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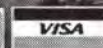
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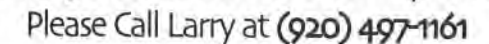
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Action Wisconsin Rallies LGBT Community & Allies To the Polls Updated Candidate Positions and Voting Records on LGBT Issues Online

Madison - Armed with updated information on every Wisconsin legislator or candidate running for state and federal office and the names of over 13,000 gay-supportive voters, Action Wisconsin (AW) has begun the most expansive "get out the vote" drive in the history of the state's LGBT history. Even as it motivates voters statewide to the polls, the LGBT advocacy group will also seek to capture more gay-friendly names on election day in its ongoing battle against the looming anti-gay ballot measure that may arrive in early 2005.

Following last September's statewide mailing 2004 Voter Education Guide to supporters in time for the fall primary, AW has now updated the guide for the general election and posted it on its website: www.actionwisconsin.org. Look for "Who's Running?" in the top right-hand corner of the web page.

For those candidates who responded to the organization's survey, the guide details their positions on the proposed constitutional ban on civil unions and marriage, civil marriage equality, and nondiscrimination protection for transgender people. The AW resource also has details about incumbent candidates' voting records on anti-gay legislation.

Action Wisconsin has also begun to mobilize the largest "Get Out The Vote" effort of LGBT community members and allies in the state's history. Following a marathon data input session by nearly five dozen volunteers over the last week and a half, AW announced October 22 that it will directly contact by mail, email and phone at least 13,032 gay-supportive voters to remind them of the critical November 2 vote. AW Volunteer Coordinator Saad Akbar Khan estimated the group's database has more than tripled since last June as volunteer activists have captured contact information for LGBT supporters from Superior through the Chippewa Valley, northern and central Wisconsin, LaCrosse and the Coulee region, Green Bay and the Fox Cities, Racine/Kenosha, and southern Wisconsin as well as the group's Madison/Dane base.

AW has held town hall meetings in Green Bay and Eau Claire and hundreds more have signed up online to download anti-amendment petitions, collect signatures and forward them to the group's expanded offices on State Street here. AW is also coordinating get out the vote efforts with the Milwaukee LGBT Center's Center Advocates organization (see separate story),

which has focused on mobilizing the Milwaukee gay community and its allies. Khan previously worked as the organizer for the Milwaukee LGBT Community Center.

Khan is one of several new staff that have been hired in the last few months by Action Wisconsin. Development Director Martha Truby joined the AW staff in September and is working to expand the group's fundraising initiatives. In 2003, Martha created the Million Dollar Promise Campaign for the MDRT Foundation, the charitable arm of an international professional association, to increase the organization's annual grant making to at least \$1 mil-

second time will trigger a ballot measure that likely will occur in during the Spring election in April, 2005.

To that end, Action Wisconsin is readying a second voter ID project in several regions of the state November 2. AW volunteers will offer voters exiting polling places the opportunity to fill out a questionnaire on LGBT issues. Supportive voters will be asked for their contact information and a commitment to vote against the measure.

Action Wisconsin has grown just in time, the growth spurt began just as the issue of civil marriage equality became a major issue of public debate at the local, state, and national levels.

The organization's budget has grown from a little over \$3,000 in 2001-2 budget to more than \$400,000 for this year alone. "Our community is now facing the most organized, concerted far right attack on our families this nation has ever seen, AW Executive Director Christopher Ott told *Quest*. "But thanks to our members and donors statewide - and a group of committed foundations -

Action Wisconsin is now in a position to meet this challenge. Since July 1, we have raised more than \$210,000."

According to Ott, funds have come from many generous individual givers, as well as foundations: the Civil Marriage Collaborative (a project of the Proteus Fund), the David Bohnett Foundation, the Gill Foundation, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, PFund, the Purple Moon Foundation, and the Wisconsin Community Fund.

However, political advisers have told Action Wisconsin it could take well over \$1.2 million to defeat the proposed state constitutional ban on civil unions and marriage - that's for advertising, additional staff, and a comprehensive program to educate and mobilize voters against the amendment.

"We will continue to need as much as help as the LGBT community can offer," Ott said. "With the help we've had so far, we have made amazing progress, but we still have a long way to go to meet the challenges ahead. (The community's) support will put us in an even stronger position to secure equal treatment for LGBT people and our families in Wisconsin."

Donations to Action Wisconsin's work can be made online at: www.actionwisconsin.org/give.html.



Written & Compiled by Mike Fitzpatrick

lion each year. Prior to that, Martha secured over \$1 million in grants for Genesis House to support HIV outreach to women involved in prostitution. A recent transplant from the Chicago area, Martha got her start in fundraising as a student at UW-Madison while working at Madison Campus Ministry.

Also on staff is Marcelle Richards is a part-time, paid intern assisting with public education, development, and administrative projects. Richards moved here from Los Angeles a year ago where she was a news editor for the UCLA campus newspaper and a contributor to UCLA's LGBT news magazine, Ten Percent. She began volunteering with AW in February, 2004.

To help with both the November voter mobilization and the looming anti-gay ballot measure the Human Rights Campaign dispatched full time staffers Jason Schellack, Samir Luther, and John Guyette in August. Working with volunteers, the trio have identified thousands of LGBT supportive voters and are now working to get them to the polls next week.

All of the election mobilization is also just a foretaste of the bigger battle about to creep over the horizon: the likely second passage to a bill that would amend the Wisconsin constitution to prohibit any legal recognition to the relationships committed same gender or unmarried heterosexual couples. Passage a



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If you're a hairy man 25-48 & having questions about the gay life, I'm the man you want to speak with. Live in **Appleton** area & promise you discretion. I'm 40, 5'10", 210, and all man. You must have facial hair or at least a very hairy chest! I hunt & fish; don't be queeny. (920) 759-0217 [1]

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GWM, 44, 6', 165, 32" waist, enjoys camping, nude beaches, cuddling, cooking, quiet evenings, football, etc. Have a beautiful home in the country to share with a very special man 18-45, height



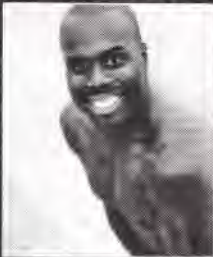
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Quest Interview: Pabrita Benjamin - Pure Activism

By Mike Fitzpatrick

It was during my final minutes of completing this year's AIDS Walk Wisconsin that I first encountered Pabrita. My pace had slowed. My feet were feeling every step of the nearly 10K I had traversed. Suddenly I was ambushed by a bundle of apparently boundless energy who thrust a clipboard at me and asked for my signature on the Center Advocates' "Don't Discriminate, Don't Amend" petition drive opposing the anti-gay Wisconsin "Marriage" Amendment (WMA).

After telling her I had already signed a similar petition and exchanging a few casual words, she was off at what seemed to be light speed. "Gotta find a few more people to sign up," she yelled back at me. "We don't have much time left!"

I loved her. As Star Trek's Spock would say, she was "pure energy." And she was working for my equal rights with an contagious effervescence that was humbling. If Pabrita is the future of the gay civil rights movement, we truly are in good hands.

In the last few months, if you have been involved with the Milwaukee LGBT community in even the most casual way, it is likely that you too have encountered Pabrita Benjamin. Pabrita was the recently hired as the new Community Organizer for the Milwaukee LGBT Center and has been highly visible in gay venues or events that benefit the community such as September's AIDS Walk.

Pabrita is focused on building community support through the OutVote voter mobilization project and especially the Equality Knocks campaign to find thousands of nongay allies of equality. She has worked with the LGBT and people of color communities for the last seven years on both local and national issues through tactics ranging from lobbying, coalition-building, and voter education and mobilization.

In preparation for Quest's Election Preview issue, I spoke with Pabrita at length on September 29 about her work, her amazing life journey, and the challenges ahead. Here is just a small portion of that conversation.

On her job description: "My job includes organizing for the community. My hours are split between Center Advocates and the Community Center. Most of my time goes to the Center Advocates, which is the advocacy branch of the Community Center (the 501(c)4 organizational arm). It's more complicated

than I understand it. I just do the work."

On OutVote: Most of Pabrita's time in the past few weeks has been devoted to OutVote. "OutVote is basically a project where we register all of our LGBT voters into a database so that we (can) call them every time there is an election and remind them to vote. We also have a "Vote Naked" program to let folks know that they can vote at their homes through absentee ballots. We don't take any sides - we're nonpartisan."

On "Equality Knocks": "The all-around campaign that the Center Advocates runs is called 'Equality Knocks.' The Equality Knocks campaign may be working on different projects within that framework. What we're working on right now is basically Marriage Equality under Equality Knocks. That campaign is basically saying 'Don't amend our Constitution to allow discrimination to actually enter our Constitution.'"

On Voter ID canvasses: "We identified over a little bit over 900 (LGBT-friendly voters at polling places during the September Primary election). Some had signed the petition before so the net result was between 850-900 new allies. We're aiming to have twice as many people at the polling places on November 2, at



Pabrita Benjamin

different places, different polls. We want to have at least 120 (volunteers) out there. Our main target is to do a 7-9 AM shift and then a 5-8 PM shift."

On Center Advocates' political advocacy: "Center Advocates endorsed State Senate candidate Lena Taylor to our members in the last (September) primary. That was our first advocacy piece."

On voter education about the WMA: "We target wards and districts within Milwaukee

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County and the City of Milwaukee that are not always LGBT-friendly. People don't know about the issue. The only thing they know about the issue is: 'Hey, I don't like gay marriage.' They don't understand the issue in depth. We call up people on the phone and we go door-to-door. We're hitting up random voters who are on voter lists to build our list (of LGBT-friendly voters). We don't know if they're going to be LGBT-friendly or not. But while we're building our voter lists we're also educating people."

On working with communities: "We need to work with other communities within the LGBT community. We need to work with the black LGBT community, the Latino LGBT community, and others. That work takes a lot of patience. You can't just pick up a whole bunch of white canvassers and say 'Hey, we're going to go to a black district and go knock on some doors and ask them to work on our issues.' That's not going to work. By getting involved in issues that are happening in those communities - like racial profiling - issues that people (of color) care about, I'm hoping to be able to make connections to get other people to say 'Hey, maybe we need to look at these issues together.' Most of our volunteers are white and the just hasn't been the time to just sit down and talk with the different communities of color."

On her personal life journey: "I started organizing when I was in 9th grade. I moved everywhere. I've lived in North Carolina, Indiana, Illinois. In Wisconsin I've lived in Sun Prairie, Middleton and Madison (before moving to Milwaukee). We were in Sun Prairie which is basically like Hicksville, USA. I was only one of a few people of color at my school. They had a program called Bridges where they would bring all the students of color together every two weeks to talk about what issues we were going through. I got really into that and I began to recognize my passion to really make change occur. I started working on youth organizing, working on issues like curfews,

places (kids) can hang out, etc. I sat on the Dane County Youth Board. I came out to myself in 10th grade and started the first gay straight alliance at Madison West High School. I have always worked on color and ethnic issues, social justice issues and gay issues."

On her Nepalese ethnicity: "I'm from Nepal originally. My dad's white and my mom's Nepali. After high school I went back to Nepal to visit my mom's family. When I was over there I started investigating - there must be gay people, you know? What I realized the concept of queerness, of 'being gay' started here in America. But all over the world men sleep with men and women sleep with women. In Nepal I found that there were two women getting married like 15 years ago and going through their struggles with Nepali culture, saying 'Yeah, we can get married!' Men and men have close, close intimate relationships in Nepal but it's all on the DL, the down low."

On the challenges facing gay activists: "It's so hard to get people involved. A lot of gay people are single, doing their thing, going to the bars. It's hard to get the bar crowd involved. (I tell them) 'Look, at some point, you're going to want to settle down. You're going to want some sort of security in your life. This (the WMA) is going to take that away from you. It only takes two hours here and there to stop this from happening.' People like to talk politics, but people don't like to act on their politics - it's a major issue. There's also an age differential. There's only been about a dozen people (in their 40's and 50's) working with us (out of over 100 active volunteers). The older, more settled people are the ones who are going to be impacted the most if this (amendment) passes."

To get involved as a volunteer in Pabrita's work with the Milwaukee LGBT Center Advocates' OutVote or Equality Knocks projects contact her via email at: PBenjamin@mkclgbt.org or by phone at 414-271-2656, Ext.119.

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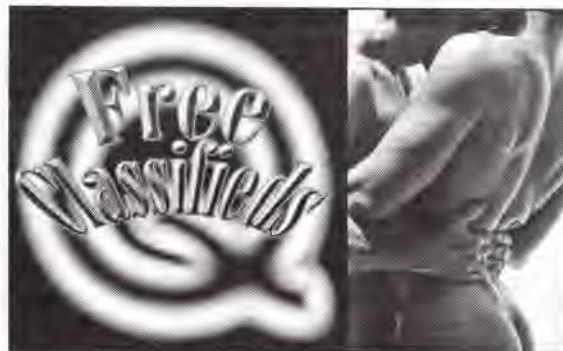
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Green Bay

HRL-PAC Announces General Election Endorsements

Milwaukee - The Human Rights League-Political Action Committee (HRL-PAC) has announced its formal endorsements for the general election to be held November 2.

With the state's Republican leadership promising to bring to a second vote a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage, a candidate's stance on the amendment has taken center stage in HRL-PAC's endorsement process this year. All candidates endorsed by the political action committee have either voted against the amendment as an incumbent or have indicated plans to oppose the amendment when it reappears in Spring, 2005.

"The proposed amendment is an effort to write discrimination into our state's constitution for the first time, HRL-PAC President Paul Williams told *Quest*. "It is written so broadly that it may ban not only same-sex marriage, but any legal contract that serves a similar purpose. Thus, civil unions, domestic partnerships and possibly even legal contracts between two same-sex partners could also become illegal."

Williams sees the first major step to defeating this divisive measure is to defeat candidates who support the amendment and to support candidates who will stand up for equality. "With these endorsements, we now provide a list of candidates who we believe will fight the amendment for the betterment of our state," Williams said. "Please support these candidates!"

Of the 46 statewide endorsements all but two are Democrats: Libertarian Roy Leyendecker and Republican Gregg Underheim. Candidates are listed by district in ascending numerical order. HRL-PAC also has made a direct financial contribution to a number of the candidates listed below. *Quest* indicates that financial support with an asterisk.

HRL-PAC endorsements for State Senate include: District 2 (Green Bay) - Roy Leyendecker, District 4 (Milwaukee) - Lena Taylor*, District 6 (Milwaukee) - Spencer Coggs, District 8 (Milwaukee) - Jennifer Morales*, District 16 (Monona) - Mark Miller, District 22 (Pleasant Prairie) - Robert Wirth, District 24 (Stevens Point) - Julie Lassa, District 26 (Madison) - Fred Risser, District 28 (New Berlin) - Brian Barnstable, and in District 32 (Onalaska) - Brad Pfaff.

In the State Assembly races HRL-PAC has endorsed the following: District 4 (Green Bay) - Tracey Vandever, District 8 (Milwaukee) - Pedro Colon, District 9 (Milwaukee) - Josh Zepnick, District 11 (Milwaukee) - Jason Fields, District 12 (Milwaukee) - Fred Kessler, District 16 (Milwaukee) - Leon Young, District 17 (Milwaukee) - Barbara Toles*, District 18 (Milwaukee) - Tamara Grigsby, District 19 (Milwaukee) - Jon Richards, District 20 (Milwaukee) - Christine Sinicki*, District 22 (Milwaukee) - Sheldon Wasserman, District 29 (Menomonie) - Jay Plouff, District 33 (Delafield) - Patrick Byrne, District 40 (New London) - Cornelius Van Handel, District 42 (Portage) - Tim Henney*, District 45 (Beloit) - Chuck Benedict*, District 46 (Sun Prairie) - Gary Hebl*, District 48 (Madison) - Joe Parisi, District 49 (Platteville) - Arlene Siss*, District 54 (Oshkosh) - Gregg Underheim, District 61 (Racine) - Robert Turner, District 62 (Racine) - John Lehman, District 64 (Kenosha) - Jim Kreuser, District 70 (Milladore) - Amy Sue Vruwink, District 72 (Grand Rapids) - Marlin Schneider, District 73 (Superior) - Frank Boyle, District 74 (Port Wing) - Gary Sherman, District 76 (Madison) - Terese Berceau, District 77 (Madison) - Spencer Black, District 78 (Madison) - Mark Pocan, District 79 (Madison) - Sindy Pope-Roberts*, District 80 (New Glarus) - Gof Thomson, District 81 (Waunakee) - Dave Travis, District 95 (La Crosse) - Jennifer Shilling and in District 96 (Viroqua) - Gail Frie.

Since 1997, the Human Rights League Political Action Committee (HRL-PAC) has worked to elect candidates who will work for and defend lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) equality. HRL-PAC works to increase pro-LGBT representation at local and statewide levels of Wisconsin government.

Through the generosity of its donors, HRL-PAC has supported over 50 pro-LGBT candidates and has sponsored community candidate forums, including the first ever LGBT-focused gubernatorial forum at PrideFest 2002 and the Milwaukee Mayoral Forum at PrideFest 2003.

HRL-PAC also seeks to bring LGBT voters together with candidates and elected officials at several yearly events. Whether through direct financial assistance to pro-LGBT candidates or through voter education campaigns, HRL-PAC is committed to building a better, more responsive government for Wisconsin's LGBT community. For more information about HRL-PAC visit the group's website at: www.hrl-pac.org

bartenders hopped up to the DJ booth to assist for the rest of the show. He was fired for leaving his bartending post after the last number was played. Also, who ever was in charge asked Randy Ray to finish up the night in the DJ booth. Nice idea, however, she was running for the pageant and could not be expected to start everyone's music and her own and still compete. Are these people complete idiots or what? Because she explained she could not because of performing she was fired also. Thank God that no other people were involved, there would have been no one left. Any way, your last two winners getting a ticket to state are, Miss Natasha Marque from Milwaukee and Janice Colby who came out of retirement to join the ranks once again. I had the pleasure of judging, but was unsure if I agree with the outcome. One thing was definite, Desiree Mathews needed to be last place, her interview was wonderful, but after, I think the girl was on something. Even tho she was there, she did not look like she was there. After the last crowning number she had to speed off to Madison to do a show. The best part of the night was the judges, (because of the early hour the pageant was held) got to have pizzas delivered to the judges table only because KJ was working us judges like dogs and never had a chance to eat. In a nutshell we all had a great time. I also want to give a big thank you to two people that made my night special, Kevin, for keeping my cocktail full and Bob just for keeping me feeling fuzzy.

Some rumors I am hearing from Milwaukee. Supposedly, the 219 shows that have been held on Thursday and Sunday nights for as long as I can remember, (and I am old) have ceased to exist. Seems that since all the good show directors have moved on to bet-

ter and bigger things, the shows have dramatically gone down hill along with the crowds and the talent within. Funny thing is, the performers apparently think they deserve more money for doing shitty shows. So they walked off the job and rumor has it are going to be performing at Triangle for free. I am confused. You leave one place because you want more money, but go to another and perform for free!?! hmmmm I think they need to get a new booking manager.

That is it for now, see ya all at state, be sure to attend, I feel this is going to be a good one. I already have my top five picked. And I am usually pretty good at picking them.

Til then, See ya at the shows! • **Safonda** •
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Safonda Says All

Hey all,

I would first like to take care of a little business from the last article. Seems in talking about the Napalese pageant I had said that it was "just a bar title". I did not mean to belittle the title as it is a very important step for those who are just starting out. In saying what I did, I was comparing it to other bar titles where they make you do so much during your reign, were Napalese is not like that. So, if I gave the wrong impression I apologize.

For a while there it seemed like there was not much going on. All of a sudden, bam, we are done and state is just three weeks away. Now, for you girls who have been around a while, you know from the past that I have said in my article about the few girls each year that do nothing more than a basic bar number and a boring gown. Girls, this is it. The big moment. Please, and I am begging, I will be sitting front row. Please do not make me fall asleep or ask the table next to me, "what the hell was she thinking?" I realize some girls have not had very much time to prepare, but that is what you get when you wait to the last prelim to get your slip to state. Now, for those of you who have had a crown for months on end. You better be good!

Now for the happenings, Big John put on a fund raising drag show at the ever lovely Napalese Lounge. John had a few of the upper crust there to perform to help raise some dough. Kudos to him for raising \$835.00.

Next up was the Rainbow Over Wisconsin's first dinner, auction and show. Over 150 people attended. Some dressed quite glam for this first run gala event. C.C. Domino and Mercedes Andrews both in gorgeous evening gowns and enough baubles to warrant a security guard, really set the tone for the night. I had the pleasure of having both of them as my dates for the evening. R.O.W. did one hell of a job raising over \$4,000.00 dollars. That is better than any picnic I can remember. Unfortunately half way through the evening, Mercedes felt more like a call girl than a beautiful debutante and cut the bottom of her dress off turning her pretty gown

into a street walkers mini skirt with a little ass sticking out. You can take some girls to the ball but....

Let's talk Wisconsin Classic. It all began with Elsie, our soon to be "has been" title holder, throwing a great "this is my last show as old girl" show. Again, the best of the best were there to help her celebrate one last time before becoming the newest has been. (Do not fret tho girl, Holly is right behind you thank God.) Again, with a packed house the numbers were done with



style and the shots were being poured. Hopefully, we all stayed sober enough cause their was one more night to go.

Next, was the big night. The theme of the evening was Shanghai nights. Miss Elsie Bovine had a wonderful evening planned for all those who attended. Her first number was quite special with her arriving on a ricksha being pulled by a rather large Chinese man. Haha. Some of the judges were from out of state and a few came from St. Louis were I had first met them. The pageant had a lot of great performers that wowed the crowd with some really hot numbers and some hot looking girls. Unfortunately, there was only one contestant. Latoya Bacall was first runner up from the last national classic pageant, so I knew she was going to be good. My question is, will we ever see her again? She hails from Kentucky. I think it is great that she traveled

so far to compete, but, Elsie did so much during her reign, I feel that, even tho we will be well represented down at the next national pageant, we will never see her until the end of the year. The other thing I am very bothered about, we have so much good talent in the state of Wisconsin over 40. My question is, were the hell were they all? No girls from our own state thought that they could run? Shame!! Oh well, next thing you know they will just cancel the whole thing and not have it anymore. Another dead state pageant. Pretty soon there will be none. Besides all that Dale and Brandon from Superstar Productions did a really great job putting on a great pageant. And if you happened to go to the bathroom at the wrong time, you missed Steven Lloyd in a sumo outfit with all his junk hanging out each time he spread his legs. YUCK! The only thing that kept my drinks down was watching Dale and Brandon in blow-up air suits to look like sumo wrestlers themselves. Thanks for the welcome distraction!

The following night a bunch of us strolled down to Kenosha for the last two crowns of the year. It had the second most contestants of any prelim. Kelli Jo did a really nice job getting people to run and putting on a great show. The night however was not without it's problems. First, it was an early pageant ending by 10pm. For a select few, it was too early to start drinking knowing that we had a long night ahead. One in particular was Samantha D' Carlo. Now keep in mind I love the girl but she proceeded to get snookered long before the pageant started. Now I know we all like to have a good time at these things, but she was supposed to DJ. Well, it started and KJ on the Mic. emceeing, started getting some major feedback from the microphone. As some of us know, you need to take the volume level down, Samantha turned it up to make things worse. As our ears were bleeding and all the dogs were howling (some in the bar) they started with the first number. Well, Samantha could not get it to play the right song, or she made it skip, or she hit the pause button, or she just stopped it entirely and started a different song. After the first few numbers of musical mishaps, she was escorted out of the bar leaving poor KJ in the booth by herself with no clue as to what to do. From what I understand, one of the

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California: Green Arrow Comic Hero Gets HIV+ Sidekick - Along with fighting alien menaces and criminal masterminds, the "Green Arrow" comic book will now feature a sidekick engaged in a more personal struggle - this one against HIV. It's the first major comic book to deal with HIV, and a dose of hard-edged reality to the usually fanciful world of costumed crime fighters.

In the latest issue of "Green Arrow," published October 20, a teenage runaway named Mia - who has been in the care of the title hero for two years - discovers that her time spent as a street-dweller and prostitute has resulted in her picking up the virus. Writer Judd Winick, who oversees the "Green Arrow" story line, said this is a way to explore socially conscious themes while also giving the Mia character extra motivation to make a difference in the world.

"We've been hinting all along the way that she's interested in taking up the mantle, being a sidekick, getting out there in the streets and helping out," Winick told The Associated Press. "Green Arrow won't hear of it."

The news that she has HIV leads her to push Green Arrow even more. Fighting crime, Winick said, is what she wants to do with her life. "So he allows her to slap on a costume and become his sidekick, which has the silly name of Speedy," Winick said. "It's not as a death wish, but she can't fool around anymore. This isn't about an abbreviated life span. It is about life having focus," he added.

Speedy was originally a boy sidekick, but the character is now grown up and goes by the more mature name of Arsenal.

Winick may be known to some from his stint on MTV's roommate reality-show, "The Real World" 1993, on which he appeared with Pedro Zamora, who died the next year after a public battle with AIDS. That experience, along with other friends who have contracted the virus, made the Mia story line a personal one for the writer. He said he wanted to approach HIV from the point of view of other young people.

"Mia is coming to terms with it in the way most young people are. It isn't about death and dying. Young people, for good or for bad, are still pretty fearless. With drug combination therapy people are living a very long time," Winick told the AP. "She seems to be unafraid of death, she's mostly feeling like no one is ever going to love her. She's HIV-positive and who's going to want to be with her now?"

Mia won't be lonely for long. As Speedy, she will later join the popular "Teen Titans" DC Comics series alongside Robin, Cyborg and Raven in the popular youth hero series.

Although some may perceive the HIV story line as a downer, Winick said it's important for comics to address real-world matters. "Comics have a long history of telling lessons," he said. "They tell stories through metaphor, but sometimes I feel we don't need the metaphor. Why should it be that Mia contracts some alien virus?"

Georgia: Syphilis Spread Through Gay Oral Sex On The Rise - A new CDC study on the rising syphilis rate shows that most people do not know it can be spread through oral sex and that it can also allow an entry point for HIV. In its weekly Morbidity and Mortality Report, the Centers for Disease Control says that use of barrier protection is the only sure way to prevent the spread of syphilis. The study was done by the Chicago Department of Public Health.

Among gay men, the incidence of syphilis has multiplied 12 times between

1999 and 2003. Since 2001, men who have sex with men account for nearly 60% of people with syphilis. In nearly 14% of cases, oral sex was the subjects' only sexual exposure during the time they were infected; this was reported by 20% of gay men with syphilis, and 6-7% of heterosexual men and women.

The rise among gay and bi men has caused double concern for public health officials. First there is the worry about the spread of syphilis itself. Of even greater concern is the realization that safe-sex practices adopted over the last two decades is being abandoned leading to the likelihood of another large scale hike in AIDS cases.

The study found that many of those interviewed believed that oral sex was safe and had no idea that syphilitic sores in the mouth can increase the risk of HIV infection. Often oral sores were mistaken for aphthous ulcers or herpes, the study found.

Illinois: GOP Drops Keyes From Election Mailings - Someone's missing from the most recent state GOP mass mailings introducing "Your 2004 Republican Team": Senatorial Candidate Alan Keyes. The polarizing, anti-gay Keyes is running for the US Senate against Democrat Barack Obama. Though the Illinois Republican Party and the Keyes campaign claim the omission was not a snub, it is no secret that many in the party are embarrassed by Keyes' constant anti-gay remarks. Some Republicans have refused to appear on the same stage as Keyes.

The former Maryland-based conservative talk show host was tapped by the party to replace original GOP nominee Jack Ryan who dropped out after the release of court documents showing his ex-wife claimed he pressured her to have sex in front of others.

Keyes has a long history of anti-gay remarks. But, his most incendiary came at the Republican National Convention when Michelangelo Signorile interviewed him for his Sirius radio show. Keyes said that homosexuality is "selfish hedonism." Signorile then asked Keyes, whether he considered Mary Cheney is a "selfish hedonist."

"Of course she is," Keyes replied. "That goes by definition. Of course she is."

London: Italian Study Confirms Homosexuality is Genetic - Genetic factors, along with cultural and early experiences, influence male homosexuality, Italian scientists said October 13. Researchers at the University of Padua said the genetic components are linked to the X chromosome which is inherited only from the mother. But they are probably on other chromosomes and could partly explain male homosexuality.

"The key factor is that these genes both influence homosexuality in men, higher fecundity in females and are in the maternal and not the paternal line," Andrea Camperio-Ciani, who headed the research team, said in an interview. More than a decade ago scientists in the United States reported that they had found evidence of a "gay gene" in men. But other researchers questioned the finding when they could not duplicate the results.

Camperio-Ciani and his team suggest there several genes could be involved, including those on the X chromosome. In their research, which is reported in the Proceedings of the Royal Society, they found an increase in homosexuality in the maternal line of gay men they studied which suggests the X chromosome. "We know that at least one of these genetic factors in on the X chromosome but that it not enough, there must be other genetic fac-

Community Calendar

Thursday, Oct. 28

BESTD offers free HIV testing this evening, 7-10pm. at **Midtowne Spa**.

SAGE/Milw. Fundraiser w/ actor John McGivern, Astor Hotel, 6 pm performance followed by an appetizer & wine reception. FMO/ reservations (414) 224-0517

Friday, Oct. 29

Harmony Cafe (Appleton) Halloween Celebration - great drinks, fun, games, costumes. Family atmosphere, 7 pm

Out 'N About (Milw.) San Francisco veteran DJ Mondo spins vinyl of the 70s & 80s. No cover

Saturday, Oct. 30

Madison Gay Video Club - Special Halloween Party, co-sponsored w/ Frontiers: 7 pm free buffet dinner, gay horror film *Shadow of the Vampire*, 8 pm. www.mgvc.org (608) 244-8675 (evenings)

SAGE/Milw. - LAMM's Halloween Carnival & Dance at the Milw. LGBT Community Center, 315 W. Court St., 7:30-11:30. Admission \$6-\$10

Sass (Green Bay) **Halloween Costume Party** w/ great drink specials. Costume judging at midnite

ZA's Historic West Theatre (Green Bay) **HALLOWEEN AT THE WEST**; all ages welcome. *Rocky Horror Picture Show* w/ our live cast on stage, 8 pm. Costume ball w/ prizes after midnite. Bar open 'til 3:30 a.m.!!!

Sunday, Oct. 31

Outwards (Milw.) A Ghostly Halloween Brunch w/ Vampire novelist Elaine Bergstrom, 11am-2pm. Free, everyone invited!

Wednesday, Nov. 3

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, **Harbor Room**

Thursday, Nov. 4

Boulevard Theatre (Milw.) Paul Vogel's *Familial Odyssey The Baltimore Waltz* opens this evening, and runs thru Nov. 27 - (414) 744-5757

Saturday, Nov. 6

Angels of Hope members **bowling outing**

Sunday, Nov. 7

Out 'N About (Milw.) Latino Nite, complete with drag show + contemporary & classic Latino music & drink specials. 10 pm (*This is a first-Mon.-of-each-month event*)

Monday, Nov. 8

Outwards (Milw.) Outwards Book Club meets 7:30 to discuss Colm Toibin's much acclaimed novel *The Master*. New members always welcome!

Tuesday, Nov. 9

Outwards (Milw.) Lesbian Reading Group meets 7 p.m. to discuss J.M. Redmann's classic *Mickey Night's Death by the Riverside*; Read the books and stop on by and join in on the discussion!

Wednesday, Nov. 10

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, **94 North, Kenosha**

Saturday, Nov. 13

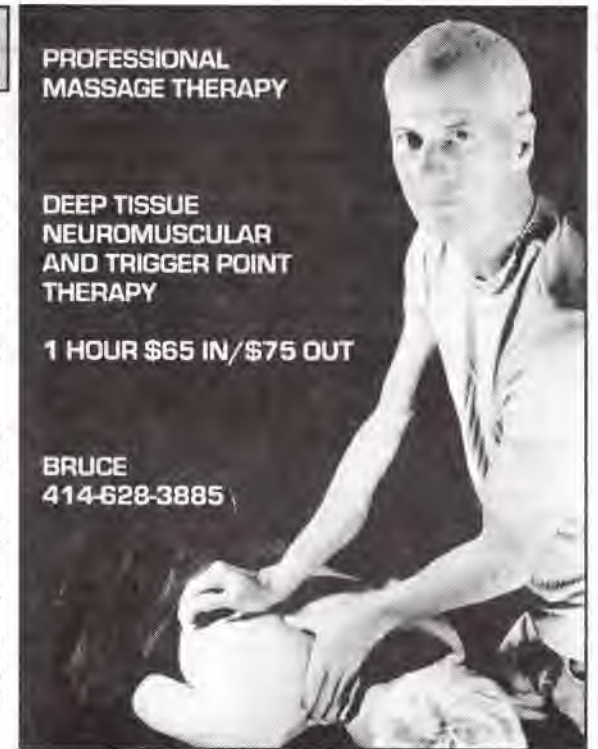
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Out 'N About (Milwaukee) Leather/Fetish event tonite
R.S.V.P. Productions (Milwaukee) presents *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* (by Charles Busch); opens this evening at **Off the Wall Theatre**, 127 E. Wells St., Milwaukee, and runs thru Nov. 28. Tickets (414) 327-3552

Wednesday, Nov. 17

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, **Fluid**

Thursday, Nov. 18

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, at **Boom**

Fri. & Sat., Nov. 19 & 20

Miss Gay Wisconsin USofA Pageant 2005

At **ZA's Historic West Theatre** (Green Bay)
18+ to attend, 21+ w/ valid Wisc. ID to consume alcohol
Dancing to follow on both pageant nites
Tickets on sale Nov. 1

Saturday, Nov. 20

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, at **Club 219**

Tuesday, Nov. 23

STD Specialists free HIV & syphilis testing, 10pm-1am, at **Woody's**

Sunday, Dec. 5

Club Majestic (Madison) **Mr. Wisconsin at Large Contest**, staged by Badger Productions. FMI (608) 239-6086 or mrgaywi-usa.com

Saturday, Dec. 11

Out N About (Milw.) Holiday Leather/Fetish event tonite

Please Sir, May I Have Another?

Postcards From the Leather Edge

There is so much to tell you that I can't possibly do it all in one column, and that is unfortunate since this will be my last column- so I will keep it short.

First, I'd like to say thanks to all of you for your concern and for your love during the time I was away. It means so much to me to know that I have so many friends in so many places. Leon appreciated your support in my absence, and I appreciate the support you gave him too.

Secondly, I'd like to thank Mark Mariucci for giving me the opportunity to write this column for the past year. It has truly been an honor and a privilege to be able to share my personal thoughts and to share news about events in the leather community. Each column has been an opportunity to take a look around and to see just how busy the Wisconsin leather crowd is! I've made some great new friends. I hope that you will continue to look around, even in my absence, and see (and support) the great things the leather boys and girls are doing in your area.

Thirdly, I'd like to thank and publicly acknowledge the Argonauts of Wisconsin for being like a family to me during my sojourn in Wisconsin. I know from personal experience about the dedication and hard work of the Argonauts membership. I have always been awed by the level of commitment that the Argonauts have to the community.

As much as I tried in this column to be impartial and to address the news from all the leather groups in the area, I always knew I wasn't kidding anybody. I am an Argonaut and my column has always had an Argonauts slant. Almost all of my leather experiences in the area were based on my membership in the Argonauts, and for that- I have no regrets.

It was my privilege to be a Club officer for the past six years- two years as Club Treasurer, and the past four years as President. It was my pleasure to see

the Argonauts grow from a core group of men who refused to be silenced, to an energized group of men (and now women!) who are a recognized and respected social force on the leather/levis scene.

I'm very proud of what the Argonauts accomplished during the years I have been a member, a period of time which



included the Club's 25th and 30th anniversaries. We saw the Club go icyber-i with its own domain name and web site. We saw the Argonauts rejoin Mid-America Conference of Clubs in 1999, and this year the Club finally hosted one of their conference meetings (about time after 30 years!). The Argonauts opened their doors to women members- and what a great move that has turned out to be (Yo, Duggie! Yo, Gina!) We watched the Daddy-Daddy's boy contest grow into a respected feeder contest on the regional circuit level, and we watched it evolve into one of the most popular local events of the year in Green Bay. The Club's Leather Sweat Ball has great promise for the future, and the Argonauts' joint run with the Castaways is still the best run going.

I'm also proud that, even with all these events, the Club continues to give back to the community through

the Argonauts Charities account. AIDS Service Organizations and individuals know- they have a friend in the Argonauts.

I have no doubt, especially with the current membership, that the Argonauts will continue to thrive. The Club will continue to grow and evolve into what the current membership wants it to become.

The Club always enabled me to be much more than I could have been as an individual. That is the strength of unity in a good leather club.

The Argonauts will remain among the many friends I leave behind in Green Bay and throughout Wisconsin, but certainly they will also remain among those that I will never forget. I will be staying in touch, and hopefully I will always maintain some level of association with the Argonauts.

I have moved back to Georgia, and as I write these words, I am sitting at my new little desk in the house I am sharing with my new partner Bill here in East Point (one of Atlanta's gay suburbs). I'm spending a lot of time lately looking for new work. Wherever that might take me, my new home base will be here.

Nothing would give me more pleasure than to continue writing the column, but QUEST's readership deserves a local writer, willing and able to cover the local leather scene. If you think you are up for such a challenge (and such a joy), please contact editor Mark Mariucci at editor@quest-online.com.

Finally- I would like to say thanks to you, readers, for allowing me to be a small part of your life over the past year. If you have once found the column to include helpful information, or if I have given you one thing to think about or even one smile during the past year, then it has all been worth it.

Take care of our leather community. Take care of each other.



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tors that are important but are elsewhere," Camperio-Ciani added.

The results are based on a study of 98 homosexual and 100 heterosexual men and about 4,600 of their relatives. The scientists compared the frequency of gay men on the maternal and paternal lines of the families. Among homosexuals there were a greater number of gay men in the maternal line of the family, as well as greater fertility in the female relatives. An early interest in sex before the age of 10 was also a predictor of homosexuality, according to the researchers.

"We can no longer say that it is impossible to have a gene that influences homosexuality because we found out that genes might have different effects depending on gender," Camperio-Ciani. But he added that cultural and individual experience can also play a part.

New York: Same-Sex Partners Can Have Benefits - Same-sex partners of New York state government workers who get married in Canada qualify for the same pension benefits as heterosexuals, state Comptroller Alan Hevesi has determined. Hevesi cited a 1980 ruling by the state's highest court, coupled with an advisory opinion issued earlier this year by state Attorney General Eliot Spitzer. The New York state retirement system covers nearly 1 million current and former government employees. Hevesi is its sole trustee.

An advocacy group, the Empire State Pride Agenda, said the retirement system is the first government entity in New York state to recognize same-sex marriages as legally identical to marriages between heterosexuals. "It also happens to be the pro-family thing to do," said Alan Van Capelle, the group's executive director.

The courts of six Canadian provinces or territories have issued rulings allowing same-sex marriages. British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec permitted gay marriages in 2003; the Yukon territory followed in July and Manitoba and Nova Scotia last month. In the United States, same-sex marriage is legal only in Massachusetts.

Hevesi said his ruling does not apply to Massachusetts gay marriages. He said those marriages involve legal issues between two or more states that will ultimately be decided by the courts.

Hevesi's ruling, dated October 8 and released October 13, came after an inquiry by state employee Mark Daigneault, who said he's been with his partner for 13 years and has two children. "I think it's a wonderful thing," Daigneault said. "I am very excited. It certainly is going to provide more protection for my family and my two children." Daigneault said he and his partner have not yet gone to Canada to be married.

Dennis Poust, a spokesman for the state Catholic

Conference, said the state's Roman Catholic bishops are worried Hevesi's decision "will be one more piece of evidence to bolster the legal case for anyone bringing suit to challenge the state's marriage laws. This could help pave the way for same-sex marriage in New York state," Poust said in response to the ruling.

New York: Gay Bishop Robinson Regrets Turmoil From Elevation - The first openly gay Episcopal bishop said October 20 that he regretted that his groundbreaking elevation to the church leadership created turmoil in the Anglican Communion, but he said he was not personally responsible for the rift and was not sorry he was elected. Bishop V. Gene Robinson made the comments in an Associated Press interview two days after an Anglican commission said the U.S. Episcopal Church should apologize for consecrating him without consulting more with other Anglicans, many of whom believe the Bible bans gay sex. "We regret how difficult this made things in many parts of the Communion," Robinson, who leads the Diocese of New Hampshire, said. "Certainly, I do not regret that my becoming a bishop has been a real blessing to me and my diocese. I don't think any of us regret the decision that we made."

The commission also asked for a moratorium on electing non-celibate gays as bishop, while leaders of the global fellowship of churches spend the next several months studying how they can remain unified.

Robinson, who lives with his longtime partner, said he anticipated many gay clergy would not seek to become bishops for now, but he did not think they should be required to withdraw from consideration. "If they feel called, I think they should put their names forward," he said. "I had hoped not to be sitting in the hot seat all alone."

The Episcopal Church, with 2.4 million members, is the U.S. province of the 77-million-member Anglican Communion, which traces its roots to the Church of England. The report, released October 18 in London, did not ask Robinson to resign or recommend punishment for the Episcopal Church, as some conservatives had demanded. Instead, it called for a long-term process of reconciliation and an end to bishops' meddling in one another's dioceses.

The report also sought to temporarily halt the growing acceptance of same-sex blessing ceremonies in Anglican churches. However, it is unclear whether U.S. dioceses will comply. Episcopalians already have competing interpretations of the scope of the commission's request,

That(Romeo and Juliet)", which Billboard magazine reviews called the albums "secret weapon", was featured pre-release on JC Penney's nationwide Back To School campaign earlier this year. As well, Amber has ventured head on into the world of legal downloading, offering pre-release full album downloads on such legal download sites as i-tunes.

While some in the industry speculate on the future of the hard copy CD format (much like the demise of the LP record and cassette before) in favor of an all electronic market, Amber is not ready to write off the format just yet. "I don't think we are quite there yet," she explains. "There are still many people who really appreciate holding the physical CD and have a booklet with the lyrics and complete rundown of the writers and producers. A physical CD is very personal and gives insight about an artist, as well as a visual."

Leaving the relative safety of former record label Tommy Boy gives Amber little room for regret. "When I was releasing 'Naked', I remember ten men standing around me saying 'Is she going too far? Too deep?' They wanted to keep me in a corner and go the safe route. But I am not afraid to take risks!"

And take risks she does, with exciting and fresh results! Billboard magazine recently gave the album and its leadoff single "You Move Me" rousing reviews, praising that "the set sees her experimenting with exotic rhythms, electric guitars and confessional lyrics. The first single, 'You Move Me' is her 10th Top 10 hit on the Hot Dance Club Play chart and shows her going for a more rock-oriented sound, complete with a shouting chorus."

As full of haunting, heartstopping ballads as it is guitar driven rock and

dance, "My Kind of World" is a true music lover's paradise. "I was influenced by so many styles," Amber explains, "I am a very diverse woman and get bored easily. I can't explain my feelings with just one genre. I was going thru a divorce while writing this record, but I always see the good within the bad. This album would not have existed had I not gone thru that experience."

Pick up your copy of this fresh, stunning and powerful new album today! As one Amazon.com reviewer writes, "Those who follow Amber into brave new territory will be rewarded with a woman whose depth and talent they only thought they knew."

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HER KIND OF WORLD

by Rob Zimmer

"You will be very astounded," Amber declares at the start of the killer track "Sacrificial Lamb" from her brand new album. And you WILL be! Amber's first release from her very own independent label JMCA Enterprises is hot! A few years ago I talked with Amber for an Quest exclusive for a look at her music, her passion and her outspoken views on the music industry. Now, in 2004, Amber is back! With a rockin' new album, a brand new Top 5 club smash, her very own record label and her usual fiery attitude, Amber once again shares her new vision and an inside look at the new album she entitles, "My Kind of World."

Dance divas have come and gone over the past several years. The industry is full of those who can't sing, those who can, those who are bound by the maze of recording contract hell (don't let anyone fool you, it IS hell) and, occasionally, those who break free of the mold. Amber has broken free.

Rather than play it safe and stick to the formula that has earned her one number one club smash after another, Amber lets loose on an intense, sometimes dark, cutting edge production that will leave you at once excited and breathless. It's been speculated in recent months by many in the industry that the new direction in dance music as it continues to evolve will be towards more rock-driven anthems, as evidenced by today's crossover chart positioning and remix projects. Amber and her team are hot on this new trend, delivering a powerful, electric-guitar driven collection of songs that, coupled with edgy confident lyrics, push the album and the artist to exciting new heights.

"The first single, 'You Move Me', was chosen because it's a fun, strong anthem with elements of rock and dance that I feel fits perfectly with my transition," Amber explains. The leadoff single for the album that was just released nationwide on October 5, "You Move Me" quickly climbed to the Top 5 on Billboard magazine's Hot Dance Club Play chart and is currently Number One on the sales chart at the popular online dance music resource Perfectbeat.com. Despite its strong club success and increasing sales, "You Move Me" is probably the tamest track on this daring new album. "You Move Me" is a relatively safe, club ready, pop friendly tune that is still in the early stages of capturing mainstream radio airplay.

"Airplay is a bitch!" Amber notes. With all

the major labels positioning their product, its hard for an independent artist with no major promotion to get a break, though many long time dedicated stations are happily promoting the new single based on name recognition alone. Amber is counting on her fans to help spread the word. "I have the best fans in the world," she says, "gay and straight. This album gives the fans a taste of what is really within me and I cannot thank (my fans) enough for all the love and support they have given me the past eight years!"

As a special treat for her longtime club fans, Amber will be releasing a special version of the album, "My Kind of World --Remixed" later this year, a full album of specially created dance mixes of all the album tracks.

Opening with a lush, mysterious vibe on "Crucified Solitude," the new album features a confident, headstrong, sometimes wounded, vocal powerhouse of a lady who rocks thru tracks like the destined to be classic "Sacrificial Lamb" (written by her own mother), sings soulfully in the haunting "City of Pain", is vulnerable in "Same Old Paradise", and goes completely wild in the insanity that is "Voodoo"! (Trust me, you have NEVER heard anything like

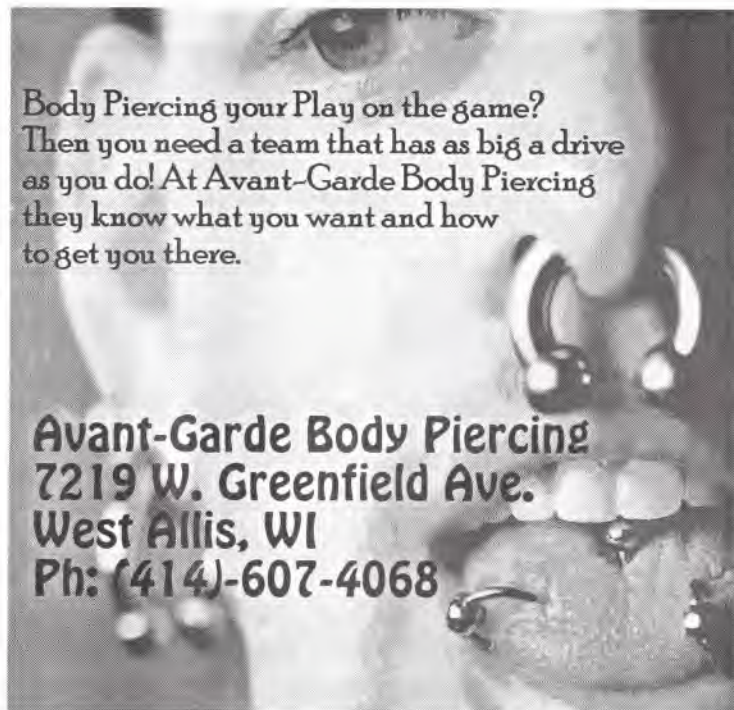


"Voodoo"--this will be huge!)

Marketing of the album has been a truly unique effort. Without the backing of major label dollars for promotion and publicity, Amber has wisely pursued a number of different and unconventional avenues to promote the new release. Exclusive remix downloads and features have been spotlighted at Gay.com and Planetout.com. The catchy new track "Just Like

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with Robinson and others contending that blessing ceremonies are still acceptable under the moratorium. Conservatives disagree.

New York: Survey Says 5% of Students Identify As Gay - The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) announced results from a new national poll on students' attitudes on sexual orientation here October 7. Based on results from the poll, approximately 5% of America's high school students identify as lesbian or gay, 16% of America's students have a gay or lesbian family member, and 72% know someone who is gay or lesbian.

The national poll conducted by Widmeyer Research and Polling in conjunction with Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc., asked questions of 9th - 12th grade students across the country about sexual orientation, name-calling, and general attitudes towards lesbian and gay people in schools. "The findings suggest that, on average, every classroom in America has at least one student who identifies as lesbian or gay and that a majority of those students know at least one gay or lesbian person, whether it be a teacher, a classmate or a family member," GLSEN Executive Director Kevin Jennings said.

Key findings from the national poll discovered that anti-gay language is rampant. 66% of students report using homophobic language, such as "that's so gay" to describe something that is wrong, bad or stupid. 81% report hearing homophobic language in their schools frequently or often.

The survey also revealed that nearly three-quarters of high school students know a gay or lesbian person. 48% of students know a lesbian or gay classmate, 30% have a close lesbian or gay friend and 11% know a lesbian or gay teacher.

The survey also found that parents, friends and family influence students' attitudes most. 65% of students identify their personal experiences with gay people as an important factor in shaping their attitudes about gay people. 58% also noted the important role their parents play while 28% acknowledged the important role of television with gay characters.

The new poll, along with GLSEN's 2003 National School Climate Survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students, documents the widespread problem of anti-LGBT language, name-calling, bullying and harassment in America's schools. The research demonstrates a disturbing gap between how LGBT and straight students perceive and are affected by the pervasive language.

"It is probably shocking to many adults how many of their children are using offensive homophobic language day in and day out in our nation's high schools," Marty McGough, Director for Widmeyer Research and Polling, said. "What the research also gives us is an indication on the large population of LGBT students who have to listen to it."

The 2003 National School Climate Survey found that 4 out of 5 LGBT stu-

dents report hearing homophobic remarks often in their school and that 82.9% of the time faculty or staff never or rarely intervene when such language is used. Nearly 1 out of 3 LGBT students report skipping at least one day of school in the last month because they are simply too afraid to go.

"The important thing here is how widespread name-calling and homophobic remarks are in high schools. Straight and LGBT students are telling us the same thing," Mark Penn, President of Penn, Schoen & Berland, said. "They hear these slurs all the time."

"Students spend their days in classrooms where 'faggot' is heard more often than the morning announcements. 39.1% of the LGBT students report being physically harassed because of their sexual orientation," Jennings said. "We know from the data that visibility and personal experience with gay and lesbian people are important first steps in making name-calling, bullying and harassment unacceptable in America's schools. However what is most important are parents, friends, and school communities taking a stand for respect and acceptance of all people regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity."

More detailed results are available in tables from the report by visiting www.glsen.org or contacting Riley Snorton at rsnorton@glenn.org. The 2004 Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) conducted by the Mass Department of Education and the Center for Disease Control (CDC) is consistent with the national poll, finding that 4-6% of students in Massachusetts identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

Washington DC: Anti-Gay Marriage Ballots May Tip Swing State Votes - Gay marriage has emerged as the trigger issue in several states to influence races both for Congress and the presidency. Ballot initiatives on banning same-sex marriages are expected to propel social conservatives to the polls in 11 states, including four presidential battlegrounds: Arkansas, Ohio, Michigan and Oregon. The Ohio Supreme Court on October 21 rejected the last pending legal challenge to placing a constitutional amend-

NEW ON STAGE

by Glenn Bishop

"Hayfever"

Long before the term "dysfunctional" became such an ubiquitous part of the modern urban landscape there was Noel Coward and his delightful play, "Hayfever," first produced back in 1924. Could there be a more dysfunctional family than Coward's deliciously deranged Blisses - not counting Glenn's own seriously disturbed family? *Not likely, thinks Glenn.*

Coward's "Hayfever" belongs another time, one far removed from our current era dominated by "reality television" - which is, of course, a supreme misnomer, being neither real nor even good television. But Glenn digresses...

The place is a small country house far from the maddening crowds of London. The time is vaguely the 1920s, although John Story's scenic design and Ellen Kozak's costumes prove merely vaguely vague. Judith Bliss (Angela Iannone) is a wily leading lady who claims to desire a

quiet life away from the stage whilst simultaneously contemplating her triumphant London stage comeback. Her husband David (Dan Mooney) spends his days holed up in his office writing trashy best-sellers. The Bliss children, Sorel (Alix Martin) and Simon (Chase Stoeger) are just as expected: over-indulged and under-employed in anything even remotely useful.

This quirky quartet seem unlikely candidates for the country life and as if to prove it, each member of the family has decided to break the tedium of their lives by inviting guests for the weekend. In short order we'll meet the four unfortunate souls who know not where they go: Sandy Tyrell (Rick Pendzich), an awestruck young man Judith has captivated; Sorel's diplomat friend Richard Greatham (Drew Brhel); Myra Arundel (Mary MacDonald Kerr), Simon's guest and finally poor, sweet Jackie (Jocelyn Ridgley) who David invited for the weekend and then immediately pre-

ceded to forget. As the relative peace and tranquility of the Bliss household is put to the test over the course of Coward's delightful three-act comedy, it becomes evident that nothing less than the sanity of these four sacrificial lambs is at stake!

Under the sure direction by Chamber Theatre Artistic Director Montgomery Davis, this fine ensemble proves more than up to the demands of Coward's hilarious blend of brittle, caustic wit and low comedy. Relishing her leading lady role with gleeful abandon is Angela Iannone as the Grande Dame Judith. Tenaciously theatrical, Iannone's Judith is surely great fun at a party but perhaps not Glenn's idea of an ideal mother. Dan Mooney turns David into the quintes-



entially beguiling, self-absorbed cad, contentedly making love to Myra then switching to his wife with silky smoothness, never mind that she's just caught him red-handed, as it were.

Also worthy mentioning amongst the fine supporting cast are Rick Pendzich's adorably clueless Sandy, Mary MacDonald Kerr's wonderfully caustic Myra and local favorite Ruth Schudson's marvelously drool turn as Clara, the Bliss's dutiful maid.

Full-price, half-price or worth a skip...

Coward certainly knows how to put the "fun" into the gloriously dysfunction Bliss family. In the capable hands of the Chamber Theatre, this shimmering comic masterpiece is as delightful an evening at the theatre as one could possibly hope for!

Just the facts...

"Hayfever" is presented by the Chamber Theatre at Milwaukee's Broadway Theatre Center's Cabot Theatre until October 31.

For ticket information, call the theatre box office at (414) 291-7800.

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PrideFest Co-Producer Cindy Taylor told *Quest* "I am quite pleased with the addition of Kristy and David. They both displayed leadership as volunteers at PrideFest 2004 and bring a lot of enthusiasm to the PrideFest 2005 production team."

Several additional Director positions remain available to members of

the public. Directors are volunteers who serve a one-year renewable term and are looking for a more in-depth experience in planning the upcoming Pride Celebration. The following Director positions remain available: PR & Marketing, Proud Crowd/VIP, Youth and Marketplace. PrideFest is also looking for volunteers to fill the roles of Pride Guide Director and Secretary. For information about these available positions, please visit PrideFest's website at: www.pridefest.com.

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ment banning gay marriage and recognition of same-sex couples on the November 2 ballot. The court ruled 6-1 on technical grounds, saying it did not have jurisdiction over the claim, that opponents did not make their claim far enough ahead of the election and that a lower court had already ruled on the same issues.

The topic also is a prominent issue in Oklahoma, South Dakota and North and South Carolina, all states with close Senate contests. A conservative group has run an ad in South Dakota, where Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle is in a tight race, saying Daschle "refuses to protect marriage; he would let liberal activist judges redefine it."

In Arkansas, GOP state Senator Jim Holt has made same-sex marriage the central theme of his longshot campaign against Democratic Senator Blanche Lincoln. It's not the only issue, he said, "but it is the most important issue, I believe, in America."

President Bush, in the final presidential debate, reiterated his support for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, saying he was concerned that, otherwise, "activist judges" would rewrite the definition of marriage.

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry expressed the view of many in his party after a narrow ruling by the supreme court in his home state of Massachusetts a year ago legalized same-sex marriage gave Republicans a new issue to activate their base. Kerry said he supports the right of gays and lesbians to form civil unions. He opposes same-sex marriage, but also is against a constitutional amendment that would ban it. States should determine marriage laws, he said.

The nuances of that stance are often lost in 30-second TV ads and campaign literature suggesting that Democrats, by opposing a constitutional amendment, are clearing a path for gay marriage. That was the message in a Republican National Committee mailer sent to voters in Arkansas and West Virginia, with a picture of a man placing a ring on the hand of another man. It said a failure to vote would open the way for liberals to ban the Bible and allow same-sex marriage. "The people who put this out (are) taking West Virginians to be gullible, ignorant fools," the state's Senator Robert Byrd told an interfaith group.

But Roberta Combs, president of the Christian Coalition of America, said defense of marriage transcends even abortion as a social issue this year because it concerns a spectrum of voters well beyond social conservatives.

"Christians are going to turn out more than they did last time," she predicted.

Peter Sprigg, senior director of policy studies at the Family Research Council, said his group also hopes "there will be a strong turnout of people with strong family values." Sprigg also stressed that the referendums in the 11 states derived from court rulings and were not "cooked up as a tool to help re-elect the president."

Cheryl Jacques, president of the Human Rights Campaign, sees it differently, saying it was "no coincidence" that in states where races are tight, "we're seeing the ramping up of the issue with billboards and flyers."

The Family Research Council and other conservative groups are putting out scorecards to inform voters how their representatives and senators voted on proposed constitutional amendments to ban gay marriage that were rejected in both the House and Senate this year.

In North Dakota, Mike Liffing, in an uphill race against Democratic Sen. Byron Dorgan, attacks Dorgan over his constitutional amendment vote using an ad showing two tuxedo-wearing men moving in for a kiss.

In North Carolina, Rep. Richard Burr, in a tight Senate race with Clinton White House chief of staff Erskine Bowles, cited Bowles' opposition to a constitutional amendment in an ad that said "it's a shame Erskine Bowles doesn't have the courage to stand up for traditional marriage."

Gay rights in general has cropped up in several other close senatorial races. Former Representative Tom Coburn, the Republican candidate in Oklahoma, sparked a controversy when he warned of "rampant" lesbianism in some Oklahoma schools. GOP Representative Jim DeMint, running for the Senate in South Carolina, caused a stir by saying that openly gay people and unwed, pregnant women should be barred from teaching in public schools.

Gay rights groups say Bush and others could be making a mistake by courting his conservative base and ignoring moderate swing voters. Patrick Guerriero, head of the gay Log Cabin Republicans, a group that has withheld its endorsement of Bush over the marriage issue, told the Republican National Committee that "appealing to people's anti-gay animus as a campaign strategy betrays the (inclusive) legacy of President Ronald Reagan."

In using a divisive issue such as gay marriage, said the Human Rights Campaign's Jacques, "you don't know who you are offending. There's no way of knowing what the backlash is."

DePere: Gephardt To Address LGBT Election Issues

Chrissy Gephardt, the out lesbian daughter of former Democrat president candidate Dick Gephardt, will be speaking about LGBT issues and the upcoming election on Saturday, October 30 at 11 AM, at St. Norbert College. Gephardt who also ran for president herself on Showtime's reality series *American Candidate* will encourage attendees to volunteer for a city-wide canvassing effort that will include a literature drop and phone banking immediately following her talk. For more information about the event contact Laura Miller at lauralaloo@yahoo.com.

LaCrosse: Lutheran Church Opens Doors To LGBT Community

Our Savior's Lutheran Church here has taken a courageous and unusual step earlier this year by adopting a public statement of welcome that includes people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. As a result of the church's action, the congregation has been recognized by the gay-supportive Lutherans Concerned of North America as a "Reconciling in Christ" (RIC) congregation. The organization has more than 280 congregations in the United States and Canada on its roster. Our Savior's is the first church to be listed from the La Crosse Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, although the Lutheran Campus Ministry of La Crosse also is recognized as an RIC congregation.

Our Savior's statement, adopted last January at the church's annual meeting by a 89-11% vote, reads: "All are welcome in this church! The Good News of God's grace is for all, regardless of age, abilities, physical & mental health, race, sexual orientation, education, income or strength of faith. There is nothing we can do, have done or will do that can separate us from God. God makes no exceptions, nor do we. Come join us in praise, prayer and the work of our Lord!"

According to Our Savior's senior pastor Rev. Rachel Thorson Mithelman the statement is "saying out loud that Our Savior's is a safe and welcoming place for all, truly all, to hear the Word, receive the Sacraments and serve others in Christ."

"What we learned in the course of a two-year study on the topic was that putting 'all are welcome' on the church sign in the front yard is simply not enough," Mithelman told *LaCrosse Tribune* reporter Gayda Hollnagel. "We needed to be more specific and bold in proclaiming that welcome, especially to people who often assume that they are not wel-

come in the church - the poor, the unemployed, the gay and lesbian community, etc."

Although the statement includes all people and not just gays and lesbians, getting church members to accept it wasn't so easy, Mithelman added. "It's not been without controversy or disagreement, and we've lost a handful of members over it, but only a handful," she said. "It's not been easy, but a group here was strongly committed to it."

Mithelman said that as part of the study they invited a gay layman from another city to preach at the church one Sunday and lead an adult forum.

She said she knew the church was on the right track when she talked with the man and he told her about how he, finally found a church that accepted him as he is. "He cried, with tears running down his face when he told me what it meant that he had found this place where he could go in just as he is," Mithelman said.

Many gays and lesbians assume even when a church says "welcome all" that it doesn't mean them because of their past experiences of being rejected, Mithelman said. "I get phone calls from people asking if they can come to church, like they have to ask permission," she said. "Ninety percent of the church-going public doesn't know, they don't know how deeply that segment of the population has been hurt."

As part of being recognized as a RIC congregation, Our Savior's now has on its sign outside the church and in its newspaper ads an insignia of a cross inside a heart and a line saying it is "A Reconciling in Christ Congregation." Mithelman said she believes the stand Our Savior's has taken is in line with the Scriptures. "We're talking here about welcome, we're talking about hospitality," she said. "In the Scriptures, there are no arguments about these things."

Milwaukee: OutVote Election Night Party Set

After you've voted, come to the OutVote Election Night Party. The LGBT Centr vocates is sponsoring the party from 7 - 10 PM at Out & About, 1407 S 1st Street. Ample off-street parking is available. Watch the election returns with LGBT and allied friends. All ages are invited to participate.

Milwaukee: Two Directors Join PrideFest

At its recent October production team meeting, PrideFest welcomed two people as Directors to help plan the 2005 pride celebration. The people who were newly appointed Tuesday night include Kristy Braun as Merchandise Director and David Charpentier as



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