points (48 percent to 41 percent). Hillary Clinton also has the highest negatives. Forty-four percent say they do not like her, compared to 27 percent who do not like McCain and 31 percent who do not like Obama.

Obama does better than Hillary with independents and Republicans (who would prefer McCain over Clinton), but the big difference between Obama and Clinton is among male voters. Men give McCain an 18-point lead over Clinton (57 percent to 39 percent), according to the CNN poll. If McCain faced Obama, his lead among men shrinks to 3 points (49 percent to 46 percent), a statistical tie. That is why Obama has a better chance of winning the general election than Hillary Clinton. I want the Democratic Party to nominate the best candidate to win the general election. (I have other problems with Hillary Clinton I don’t have space to go into.)

Before Super Tuesday, Obama received a list of important endorsements including Sen. Edward Kennedy and JFK’s daughter Caroline Kennedy. Both Sen. Kennedy and Obama attacked McCain on his views on gay and lesbians in their speeches at the event. Obama said that the legacy of hope of both John and Robert Kennedy inspired people and “lives on in those Americans—young and old, rich and poor, black and white, Latino and Asian, Native American, gay and straight—who are tired of a politics that divides us and want to recapture the sense of common purpose we had when John Kennedy was president of the United States.”

Obama also addressed prejudice against gays and lesbians in a speech honoring MLK at Ebenezer Baptist Church. Obama came under fire for allow anti-gay black gospel singer Donnie McClurkin to be part of one his campaign tours. But Obama has addressed homophobia in the black community on several occasions, including his excellent MLK speech.

The momentum in the Democratic race seems to be with Obama now. On Super Tuesday, Obama won 13 states, Clinton won 8. (Hillary won Tennessee, but Obama won Shelby County.) On Feb. 9, Obama won caucuses in Louisiana, Nebraska, Washington and Maine, and is leading in Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia. Hillary Clinton still has a slim lead in the delegate count (1095 to 1070) according to the AP. However, Obama has won most of the pledged delegates from the primaries and caucuses (971 to 915). Clinton leads among the “super” delegates (whoever they are) by 243 to 156. The big fear is that the Democratic race will be tied all the way to the Democratic convention and that the party establishment “super” delegates will choose the Democratic nominee. That would not be pretty, or very “democratic.”

One thing for sure, the Democratic convention will be one of the gayest ever. The DNC’s Executive Committee as already approved seven LGBT delegates to the 2008 Denver Democratic Convention’s standing committees on platform, rules and credentials. The Stone-wall Democrats have launched their “Pride in the Party” campaign to get LGBT delegates elected across the country. In Shelby County alone, about eight LGBT people are running for delegate positions at the SCDP convention this month.

In other gay political news, former V.P. Al Gore has come out in support of gay marriage equality. Gore, who actually won the 2000 presidential election, released his statement on Current TV, a cable TV network he founded. Now that John Edwards is out of the presidential race, I expect he may also admit his support of marriage equality soon (his wife already has).

Republicans have already started up their attacks on gays and lesbians in the Tennessee legislature. Rep. Stacey Campfield of Knoxville has introduced a bill that would prevent public elementary and middle schools from allowing “any instruction or materials discussing sexual orientation other than heterosexuality.” I guess students in Tennessee will not be able to discuss a lot of literature or history.

Speaking of anti-gay bigots, Focus on the Family’s “Love Won Out” freak show is coming to Memphis again in February. While the organizers claim that LWO is designed to help those who are struggling with their sexuality and religious beliefs, it is really a cover for a political attack on LGBT civil rights. I don’t have any problem with religious fanatics who want to repress their same-sex desires, but when they attack my civil rights, I have a problem!

(Read more Queer Notes at queernotes.blogspot.com and share your opinions. Jim Maynard’s opinions are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of Gaze.)
Idle Thoughts and Random Musings

By Allen Cook

I guess this is probably the most appropriate place to apologize for being late with this edition of Gaze. In my defense, whatever bug is going around hit me with a vengeance on the Tuesday before we were originally scheduled to go to press.

Who knew that the human body could produce enough mucus to float a battleship in a single day?

In any case, I sure hope whatever hit me missed you and this finds you well.

It's good to see that there is a concerted effort by the GLBT community to offer an alternative to the Love Won Out conference that's held in Memphis every year. I find it hard to believe that anyone considering attending the LWO conference would consider any of the events in Memphis every year. I find it hard to believe that anyone considering attending the LWO conference would consider any of the events proposing an alternative ("Leave the kid alone!") but the media coverage may help. (See story on page 16).

Wendi Thomas of The Commercial Appeal boarded our bandwagon in her Feb. 17 column which amazed me. Although she has been very supportive of the GLBT community, I never expected her to be as supportive as she was. What an ally! If no one else has thanked her, let me do it here. Thank you, Wendi!

We were very sorry to hear of the passing of Tim Deaver aka Leslie Cartier. While I've never been a great fan of drag, I found Leslie to definitely be a cut above.

The first time I ever saw her perform was at a party at the old French Connection on Marshall St. What made the performance outstanding was that Leslie actually sang. It was, I think, the first time I had ever seen a drag queen do anything but lip-synch. To put it mildly, I was very impressed. Leslie Cartier, you will be missed.

Sometimes when you're producing a paper like this one, things end up on the editor's floor. Such was the case of a story on Rudy Giuliani's tactics against gay and AIDS activists during his term as mayor of New York.

Any coverage of Giuliani became moot when he pulled out of the race for the Republican nomination for president.

Considering the fact that Rudy stayed with some gay friends after his divorce, I thought he'd have been more sympathetic toward our causes, but... nooooo!

Regardless of his current political status, we can't resist publishing the picture we had planned to run with the story.

In the last issue, we ran a story about a new strain of staph germ that was reported to be surfacing in unusually large numbers in the gay male community of San Francisco.

I mentioned then that I had a question about the story much as I had a similar question about a story in 1983 about what became AIDS.

In 1983, I did not run the story; in the current case, I vowed not to make that same mistake.

Now, it seems that my first reaction was the correct one. The University of California at San Francisco has issued a statement apologizing for "misleading" information contained in its original press release. (See story on page 4.)

All it proves really is that you should take everything with a grain of salt. Men culpa.

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Publisher/Co-Editor
Allen Cook (allen@gazememphis.com)
Co-Editor
Bob Dumais (bob@gazememphis.com)
Contributors
Vincent Astor, Jim Maynard, Kim Moss

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Ex-Gay Survivors Countering ‘Love Won Out’ Conference

A group of ex-gay survivors along with GLBT organizations has organized a series of events Feb. 22-24 to educate the Memphis community about the harmful effects of so-called “reparative therapy.”

The events are taking place alongside the “Love Won Out” conference set for Feb. 23 at Central Church. The purpose of the “Love Won Out” conference is to introduce families of gays and lesbians to the idea that it is possible to change one’s sexual orientation, despite insufficient scientific evidence to support this claim. Committed to educating the often terrified parents attending the conference, this group of survivors and local GLBT leaders are planning a weekend of action and art.

Organizers say that many of the speakers at the one-day Love Won Out conference offer the false promise to parents that “freedom from homosexuality” is possible, but they deceptively omit descriptions of what that “freedom” is supposed to look like.

They also say that the LWO conference raises false hope that an individual’s sexual feelings and attractions will change and that marriage is a viable hope for “those who struggle with homosexuality.”

According to Peterson Toscano, an event organizer and a former Memphis resident who attended the Love in Action ex-gay residential program, “The majority of people who come to Love Won Out are not ex-gays or even ministers, but concerned parents desperately looking for answers. We offer a caring response to the confusion and fear that Love Won Out breeds.

In ex-gay survivor stories, we have witnessed the reality that when we attempt to suppress and change our sexual orientation, we harm ourselves and the relationship between parents and their children.”

The weekend will include a press conference, an ex-gay survivor art show, a presentation of Toscano’s one-man show, Doin’ Time in the Homo No Mo Halfway House and a viewing of This Is What Love in Action Looks Like, a film by Memphian Jon Morgan Fox.

On Sun., Feb. 24, at 7 p.m., Toscano will present another one-man show Transfigurations — Transgressing Gender in the Bible in which Toscano unearths transgender Bible characters who in transgressing and transcending gender, find themselves at the center of some of the Bible’s most important stories.

For more information on the weekend events, visit the website of the Memphis Gay and Lesbian Community Center at www.mlgcc.org.

Volunteers Constructing New 100-Foot Rainbow Flag; Will Debut in June at Pride

One of the inexorable facts of life regarding textiles is that they deteriorate over time — they fray, they rip, they fade. Unfortunately such was the case with one of Memphis’ best loved gay symbols: the 100-foot rainbow flag used in Pride parades for many years.

This year’s Pride parade will feature the latest incarnation of the rainbow flag currently being constructed at First Congregational Church.

The construction and design is being headed by Mike Morgan. “We’re making the flag more durable than previous ones in hopes that it will last longer,” Morgan said.

To that end, there will be strong webbing not only on the outside edges of the flag, but crossways as well.

“The flag undergoes a lot of stress in every parade not only from the people carrying it and keeping it elevated, but from the wind as well. We’re hoping that the reinforcement periodically will make this flag last a very long time,” he said.

The flag is being constructed of more than 18 bolts of material (three bolts per color), several hundred feet of reinforcing webbing as well as the grommets, handles and miles of thread necessary for assembling it.

Camp Sister Spirit Founder Dead at 62

Brenda Kay Henson, age 62, of Dumas, Ark., died peacefully at home in the arms of her wife and surrounded by family and longtime friends at 11:47 p.m. on Feb. 8, 2008.

She is survived by her wife Wanda Reeves Henson; sister Barbara Ley, Chauncey, Ohio; daughter Andie Gibbs (and life partner Ann Miller), Jemison, Ala.; son Robin Gibbs (and spouse Ann Miller), Jemison, Ala.; son Arthur Elliott, Reno, Nev.; grandchildren Vanessa Gibbs, Britney Elliott, Arthur Elliott, III, (and Brittany and Arthur’s mother Leslie Melancon), Alexandria Elliott; great-grandchildren Leighton Albin, Alyssa Albin; numerous nieces, nephews and self-identified ‘children.’

Born September 25, 1945 in Lebanon, Ohio, raised in Loveland, Ohio, she was pre-deceased in death by her parents Herman Oliver Brandenburg and Mary Eliza Brandenburg and her brother James H. DeBord.

Proudest Moments

Consecrating in holy matri­mony her 20-year committed rela­tionship with her wife in Mas­sachusetts on May 24, 2004; thus reaping the benefits of the social justice communities hard won rights and her life’s work as an adult educator and social transformationist.

Despite dropping out of school in ninth grade, she earned her GED in 1982, a bachelor’s degree and master’s degree by 1992 and an education specialist degree (Ed.S.) with emphasis on teaching displaced homemakers, all from the University of Southern Mississippi.

With Wanda Hensen, she co-founded Southern Wild Sisters Bookstore, a feminist resource Gulfport, Miss. in 1987.

In 1989 she co-founded the public charity Sister Spirit, Inc. and in 1998, Camp Sister Spirit, a feminist education and also the cultural retreat center, in Ovett, Miss. Thus she was a guest lecturer at 55 universities, speaking on the topic: “From the Frontlines — Homophobia in the US Today; A First Person Accounting.”

In 2001, The University of Ulster-Jordanstown Students Union hosted the Hensons for a two-week fact-finding and speaking tour in the North of Ireland. They were invited to a parliamentary in­vitation, were the honored guests of Eileen Bell (MLA-Alliance Party) and Patricia Llewesly (MLA-Social Democratic Labour Party), and addressed members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) at Stormont, discussing the exclusion of civil rights for gays and lesbians in America. (lesbian and gay Irelanders are protected by their government in the Good Fri­day Peace Agreement.)

Countless awards of recogni­tion and achievement including 1994 Uncommon Woman of the Year from the Uncommon Legacy Foundation; Certificate of Tribute for courage and strength in the struggle against bigotry and dis­crimination by creating “Camp Sister Spirit,” from The City of Los Angeles; 1995 Entrepreneur of Year from Victory! magazine; and a Commendation for Bravery from the Congress of the United States House of Representatives.

She cherished the friendships of Dr. Louise McFarland and Shirley Kirkconnel, U.S. Rep. Barney Frank, (D-Mass), internationally acclaimed feminist author Phylis Chesler, and lesbian activist pioneer Robyn Tyler.

Her life’s dream, to live in peace until her demise, was not accomplished, but she tried until the end to enjoy happiness and love every minute with her devoted wife. And she did.

She survived recurrent colon cancer for four years, empowered by her belief in positive thinking and never stopped hoping for a cure for all colon cancer.

Memorial scattering of ashes was held at 2 pm, Sun., Feb. 17, at Moses Pier, Hwy 49, Gulfport, Miss. Arrangements were provided by Roselawn Crematory, Pine Bluff, Ark.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be sent to SisterSpirit, Inc./Camp Sister Spirit, PO Box 12, Ovett, MS 38649 or Rainbow Law, RR 1, Box266C, Wallace, WV 26448; or to a social justice organization of one’s choice.