

National Roundup

September 27, 2006

by Andrew Davis

The FORTUNE 500 Project announced that a record 461 (92.2%) of 2006 FORTUNE 500 companies provide non-discrimination protection for their gay and lesbian employees. The project was a collaboration involving Equality Forum (which began as PrideFest Philadelphia), Wharton School professor Louis Thomas and Yale Law School professor Ian Ayres.

PROMO, a key LGBT-rights organization in Missouri, recently marked its 20th anniversary, according to Advocate.com. The group was founded in St. Louis as the Private Education Rights Project to work for the repeal of a state law that made same-sex sodomy a crime. In July, the group—which started as an all-volunteer group and now has four paid staff members and offices in Springfield and Kansas City—finally got its wish when Gov. Matt Blunt signed legislation removing the sodomy statute from the books.

Designer Michael Stars has fashioned a new T-shirt to help raise funds for YouthAIDS, a worldwide initiative of Population Services International (PSI) , according to a press release. For every purchase of the "Grow Awareness" T-shirt, Stars will donate \$10 to YouthAIDS, with a guaranteed minimum of \$50,000. The shirts, available at www.michaelstars.com, come in a tank top (\$24) and a band crew T-shirt (\$26) .

In response to recent hate crimes in San Diego, writer/director/producer Del Shores and actors Leslie Jordan and Delta Burke (of the productions Sordid Lives and Southern Baptist Sissies) will unite with the local gay community to raise money for the San Diego LGBT Community Center, a press release stated. "Sadly, when a community is denied equality and deemed 'second class citizens,' they become targets of hate," Shores said in the statement.

Fifty-eight percent of registered Colorado voters support Referendum I, which would let same-sex couples register as domestic partners, according to a poll conducted by Rocky Mountain News and CBS-4. However, 52 percent said they also support Amendment 43, which would basically ban gay marriage.

The Fenway Community Health Center is attempting to raise money for a \$55 million clinic and research center that will allow it to, among other things, expand its healthcare programs for the gay community, The Boston Globe reported. Officials at the center hope to generate enough in philanthropic contributions to help build a 10-story, 100,000-square-foot building. Developers said the facility, scheduled to be completed in 2008, will be the nation's largest clinic and research center with a focus on gay health issues.

Jeff Balk, the publisher of EXP Magazine, has sued Ethan Interactive—a company that bought and then allegedly abandoned the gay publication—for more than \$1 million, the Washington Blade noted. EXP Magazine, which has a monthly circulation of 43,000, remains in print; its latest issue was distributed Sept. 15.

Following former New Jersey Governor James McGreevey's appearances on series such as The Oprah Winfrey Show, his memoir, The Confession, is flying off store shelves, according to

365Gay.com. Released on Sept. 19, the book ranked No. 5 on both Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com on Sept. 20. The book includes explicit details of his relationship with an Israeli man who says he is not gay and that McGreevey sexually harassed him.

The Dallas Gay & Lesbian Alliance is irate over comments supposedly made by Dallas County Commissioner John Wiley Price that criticize lesbian sheriff Lupe Valdez for appointing a gay liaison officer, according to The Dallas Voice. A Dallas Morning News column quotes Price saying that the appointment is “probably just more P.R. pandering.”

Daphne Wright, a deaf lesbian, has been charged with first-degree murder and kidnapping Darlene VanderGiesen, who Wright thought was trying to break up her relationship with another woman, according to the Washington Blade. At first, Wright denied seeing VanderGiesen the day of the February slaying; however, she later changed her testimony.

Georgia dentist Barton Corbin has been ordered to serve two concurrent life sentences after pleading guilty to killing his wife and his old girlfriend in two cases initially thought to be suicides. According to the Washington Blade, Corbin filed for divorce in 2004 from his wife Jennifer, claiming she might have had a lesbian relationship; five days later, Jennifer turned up dead.

The LGBT advocacy group Truth Wins Out expressed outrage with the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality (NARTH) after a racist column that defends slavery was posted on the group’s Web site, according to GayAlliance.org. The comments came only days before Ron Oden, the openly gay African-American mayor of Palm Springs, Calif., was to appear at Focus on the Family’s Sept. 23 anti-gay “Love Won Out” conference, headlined by NARTH Executive Director Joseph Nicolosi.

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force is urging individuals to participate in its Phone Home campaign, which is mobilizing people to fight the anti-LGBT constitutional amendments that will be on the November ballot in eight states, including Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, and Wisconsin. More information is at www.PhoneHome2006.com .

In California, Lambda Legal submitted its opening brief to the state supreme court, hoping to reinstate a trial court decision that doctors must treat their lesbian patients like everyone else, despite the physicians’ religious beliefs. Lambda Legal, according to a press release, is representing Guadalupe Benitez, who was denied infertility treatment by her San Diego County health care providers because she is a lesbian and the physicians are fundamentalist Christians.

An analysis of almost 70,000 New York City residents with AIDS found that 26.3 percent of those who died between 1999 and 2004 did so because of non-HIV-related causes, according to ACPonline.org. The figure represents a 32.8-percent increase from 19.8 percent in 1999. More than three quarters of the non-HIV-related deaths were due to substance abuse (31 percent) , cardiovascular disease (23.8 percent) or non-HIV-related cancer (20.8 percent) .

Another intriguing survey posted on ACPonline.org revealed that of 4,193 men living in New York City, almost 10 percent of male participants who identified themselves as straight reported having sex with at least one man during the previous year. Compared to men who identified themselves as gay, these “straight” men—of which 70 percent reported being married—were more likely to belong to a minority racial or ethnic group, be foreign-born, have a lower educational level and live outside Manhattan.