



Give the People Light and they will find their own way.

The Wisconsin Light

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Manufacture/Sale Of Poppers Banned in U.S.

John Lauritsen

Poppers (nitrite inhalants) are now a "banned hazardous product" in the United States. As of February 15, 1989, it is illegal to manufacture, distribute, import or sell any isobutyl nitrite substance or any consumer product "used for inhaling or otherwise introduced into the body for euphoric or physical effects."

The ban is part of the Drug Omnibus Act of 1988, which was signed into law last November by President Reagan. The main sponsors of the nitrite inhalants provision were Representatives Mel Levine and Henry Waxman (D's-Calif.). Both are strong supporters of Gay rights.

The ban was hailed by Hank Wilson of San Francisco, a Gay activist who, in 1981, founded the Committee to Monitor Poppers.

"It is long overdue", said Wilson. "Up to the point of the ban we still had businesses in the Gay community that were promoting and selling poppers. There were Gay publications, like Update in San Diego, carrying large popper ads, as though there were no hazards to using the drug."

Wilson continued: "New people are continually coming into the Gay community. Young people are coming out. The last thing we ought to do is to introduce these newcomers to products that will be harmful to their immune systems, while we're in the midst of this epidemic."

With regard to the hazards of poppers and their effects on the immune system, a great many studies have been done by top-notch independent researchers. Wilson emphasized that these studies all point out that poppers are bad for the health and bad for the immune system.

The initiative for regulating poppers has come from the Gay community itself. West Hollywood, the Gayest city in the world, took the lead in banning poppers.

The medical case against poppers is impressive. Poppers are immunosuppressive. They can cause anemia, lung damage, serious skin burns and death or brain damage from cardiovascular collapse or stroke. Poppers cause genes to mutate and have the potential to cause cancer by producing dealy N-nitroso compounds. Poppers have been used successfully to commit suicide (by drinking) and murder (victim gagged with sock soaked with poppers). There are strong epidemiological links between the use of poppers and the development of AIDS, and especially Kaposi's sarcoma (KS). A six-fold decrease in the incidence of KS over the past five years parallels a sharp decline in the use of poppers.

For nearly two decades the poppers industry eluded regulation by labeling their commodity a "room odorizer." The FDA and various other health agencies all looked the other way. The Centers for

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HELMS KILLS FEDERAL AZT BILL AS STATES RUN OUT OF FUNDS



Jerry Johnson

Ted Altschuler directs Amy Zeh as Agnes and Kay Knudson as the Mother Superior during a rehearsal of Milwaukee's Clavis Theatre's production of "Agnes of God" which runs March 24-April 30.

Milwaukee Nursing Homes Begin Accepting AIDS Patients

[Milwaukee]- It was clearly a victory for the Milwaukee AIDS Project (MAP). It was a victory that is a beginning, but a victory nonetheless.

At a press conference held March 13, 1989 at MAP offices, representatives from the health care industry and from two Milwaukee area nursing homes announced the opening of two nursing homes to AIDS patients.

The two nursing homes are the Mt. Carmel Health Care facility and the Greentree nursing home.

Tom Moore, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Nursing Homes Association said that he was "proud of the role" he and the Association played in getting AIDS patient placement. "A comprehensive educational effort is currently underway," he said for staff, patients and families. Moore added that he hoped that other nursing homes would soon follow suit. He noted that within "2-3 weeks" two more nursing homes should be "ready to open their doors" to AIDS patients. He did not specify which two these would be.

The Nursing Homes Association represents 258 nursing homes throughout Wisconsin.

Joe Higdon of the Greentree facility confirmed Moore's commitment to caring for AIDS sufferers and said that the first AIDS patient would be admitted by March 31.

Doug Lesjak of the Mt. Carmel facility announced that in-service education was already underway although he would give no definite date as to when the first AIDS patient would be admitted to Mt. Carmel.

The opening of the two nursing homes is the culmination of a long process of delicate negotiations by MAP and the organizations Executive Director, Doug Nelson. Nelson thanked Moore "profoundly" for his efforts and extended gratitude to both Greentree and Mt. Carmel. Nelson said that MAP social workers and case managers would be prepared to render all possible help in giving care to AIDS patients in the homes. The Buddy System will be at the nursing homes, he said, and MAP will do in-service education as well.

However, Nelson said that the opening of these two homes was only "the first step toward high quality care." The numbers of AIDS cases in Milwaukee is, Nelson said, expected to increase.

Currently, Nelson said, there are 131 persons living with AIDS. By what he called "a very conservative projection" that number is expected to increase to 200

by 1990 and 300 plus by 1991. These numbers are for Milwaukee alone. Nelson was optimistic that as nursing home experience caring for AIDS patients grows, the numbers of facilities needed will be available. However Nelson again stressed the need for a long-term AIDS care facility.

Asked about staff response to the admissions of AIDS patients, Higdon said that at Greentree there had been "no overwhelming reaction; no negative comments. We expect it to be a positive experience," he said. Lesjak agreed that the same was true for Mt. Carmel.

Nelson said that the greatest obstacle to overcome was fear on the part of those unfamiliar with AIDS patient care. It was fear that caused the delay in the opening of the nursing homes to AIDS patients. But, he emphasized, this reaction was greatest from people who are not close to persons with AIDS. However, he stressed, there was no need for fear and that with on-going education, this would be overcome as discrimination was increasingly dismantled.

"Milwaukee," Nelson said, "is a progressive, caring community." He voiced strong optimism that with education and continuing effort and good will on the part of all concerned, AIDS sufferers would receive the care that they deserve.

Federal Law Prohibits AIDS Discrimination

[New York, NY]- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has urged AIDS advocacy groups to take advantage of a new federal law which, effective Sunday, March 12, prohibits discrimination in housing based on that disease.

The Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988 bars discrimination against persons with disabilities including persons with AIDS and HIV infection. It applies to virtually all housing in the United States.

Under the law, it will now be illegal for landlords to discriminate against persons with AIDS-related conditions in the sale or rental of housing. It will also be illegal for landlords to ask questions of prospective tenants about whether they have AIDS or a related condition. If a person were evicted or turned down for an apartment because he/she had an AIDS-related condition, that person could file suit in federal court.

[Washington, D.C.]- Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) on March 17 killed legislation that would have extended by six months the federal government's funding program of AZT (Retrovir) for low-income individuals. The move comes as two states — Georgia and Kansas — have exhausted their AZT grants, with funding in several more states expected to expire in the upcoming weeks.

Wisconsin with 26 persons under the federal program, is one of 13 states who will run out of money in June, 1989.

Approximately 7000 people in the U.S. are receiving government assistance under the AZT subsidy program. AZT — which costs about \$8,000 a year at full dose — is the only government-approved drug for directly fighting AIDS.

Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) lobbyists said the bill would not have allocated additional funds for AZT, but would have given the government time to reprogram already existing funds into federal AZT subsidies. For example, funds from states with surplus money could be moved into states whose funds have expired, or additional moneys could be located within the Public Health Service to subsidize AZT.

Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine), who schedules legislation in the Senate, had stipulated that the bill would be brought onto the floor only if Senators could agree not to add amendments or to set a time limit for debate on amendments.

Legislative insiders on Capitol Hill said Helms, along with Senators William Armstrong (R-Colo.) and Don Nickles (R-Okla.), refused to agree to the stipulations, thus preventing the bill from being considered by the Senate.

"When we say Jesse Helms is 'King of Killer Amendments,' we really mean killer," said Robert Bray, HRCF communications director. "More people are going to get sick and die faster because they cannot afford life-prolonging drug treatments. It was not a good day in

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Central WI. Forms HIV + Support Groups

[Stevens Point, WI]- A new support group for HIV-positive persons has been formed for individuals in the central Wisconsin counties of Portage, Wood and Marathon by the Central Wisconsin AIDS Support Group, Inc. (CWASG) and the Central Wisconsin AIDS Network (CWAN).

Membership in this group will be limited to HIV-positive individuals only. To insure confidentiality, interested parties will be screened and will have to submit medical proof of HIV positivity (copy of test results or physician's letter).

The first meeting will take place in late March and subsequent meetings will be held bi-monthly thereafter. Agenda and issues to be discussed will be determined by the group members.

Although both CWASG and CWAN currently limit their activities to the above mentioned counties, interested individuals in surrounding counties (Shawano, Lincoln, Price and Waupaca) are invited to take part in this program.

For more information, contact CWAN Program Assistant in the following cities: Wausau (847-5888), Stevens Point (345-5350), Wisconsin Rapids (421-8525) or Marshfield (387-8646). Screening will take place over the phone and specific meeting times and places will be released following that screening.

Interested persons may also write CWASG, P.O. Box 2071, Wausau, WI 54402-2071 for more information.