

he lamely complained about being quoted out of context - is not enough. His divisive comments will not soon be forgotten."

From the *St. Louis Dispatch*: "Even by Mr. Falwell's own standards of intolerance, these comments were breathtakingly hateful. Evil exists of man, not God. It is the duty of the righteous to stand against it, not to make it worse."

From the *Spokane Spokesman-Review* in Washington: "In addition to the outrage I feel at the horrific acts of the terrorists, I now have outrage toward two American citizens, Falwell and Robertson. While people all over the country are struggling to find comfort and solace for their grief and losses, these two... promote narrow-minded, ill-informed theological speculation."

An editorial in the *Columbus Dispatch* read: "Falwell said he's pointing the finger, and he demonstrates why finger-pointing is an ugly thing. Finger pointing is even more ugly when done while the president

is calling for a national day of prayer."

Perhaps most remarkable is the drubbing Falwell and Robertson, both longtime backers of the Republican Party, are receiving from other conservatives. Family Research Council President Ken Connor said, "This is not the time to further wound America's spirit, by casting blame on our fellow citizens."

Connor's statement was released a day after Falwell issued a tentative apology. Among those voicing disapproval was President Bush. An aide to the president spoke to Falwell about the remarks, but Falwell insists his apology was not the result of pressure.

In addition to critical write-ups in the conservative *Weekly Standard*, one which memorably asks Falwell to take "a vow of silence for the duration of the current struggle."

Sources of this article include: *Associated Press* and *DataLounge.com*. - Editor

California Senate Passes DP Measure

Sacramento CA - A measure expanding the rights of Gay men and Lesbians in domestic partnerships cleared the California Senate last Monday, prompting opponents to call on Gov. Gray Davis to "protect marriage" by vetoing the legislation, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

The domestic partnership bill, proposed by Democratic Assemblywoman Carole Migden of San Francisco, is one of the most controversial pieces of legislation to surface this session.



Sen. Sheila Kuehl

The bill seeks to increase health, legal and unemployment benefits to the more than 16,000 Gay, Lesbian and elderly opposite-sex couples who have registered as domestic partners in California since a law took effect 21 months ago permitting them to do so.

Sen. Sheila Kuehl, a Santa Monica Democrat, described it as a modest and fair bill. "It is extremely important in terms of making life a little easier for people who are committed to each other," she said.

Sen. Ray Haynes, a Republican from Riverside, warned that the measure would result in "severe social and legal consequences for Californians."

Senate lawmakers split along party lines, with the majority Democrats pushing the measure through on a vote of 23 to 11. It now heads to the Assembly, where lawmakers are expected to sign off on changes made in the Senate before sending it to Davis. The governor supports the legislation and will sign it if it reaches his desk, a spokesperson said.

The Campaign for California Families, a nonprofit group that opposes the bill, has been running television and radio ads calling on Davis to veto it. Randy Thomasson, the group's executive director, said he believes the measure undermines Proposition 22, the ballot initiative that state voters approved last year that defined marriage as a heterosexual-only bond.

Migden said her measure deals with domestic partnerships and has nothing to do with Proposition 22 or marriage. "There will never be any appeasing Randy Thomasson when it has to do with equity for Lesbian and Gay citizens," she said.

New Orleans OK's Partner Benefits

New Orleans - The City Council passed an ordinance on last Thursday guaranteeing health benefits, family leave, bereavement leave and other perks to the domestic partners of Gay and Lesbian city employees.

The domestic partner benefits have in fact been available to city staff since July, 1997, under an executive order issued by Mayor Marc Morial. Twelve out of the city's 7,000 employees have signed up, costing the city \$373,303 over four years. But according to Melinda Shelton, Executive Director of the Louisiana Lesbian and Gay Political Caucus, activists wanted the executive order to be codified into law to make sure the benefits survived from one mayoral administration to the next.

New Orleans will host a mayor's race next year, and unless voters change a provision of the city charter in this year's election, Morial will not be able to run for a third term.

The partners' benefits passed unanimously with no discussion. Shelton notes that all members of the city council, as well as Mayor Morial, were endorsed by the caucus and were open to the domestic partners issue. Activists put the matter on the lawmakers' agenda last April, and recently urged the backlogged council to put the proposal to a vote.

New Orleans, says Shelton, is progressive by Louisiana standards. "If there is a liberal bastion," she says, "this would be it." The Lesbian and Gay vote in this international tourist destination is significant, and the recent census confirms New Orleans' status as the city with the highest population of same-sex couples in the state.

The vote came on the eve of a nine-day PrideFest, which kicked off with a parade Saturday and runs its course with a weekend festival Sept. 29-30.

New Orleans' domestic partner ordinance applies to same-sex couples only, a restriction that Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund argues is discriminatory. "After all," wrote Lambda's Patricia Logue in a public letter recently, "when courts are asked whether it's okay to treat people differently based on their sexual orientation and marital status, it's our community that has to live with the consequences."

- By Ann Rostow,

Gay.com/PlanetOut.com Network

Cohabitation Not Grounds to End Alimony

Philadelphia, PA (AP) - The state Superior Court, saying someone can only "cohabit" with a person of the opposite sex, has refused to let a former husband use his wife's living with another woman as grounds to end alimony payments to her.

Judge Debra A. Todd, writing for the panel that included Judges Michael Eakin and Frank Musmanno, called Kripp vs. Kripp a "case of first impression" as a new issue for the court, but followed the same reasoning as recent opinions barring same-sex adoptions or marriages.

The dispute was between Robin and Anthony Kripp, who married in April 1982, had three children, and separated in March 1996. Anthony Kripp filed for divorce and Robin moved to Kentucky, where she now lives with another woman, Todd said in the Sept. 14 ruling.

Under the property settlement agreement, Anthony's \$1,000-per-month alimony payments would end after two years if his ex-wife were to "cohabit." After that time, he stopped payment, saying his obligation had ended because she was cohabiting with another woman.

... this court has so held with regard to the question of same-sex adoption, as well as same-sex marriage ...

Robin Kripp requested and got another \$1,000 payment, which her ex-husband marked "Final Payment," but she sued in July 2000. In October, the Chester County Court of Common Pleas denied her petition, accepting Anthony Kripp's testimony about what the parties meant when they used the word "cohabitation." Robin Kripp was not present at the hearing.

While Robin Kripp also said there was no proof of a sexual relationship with another person, and the judges agreed, they said they did not have to consider the issue because of their ruling that same-sex partners could not be in "cohabitation."

"As a majority of this court has so held with regard to the question of same-sex adoption, as well as same-sex marriage ... we must defer to our Pennsylvania legislature the task of determining whether to expand the definition of cohabitation to include same-sex partners under the Divorce Code," the court wrote.

Montgomery County attorney Carolyn R. Mirabile, who represented Anthony Kripp, said she was "very surprised" by the ruling and was considering seeking an appeal to the state Supreme Court.

Court: Same-Sex Solicitation Law Discriminates

Cleveland, OH (AP) - An Ohio court ruled that a little-known statute that treats same-sex solicitation differently from unwanted heterosexual advances is discriminatory.

The decision last Thursday, by the 8th Ohio District Court of Appeals unanimously overturned the conviction of a Cleveland State University student and ended a yearlong probation sentence.

"Society has changed," Judge Colleen Conway Cooney wrote in her opinion. "There is simply no rational basis for burdening homosexuals with greater criminal liability for conduct which, if heterosexual in nature, would be subject to lesser punishment."

Joseph Maistros, 46, peeked under a university bathroom stall and asked another student for sex in November 1999. Maistros asked twice more and kept peeking under the stall when the student covered himself and told him to leave.

The student called police on a cell phone as he and two friends chased Maistros and cornered him in a nearby bar. Officers arrested Maistros on a charge of importuning, a subsection of the disorderly conduct statute that deals only with same-sex solicitation.

Maistros was convicted in Cleveland Municipal Court and sentenced to one year of probation. The court suspended his \$150 fine and 180-day jail term if he stayed away from the campus.

Under the 1972 law, the maximum penalty is six months in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

The Ohio same-sex solicitation statute is "the only one I've heard of," said Kevin Layton, the Deputy Legal Director for The Human Rights Campaign in Washington, DC. Layton said he considers the court's ruling that such a law is discriminatory to be a "positive sign" for Gay rights.

Cooney said if Maistros behaved the same way toward a woman, he would have faced a maximum \$100 fine. The state could not justify "judging one crime to be more offensive than the other, not based on the act done, but against whom the act is committed," Cooney wrote.

"Any laws that make penalties based on the person acting should send up a red flag," said Kenneth Rexford, a lawyer with the Legal Aid Society.

In past court paperwork, a city prosecutor argued the statute does not discriminate because it does not mention sexual orientation. Technically, a heterosexual could be charged with soliciting someone

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National BRIEFS

Oppose Federal Marriage Amendment

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has issued an update warning about attempts to write intolerance into the Constitution.

An ACLU Action Update stated, "Starting with the Bill of Rights, amendments to the U.S. Constitution have been the source of most of its protections for individual liberty. Despite this proud tradition, plans have been announced to introduce a constitutional amendment that would attack the basic rights of millions of Americans."

"This amendment, currently being called the 'Federal Marriage Amendment,' would not only define marriage as strictly between a man and a woman, but invalidate all legal protections for unmarried couples - Gay or straight."

The legal protections that would be invalidated include state and local domestic partnership laws, laws prohibiting discrimination based on "marital status" and even laws protecting unmarried elderly couples who refrain from marrying in order to hold on to their pensions.

The ACLU warns: "In short, proponents of this extreme amendment are so concerned about preventing Gay marriage that they would wipe out every single law protecting nontraditional families no matter what their sexual orientation. As a result, the proposed amendment would deny all protection for the most personal decisions made by millions of families."

Take Action! You can read more about this amendment and send a Free fax to your Members of Congress from the ACLU website. Tour action alert at: www.aclu.org/action/marriage107.html.

School panel: Sex Book Stays

Anchorage, AK (AP) - The Anchorage School District's Controversial Issues Review Committee voted last week to leave the sex education book "*It's Perfectly Normal*" on school library shelves.

The 10-3 vote followed testimony from two sets of parents of students at Oceanview Elementary School, one of 16 Anchorage middle and elementary school libraries with the book on their shelves. The Egelands and Steeles filed separate requests last spring asking the book be checked out only to those students who have parental permission.

The parents read aloud excerpts that describe sexual intercourse and say that kids curiously touching each other's bodies is normal. Rick Steele said the book undermines the district's commitment of teaching fifth- and sixth-grade students about abstinence.

"Gay People Hugging"

The also parents objected to most of the book's illustrations. "We do not believe a book with pictures of people having sex, naked bodies, people masturbating, people putting on condoms, a student having an erection in front of a school class, Gay people hugging is necessary at the school level," Eric Egeland said.

The committee ruling goes to superintendent Carol Comeau. She will pass that decision and her own opinion to the School Board. The School Board will rule on the book Oct. 8.

GFN Dark Due to Trade Center Attack

New York, NY - The 9-11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City disabled GFN.com, the website operated by the Gay Financial News Network.

GFN's offices are located about a half-mile from the where the twin towers collapsed, raining down destruction in a calamity that has claimed over five thousand lives. Much of the area immediately surrounding the World Trade Center has been declared a federal disaster area and sealed off by police and the national guard.

The destruction of the towers has disrupted telephone communications throughout the city. Technicians are erecting temporary satellite receivers and microwave antennae to alleviate the more serious disruptions, but restoring electricity to the area is another matter.

GFN chairman Walter Shubert has reported that everyone on his staff is safe and accounted for.

Man Who Spattered Blood Sparks HIV Debate

Springfield, MA (AP) - A man who splattered blood on police during his arrest and refused to disclose his HIV status has been sentenced to three to seven years in prison.

The case of Luiz Ortiz, 43, sparked a debate about the confidentiality of HIV testing and led to legislative proposals that would require HIV disclosure in certain cases.

Ortiz was arrested in January after police were called to a Springfield apartment where they found Ortiz covered in blood and wielding a large butcher knife.

After he was shot twice by police, Ortiz continued to resist arrest. Officers who tried to subdue him and attend to his wounds were splashed with blood, prosecutors said.

The case led to a debate about whether people have a right to keep their HIV status private, especially where that secrecy could endanger others' safety. Ortiz refused to say whether he had tested positive for HIV or AIDS.

Gay activists said breaching the confidentiality of people's HIV status could discourage others from getting tested. HIV, human immunodeficiency virus, is the agent that causes AIDS.

A district court judge ordered that Ortiz reveal his HIV status, but in February, the state's highest court overturned that order. In her decision, Supreme Judicial Court Justice Martha Sosman said the law provides "absolute confidentiality for HIV testing" without any exceptions.

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Solicitation Law Discriminates

Continued from Page 7

of the same sex.

Bob Bucklew, director of health and wellness for the Lesbian/Gay Community Service Center in Cleveland, called the decision a civil-rights advance. "Ohio is a fairer place," Bucklew said.

Laws treating same-sex and heterosexual advances differently are unfair to women as well as homosexuals, he said.

"The vast majority of offensive sexual propositions are made by men," Bucklew said. "If you look at the targets of those gestures, the vast majority are women."

Despite Emergency, Gays Can't Give Blood

If you're a Gay man thinking about donating blood because of the terrorist attacks, forget it - unless you're a virgin. Even during the current national crisis, nearly all homosexual and Bi men are still banned from giving blood to help others.

"There's a large group of people who are willing to participate, but they're excluded. It's not only discriminatory, but it's counterproductive to address the problems we're facing now," said Nathan Purkiss, legislative aide for San Francisco Supervisor Mark Leno, who has pushed for looser rules.

Blood donations, which had been dipping to precarious levels in recent years, skyrocketed in the wake of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington DC. Officials in both cities say they have enough blood for now, but donations are urged over the next several weeks to keep the national supply steady.

Since 1985, the federal Food & Drug Administration has banned all blood donations from any man who has had sex with a man since 1977, even once. Also, women may not give blood if they had sex over the last 12 months with a man who had Gay sex in the last 24 years.

People infected with HIV, of course, are also forbidden to give blood, as are IV drug users, prostitutes and their clients, and others considered at high risk. Blood banks are bracing for a new set of rules that will ban donations from some travelers to the United Kingdom and France because of concerns about Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease, also known as "Mad Cow" Disease.

Last year, an FDA advisory committee voted 7-6 to keep the current policies about Gay men in effect. Some officials had suggested that men be allowed to donate if they hadn't had sex with a man for five years or one year. Half the nation's blood centers supported such a change, but the American Red Cross did not.

An estimated 2 to 3 people a year become infected with HIV through blood transfusions, in sharp contrast to the 1980s, when thousands became ill. It's not clear why the virus isn't detected in the blood supply, but it could be due to human error or failures in the tests themselves, said former advisory committee chairman Dr. F. Blaine Hollinger, a professor at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

But on the whole, he said, the nation's blood supply is "extremely safe." Many of those who favored the current policy were concerned about diseases other than AIDS, according to Hollinger, especially since Gay men are susceptible to many illnesses. "The risk is not so much with the diseases we can test for. It's for the diseases we don't know about," he said. "That's a diffi-

cult thing to resolve."

However, Hollinger supported changing the policy to allow Gay men to donate if they hadn't had sex in recent years.

At least one Gay man learned he couldn't give blood when he visited the Blood Centers of the Pacific this week. "He wasn't happy with the answer," said spokeswoman Verkouw. "People feel helpless when buildings are blown up, and they want to help."

- By Randy Dotinga,
Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network

Rivendell Marketing Acquires Q Syndicate

In yet another takeover in the already small world of Gay media, a marketing company has bought Q Syndicate, the largest provider of content to the Gay and Lesbian press in the United States.

Rivendell Marketing's purchase of Q Syndicate became effective on Sept. 1, but was only announced last Friday.

The company, which woos advertisers to the Gay media, plans to expand the material provided by the syndicate and launch a new lesbian comic strip.

Q Syndicate offers columns, entertainment reviews, horoscopes and puzzles to Gay newspapers. Current features include *A Couple of Guys*, *Deep Inside Hollywood*, *Sex Talk* and *Lesbian Notions*.

In a statement, Rivendell said it will keep Q Syndicate founder David Bianco on board as vice president for content. Paula Martinac, a novelist and freelance writer, will be editor in chief.

Gay Media Merger Madness

The Gay media world has been rocked by several mergers in recent months, including the separate unions of *The Advocate* and *Out* magazines and the *PlanetOut.com* and *Gay.com* Web sites. Earlier this year, Window Media, publisher of the *Southern Voice* and other local newspapers in the southern part of the country, acquired the *Washington Blade* and *New York Blade*.

"It should raise eyebrows for all people who care about journalistic integrity... a marketing company parent ...of a journalistic enterprise."

- Steven Petrow, VP, NLGJA

Critics have bitterly decried the mergers, claiming they will lead to fewer voices being heard in the Gay media. But company officials point out that mergers are often necessary to avoid bankruptcy.

"I can't judge how this (merger) will affect Q Syndicate's content," said Steven Petrow, a vice president of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association. "But it certainly should raise eyebrows for all people who care about journalistic integrity that a marketing company would be the parent company of a journalistic enterprise."

- Randy Dotinga,
Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network

Corporate Support Withdrawn From Scout Benefit Race

Columbus, IN (AP) - Cummins Inc. plans to withdraw its sponsorship from an event that raises money for the Boy Scouts of America, citing the organization's refusal to accept homosexuals.

Scouting programs in Bartholomew County may have to be scaled back if funding from Cummins cannot be replaced, a Boy Scouts spokesman told

Sports NEWS

Remembering Mark Bingham

By Jason Alan

As The United States of America reels from the horror of the terrorist attacks that unfolded on September 11, thousands of people and families are left with only memories. However, as the history books are still in the process of being written on this tragic attack, there is an under-reported fact that should be forever noted about one of the passengers who in all likelihood helped save the White House. One passenger, Mark Bingham, who is suspected of helping organize the revolt against the hijackers of United Airlines Flight # 93, was a well-known Gay rugby player.

Bingham, age 31 at the time of the crash, was not only a rugby player. He recently organized a Gay rugby team known as The San Francisco Fog. Plans were in the works for Mark to field a touch rugby team for next year's Gay Games in Sydney, Australia. Unfortunately, that will never happen now.

Mark ran a public relations firm in his professional life. He graduated from the University of California at Berkeley, and was a member of the Golden Bears' national champion rugby team in the 90's. An accomplished athlete, Mark did not start playing rugby until age 16.

He has been quoted as saying that as a young man he felt his sexuality could never be known. However, as he got older, this changed and the world of his private life and the world of his impressive accomplished athletic career grew intertwined.

Those who knew him were fully aware of his nature. He was not a man who would sit on the sidelines as the horrific events of September 11, unfolded. When interviewed by the media, his aunt said "You'd have to know Mark. He was no wallflower, no pushover. He wasn't the kind of guy to be pushed around. So I'm sure he and the others did something to stop this."

As we go to press, an e-mail has been circulating on the Web. It is one of the last e-mails Mark wrote in his lifetime, and the only currently known record of his thoughts on Gay issues. It was written to members of the Fog rugby team after they were recently accepted into the straight California Rugby League. It reads in part:

"This is a great opportunity to change a lot of people's minds, and to reach a group that might never have had to know or hear about Gay people. Let's go make some new friends... and win a few games. Congratulations, my brothers in rugby."

The USA owes a debt that can never be paid to Mark Bingham and the other passengers of Flight 93. However, the history books often don't mention when a person of historic interest is Gay, they only mention the act. He was a hero who happened to be Gay; one of many heroes' on that doomed flight.

He was a hero, a tremendous athlete, and he was one of our own.

Rudy Galindo, a Portrait of a Great Skater

Rudy Galindo is a well-known competitive ice skater. He generated a great deal of attention in 1996 when at the U.S. National Figure Skating Championships he took home an impressive - and equally improbable - win. He went on to have his

best finish ever at the 2000 World Professional Championships.

On February 4, 2000 his lungs shut down very early in his performance. Weeks later, Galindo struggled to compete at the Goodwill Games. He withdrew after the technical program and sought a diagnosis for the illness that had been afflicting him for some time.



In March of that year, Galindo was diagnosed with HIV while under treatment for pneumonia. At the time, according to an article in the *Reno Gazette Journal*, his lung capacity was down to 23% and he felt his career was finished.

On April 5, he announced his HIV status in *USA Today* one day before he would make his return to the ice with the *Champions on Ice* Summer Tour in Baltimore. According to news reports, Galindo made an impressive comeback and missed only five tour stops.

Later in 2000, he was made the Honorary Co-chair of the National Minority AIDS Council, and later hosted a World AIDS Day tribute at the National Pres Club in Washington, D.C. He was invited to compete in the Grand Slam of Skating last October, 2000. That was followed in December with the World Professional Championships televised on major networks, and finished in second place - shocking the skating community; as well as the country, to some extent.

Rudy Galindo is a fine athlete. He has risen to the occasion in ways most of us never could. Very few people in life have the talent to take home a medal in any of the above-mentioned events. However, to do that - after a come back from near death - is even more amazing. That is what makes people like him people we can look to for inspiration. And that kind of inspiration - often found through other people - often inspires the next world-class talent to find their talent and act on it.

Gay Skating Union

Becomes Member of Intl. Institute

The new relationship between the International Gay Figure Skating Union and the International Skating Institute is significant - allowing IGFSU to hold events without participants losing eligibility to participate in other competitive skating events. The first recognized Gay skating event was held in 1998, but only now can skaters feel totally free and uninhibited to participate in other skating events.

Under the terms of the deal, the ISI gives the Gay union the "means to hold skating events which will be open to skaters who are members of the ISI, the United States Figure Skating Association, and the Professional Skaters Association." The IGFSU plans to introduce a substantial number of skaters from all over the world. At the time of this writing, plans are in the works for skaters to participate that are from the USA, Canada, Europe, and Australia.

The IGFSU plans to hold various skating events during the rest of 2001 and into 2002. The events are planned for a plethora of locations. In addition, plans are in the works for some of these events to be

tied into local gay pride events.

The *Wisconsin Light* will keep readers informed as more information is obtained.

Out Athlete of the Month: Billy Bean

Billy Bean, former Major League Baseball player, came out publicly in a 1999 cover story in the *New York Times*.

Bean is now a significant Gay rights spokesperson; but in earlier years was noted for working to hide his sexuality. He had a wife of nine years before coming out, and he has been noted for playing ball the day his lover died.

Chicago Cubs Court Their Gay Fans

By Jason Alan

Recently, the Chicago Cubs MLB team wanted to do something different with their advertisements. This would certainly not be an easy task as in the world of advertising, it is hard to be original. After all, many of the ads in the media are typical stock canned ads with little originality. What to do, what to do?

The Chicago Cubs came up with a first; at least for their team and for Major League Baseball. The Chicago Cubs ran 10 full page ads in *The Chicago Free Press*, a weekly Gay paper in Chicagoland. The ads quietly started running in February.

The Chicago Free Press claimed the ads were the first serious deal between an American pro sports team and an exclusively Gay publication. While there have been women's teams that have done this on one level or another, research reflects that

claim.

According to news reports, the idea was the brainchild of *Free Press* 28 year old ad exec. Bill Gubrud. His idea was to convince the Cubs that it made good business sense to run such an ad campaign. Further, it certainly didn't hurt that the Cubs are right in the heart of Chicago's Gay neighborhood. Estimates show that about 40,000 Gays call the area home.

The Cubs were convinced it was a good business idea and history was made. However, the good news doesn't stop there. On June 23, 2001 the Cubs ran a special promotion called "Out at the ball game." On that day, when the Cubs played Wisconsin's very own Milwaukee Brewers, the *Free Press* joined with the Cubs to sell 2,000 tickets to the promotion, in coordination with the ads.

They were so successful, it was reported people bought regular tickets at Wrigley Field just to be there as the promotion quickly sold out.

"Out at the ball game" was one day before Chicago's famous annual Pride Parade, and the Cubs let the *Free Press* pick the singer for the National Anthem that day.




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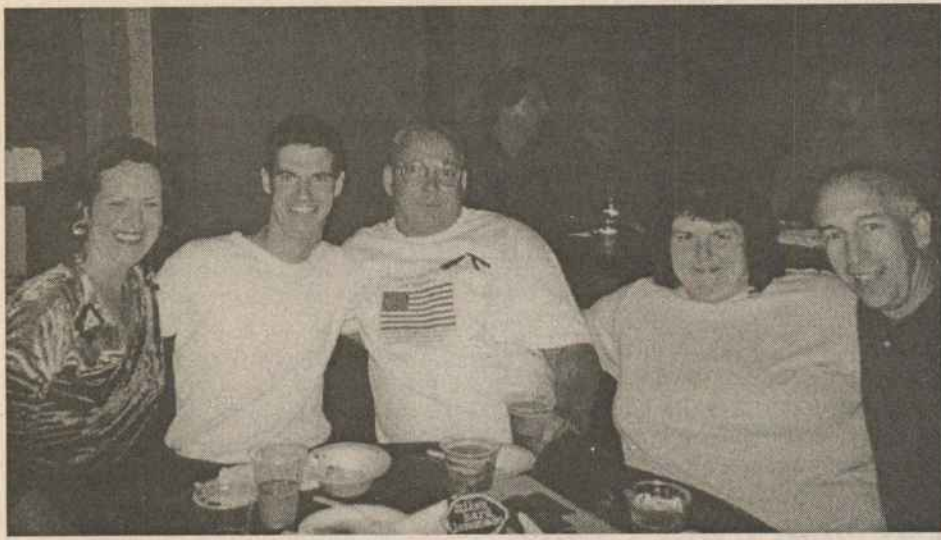
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PrideFest's volunteer party on Sept. 15 at Gus' Intl. Deli. Over 1,000 volunteers were invited to the annual event. Door prizes, a Mexican buffet and dancing highlighted the evening. Enjoying the festive mood were (L to R): Tod Ekstrom, Gary Kopydlowski, Michael Laforest and Forestiwe Rose. Photo by Jerry Johnson



Photo By TJ
Birthday Girl Debbie Ambruso hosting her party/fundraiser at Walker's Pint.



Photo By TJ
Everyone admired Jerry "Carmen Miranda" Johnson at the Pig Roast.

HIV Epidemic on Upswing Nationally

Atlanta (PlanetOut)— The battle against the AIDS epidemic has stalled in the United States and the disease showed signs of making a strong comeback among Gay and Bi men and parts of the black community according to a *Reuters* report, quoting federal officials.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention said its latest data from the first half of 2000 showed 16,000 Americans were dying from AIDS and 40,000 others were becoming infected each year with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), which causes the disease.

These figures, released last month, were largely unchanged from those reported in 1998, when health officials first observed that the epidemic had stabilized after declining sharply in the early 1990s.

"Two decades into the epidemic, these latest data show us that we are at a turning point," Dr. Helene Gayle, director of the CDC's National Center for HIV, STD and TB Prevention, said at the 2001 National HIV Prevention Conference in Atlanta.

"We either move forward toward further reducing HIV or risk going back to a period of elevated infections," Gayle said.

Health officials said they were particularly discouraged by a spate of studies that appeared to confirm reports that Gay and Bi men were engaging more frequently in unprotected anal sex and other high-risk sexual behavior.

Barebacking

One study showed 20 percent of HIV-positive Gay and Bi men in Seattle reported having unprotected anal sex with HIV-negative partners or others with an unknown HIV status last year, nearly double the 1998 rate.

Sixteen percent of Gay and Bi men between the ages of 23 and 29 in Miami's South Beach, home to one of the country's biggest Gay communities, tested positive for HIV, according to another study.

Cynthia Gomez, a researcher at the University of California's Center for AIDS Prevention Studies in San Francisco, said the findings highlighted the need to rethink HIV prevention and treatment programs targeted at Gay and Bi men.

"This is not the same epidemic. We can not expect to repeat what we did in 1981 and expect it to have the same results," said Gomez, who added that the majority of Gay men were continuing to practice safe sex on a consistent basis.

Sobering glimpse of attitudes

Those who attended the conference were also provided a sobering glimpse of attitudes toward HIV and AIDS in the black community, one of the groups hardest hit by the epidemic.

A survey by Atlanta's Morehouse School of Medicine revealed that almost half of poor black women between the ages of 17 and 44 in Atlanta had not used a condom during sex in the previous two months.

Sixty percent of those surveyed did not know their partner's HIV status, while 70 percent said they were not at risk or not at high risk of contracting the disease, said Ellen Yancey, who lead the survey.

The CDC, which hopes to cut the number of new annual HIV infections in half within five years, said the findings underlined the importance of concentrating HIV prevention and control programs on high-risk groups in minority communities.

Despite offering a largely gloomy snapshot of the battle against AIDS, the Atlanta-based CDC did note some positive trends for the epidemic.

Some good news

It said the number of infants who contracted HIV from their mothers had declined 84 percent since peaking at 901 cases in 1992. Only 47 cases were reported in the first half of last year.

HIV rates also have plummeted among intravenous drug users, mostly due to the expansion of clean needle exchange programs.

About 20 percent of those who injected drugs in New York City were estimated to be infected with HIV last year, compared to 50 percent in 1990, according to Don Des



Photo By TJ
Cheese Cake Joe and Karen Lamb at the Wisconsin Light Pig Roast.

Lewd Charges Dropped in Poundstone Case

Los Angeles — Comedian Paula Poundstone arrived at a deal with the Los Angeles District Attorney's office in an effort to avoid prosecution for lewd conduct charges, the *Los Angeles Times* reported.

Poundstone agreed to enter a no contest plea to one count of felony child endangerment and one misdemeanor count of inflicting injury on a child, after prosecutors agreed to drop sex charges against her.

The arrangement fulfills a promise made by her attorney, Steven Cron, when he said his client would be cleared of lewd-conduct charges and not serve any jail time.

Poundstone, 41, agreed to the prosecutor's recommended sentence: five years' supervised probation, in addition to 180 days in a lock-down alcohol rehab center as part of the her plea agreement — instead of a six-month sentence in jail.

Poundstone has been in alcohol rehab ever since her arrest in June for allegedly committing a lewd act on a child under 14. She expressed relief with the plea bargain.

"At the beginning of this nightmare I said I trusted the truth," Poundstone said in a statement, after entering her plea in a Santa Monica courtroom. "Today, the truth prevailed. The lewd-conduct charges against me were dropped because they weren't true," she added. "I pled no contest to the child-endangerment/injury charges because they were [true]. My drinking helped to create a dangerous situation for the children, [and] for this I am very sorry."

The comedian pleaded innocent in July to three counts of lewd conduct involving a girl under 14 and another count of child endangerment on two boys and two girls. She is expected to regain custody of her two adoptive children.

