



PFLAG of Cape Cod, Brewster

Parents, Families, Friends of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transenders

August 2003

NEWSLETTER

Brewster, MA

News from All Around

Constitutional Amendment Update: US Rep. Marilyn Musgrave, R-Colo., introduced a House bill calling for a heterosexual-only-marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and it reportedly has 80 co-sponsors. The measure has been referred to a subcommittee of the House judiciary panel. However, James Sensenbrenner, a Republican who chairs the House Judiciary Committee, said that a constitutional amendment reinforcing marriage as a hetero-sexual institution is unnecessary. Sensenbrenner, who opposes same-sex marriage rights, helped write the 1996 Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage on the federal level.

In California, a bill that grants same-sex domestic partners nearly all of the state rights associated with marriage has been approved by the Assembly and is headed for debate by the full Senate. If passed, the measure will put California on par with Vermont regarding legal recognition of same-sex couples. More than 20,000 same-sex couples are registered as domestic partners in California. Gov. Gray Davis says he will sign the bill if it passes in the Senate. Debate on the measure could start by the end of this week.

In Massachusetts, the anti-gay, neo-Nazi inmate who killed ex-priest child molester John Geoghan in his prison cell had been planning the murder for some time, the Associated Press reports.

Egg-Throwers Sentenced: Two men who threw eggs at a booth promoting a gay club at California State Polytechnic University in San Luis Obispo have been placed on 18 months probation by the Judge, who ordered them each to pay a \$300 fine, and ordered to do community service for the local AIDS Support Network.

In Canada, the Chretien government was forced to propose legislation after courts in Quebec, Ontario, and BC ruled it is unconstitutional to bar gay and lesbian couples from marrying. The Ontario and BC rulings struck down the ban, allowing same-sex couples in those provinces to begin marrying earlier this summer. The draft bill is awaiting a legal opinion from the Supreme Court of Canada and is expected to be introduced in Parliament late this year. But opposition is building. The religious right and the Catholic Church are saying no to ANY state recognition of same-sex couples. Rural Liberal MP's are in trouble.

Supreme Court Decision

[Gay.Com]

On June 26, 2003, the Supreme Court struck a death blow to state sodomy laws that have been a cornerstone for anti-gay discrimination in the United States.

The case, Lawrence and Garner v. Texas, centered around two Texas men who were arrested for having consensual sex in their bedroom. In a 6-3 ruling, the high court said the two men... "are entitled to respect for their private lives."

"The state cannot demean their existence or control their destiny by making their private sexual conduct a crime," wrote Justice Kennedy in the majority opinion.

The ruling nullifies the remaining sodomy laws in 13 states and overturns the 1986 Supreme Court ruling of Bowers v. Hardwick.

Boston Globe Backs Gay Marriage Rights

Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network

As the top court in Massachusetts prepares to rule on same-sex marriage, the largest newspaper in New England urged the court to extend marriage rights to gays and lesbians as a matter of constitutional fairness.

In a lengthy editorial titled "For Gay Marriage," the *Boston Globe* said, "For all the legal acrobatics offered by opponents, it is hard to see how anything other than an animus toward gays and lesbians prevents them from obtaining the same 'benefits and protections' enjoyed by heterosexual couples."

AIDS Memorial Quilt in P'Town

On September 13 and 14, the AIDS Memorial Quilt will be on display in Provincetown. Volunteers are needed to help with opening and closing the quilt and monitoring it while open. Call David at 508-487-7295 for information or to volunteer to help.

Our Big Gay Summer

[Dylan Swizzler, 8/22/03 PlanetOut]

This year, the summer wind came blowing in, and now everything's coming up gay.

From the Canadian same-sex marriage ruling and the U.S. Supreme Court decision against sodomy laws to the first openly gay Episcopalian bishop and the runaway success of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," there's been an explosion of gayness that makes this season one of the most significant since the Stonewall riots in the summer of 1969.

Every other day a new poll suggests how people feel about gay rights or same-sex marriage. This hyper temperature-taking is just one indicator that U.S. society may be grappling with GLBT issues on a wider scale than ever before.

In the cultural arena, for example, the "Fab Five" from "Queer Eye" earned record TV ratings for Bravo this summer and became powerful new media darlings. Even people who haven't seen the show know about these five gay style gurus -- they have saturated the airwaves and the nation's style consciousness.

Politically, there's the 2004 presidential election, which is more than a year away, but the candidates are talking gay talk with surprising intensity. In July, most of the nine Democratic candidates appeared at a forum in Washington, D.C., to discuss nothing but their views on GLBT political concerns. It was an historic first for the community.

Same-sex marriage emerged as a hot-button political issue that will not be brushed aside. With Canada granting marriage licenses and a Massachusetts high court ruling expected soon, conservatives have been talking up a "cultural war" in the United States, and GLBT issues are the central axis of engagement.

It feels like we may be in a pivotal evolutionary moment in the GLBT rights movement. But did people years ago have any idea they were transitioning from the Middle Ages into the Renaissance?

Protests Over Gay Bishop

Gay.com / PlanetOut.com Network

The Episcopal Church's confirmation earlier this month of an openly gay, noncelibate bishop, the Rev. Gene Robinson, has prompted one cleric to resign and several parishes to withhold donations.

An Internet petition against the church's endorsement of Robinson -- at communionparishes.org -- encourages signers to stop making donations to the national denomination. According to AP, the petition has been endorsed by at least 52 parishes in 20 states, 320 priests, and 16 U.S. bishops.

Gay Couple Wins \$1,000,000

Ari Bendersky, 8/22/03 Gay.com

Shocking even themselves, gay couple Chip Arndt and Reichen Lehmkuhl took home the \$1 million prize on CBS' "The Amazing Race," but they also shined the spotlight on another race -- the battle for equality.

In the season finale, after hitting four continents and 24 cities and journeying 44,000 miles, the pair from Los Angeles, whom the show's producers referred to as "married," crossed the finish line first in Arizona.

"There's no way I could've gotten through this without Reichen's support and patience. What I realized throughout the race is how much I need him and how much he needs me," said Arndt, an entertainment finance consultant, after winning the race.

Whether proving it to themselves or to the American public, the couple played up the fact that they didn't win because they were gay; they took first place because they were strong competitors.

"When we went into this and found out that we were going to be on the 'Race,' we said, 'We're gay and we'd like to show America that gay people can do anything straight people can do,'" said Reichen, a former U.S. Air Force officer and current flight instructor, on CBS' *The Early Show* on Friday. "There's such a stereotype of the feminine, homosexual male and we wanted to break that and show that we can do anything."

And during this trek around the globe, they did anything and everything. The teams participated in such events as scaling down the side of a building face first, walking through a shark-infested tank, digging through a huge pile of dung to find a clue, and skydiving. Following that last event, Arndt, who arrived on the ground first, looked up with a smile and screamed, "Where's my boy?"

The couple said they plan to use their money and newfound fame to help enlighten people about the gay community and continue being positive role models.

"We had a party last night with people literally coming up to us and saying, 'After I watched you guys win, I called my mom and I told her I was gay. It was the most emotional moment of my life, and I just want to thank you so much for giving me the ability to relate to somebody that I'm proud of, and I see as a role model,'" Lehmkuhl said. "That made us cry."

The couple will continue to push for equality on many fronts. In fact, Lehmkuhl is set to appear in a documentary focusing on the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy, which begins filming this fall.

"The Pentagon is firing three people every day simply because of their sexual orientation," he said. "If the same thing were happening in corporate America, most citizens would be rightfully outraged. The fact that our nation's largest employer discriminates against gay Americans under the sanction of federal law is equally appalling."

Kennedy Stand Against Pope

Jen Christensen, 8/11/03 PlanetOut.com

Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy, Democratic congressman from Rhode Island, disagrees with the Pope on the issue of same-sex marriage.

Kennedy is a member of the most visible family of Catholic politicians in the U.S., and yet he says he won't do what the Pope asks.

In a six-page edict issued this month, the Catholic Church told these politicians that they had a "moral duty" to oppose same-sex marriage. It warned Catholic politicians that voting for such legislation would be "gravely immoral."

Rep. Kennedy called the Catholic church's opposition to same-sex marriage "bigotry." In a news release he said he was in favor of same-sex unions, and that he would oppose a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would make same-sex marriage illegal. Rep. Kennedy said that what the Catholic Church is asking him to do is wrong.

"We are talking about the law here, and whether the law is going to treat people equally," Kennedy said in an interview. "I don't see where the church or anyone else dictates what the policy is going to be with respect to treating people equally."

Kennedy is the most outspoken politician on gay issues from his state. Rhode Island has one of the highest concentrations of Catholics in the country, but Kennedy is not afraid to disagree with his church. He has a long outspoken history favoring abortion rights and the ordination of women in the Catholic Church.

Attacks on Transgender Women

[HRC.org]

We mourn the brutal murders of two transgender women and the brutal attack of another transgender woman this week in the nation's capital. The attacks come one year after the unsolved murders of Stephanie Thomas and Ukea Davis, transgender teens who were brutally gunned down Aug. 12, 2002, in Southeast Washington.

GLBT Parenting Approved

[PFLAG National]

According to the Canadian Psychological Association, psychosocial research into lesbian and gay parenting indicates that there are essentially no differences in the psychosocial development, gender identity, or sexual orientation between the children of gay or lesbian parents and the children of heterosexual parents.

Don't Segregate Gay Students

[Leland Scruby, 8/2/03 NY Times]

As a young gay man only a few years out of high school, I see the appeal of the Harvey Milk High School, a public school in New York City for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students that will be expanded this fall. But it is the easy way out - an exercise in wishful thinking that will do little to foster tolerance.

I know that public high schools can be unfriendly and scary, especially if you are homosexual. But the purpose of high school is not just earning a diploma, but also learning how to interact with people who may be different from you. There's no way an isolated, segregated environment will teach homosexual and heterosexual students to coexist and respect each other. After years of keeping silent, I decided to come out during my sophomore year in high school. I knew it wouldn't be easy, but at least I would be facing reality. My school, Schenley High School in Pittsburgh, is an inner-city public high school. It is slightly famous because Andy Warhol went there, and it's pretty liberal, but there was still the same bullying and homophobia that exist in just about every high school.

At first I only told a few people, but within a month the whole school knew. Much to my surprise, my life got better. I made a new set of friends among other students who considered themselves outsiders. Teachers, impressed by my courage, gave me support. My grades improved significantly (by the end of my junior year, my grade-point average went up to an A from a C). Sure, not every day was easy, but by lifting the burden of my secret, I was able to get my act together and start focusing on my future.

I know that not every gay high school student has such a positive experience, but I do feel that being in a school among other students who were "different" in their own way made accepting me easier. And it was great for the school. Students who had never known a gay person now knew one. And I wasn't scary to them.

I do think it's important for people to express their sexuality, even at a young age, and it's only fair that they should be able to do so in a safe environment. But if gay students are afraid of being called names, going to an exclusively gay high school is not going to solve their problems. The straight bullies (and the closeted gay bullies) will be able to thrive and fester in their own hateful paradise, while the gay students will sit around hating the bullies in theirs.

The sad truth is that gay people are discriminated against no matter what - no matter where we go to school, where we live, where we work. Segregating gay students won't prevent it. Rather than promoting unity and understanding, it will foster intolerance among both straight and gay people. [Leland Scruby is a student at Carnegie Mellon University.]

GLBT Fact Sheet

[Pamela Garramone, Greater Boston PFLAG Safe Schools Project]

- In Massachusetts, it is illegal to discriminate against gay and lesbian students in public schools.
- GLBT people come from all parts of the world, backgrounds, races, and religions. It is believed that from 6 to 10% of the population is GLBT. One in every four families has a GLBT person.
- Using the phrases, "That's so gay" or "That movie was gay" or any other anti-gay slurs are offensive to GLBT people. Since you don't know if someone is GLBT unless they tell you, by speaking in this way you could be offending or hurting someone without intending to.
- There is no "gay lifestyle" any more than there is a "straight lifestyle."
- Using the term "sexual preference" implies that gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) people choose to be gay. According to the American Psychological Association, it is not a choice. "Human beings cannot choose to be either gay or straight." Instead, the term "sexual orientation" should be used when applicable.
- In 37 states, it is legal to deny employment or housing to gay and lesbian persons. Massachusetts is one of only 13 states where it is illegal to deny a person employment or housing based on sexual orientation. (ACLU)
- Gay and lesbian couples cannot be married anywhere in the United States. Vermont offers a civil union which allows the same legal rights for gay and lesbian couples, but is not the equivalent of marriage since it is not recognized in any other state. Further, it does not include the 1,049 federal legal rights, only state rights. (GLAD)
- There is one country that allows the equivalent of marriage for same-sex couples and that is the Netherlands. However, you have to be a resident of the country to secure the benefits of marriage. The following countries also have some form of recognition for gay and lesbian couples: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Finland, Hungary, Germany, Switzerland, France, Argentina, Portugal, Belgium, and Canada. In addition, gay couples have certain spousal rights in Africa, Spain, and Great Britain. (GLAD)
- There is no evidence that growing up with a gay or lesbian parent means that a child or children will most likely be gay or lesbian. The majority of gay and lesbian people have heterosexual parents.
- A typical high school student hears anti-gay slurs 25.5 times a day. 97% of students regularly hear homophobic comments from their peers. 53% report hearing homophobic comments from high school staff. 19% of GLBT students report suffering physical attacks based on their sexual orientation. (GLSEN)

GLBT Group Meetings

PFLAG/Brewster third Mondays, Brewster UU, 7pm
CISGYA 56 Barnstable Rd. Hyannis, 7pm Wed & Thur, age to 22. 508-778-7744 x12 or 877-GAY-PRID
Straight Spouse Grp. third Thursdays monthly, 896-9060.
Metropolitan Community Chch 1st & 3rd Sundays, 7pm, Chapel in the Pines, Eastham, 385-2873 or 430-2682.
Transgender Support second Sundays 2-4pm, Dawes Hall (across from Brewster UU on 6A) & fourth Mondays, 7pm, CISGYA House, Hyannis, 255-5354 or 362-4438.
Radio Chat Program for GLBT's, 103.7 FM, 10-12pm Sun.

Dates to Remember

Sep 15, Oct 20, Nov 17: **Brewster PFLAG, 7 pm**
Sep 18, Oct 16, Nov 20 **Straight Spouse Spt, 896-9060**
Sep 14 & 22, Oct 12 & 27, Nov 9 & 24: **Trans Spt. 432-8119**
Oct 11 **National Coming Out Day**

PFLAG/Cape Cod, Brewster

PO Box 1167 Orleans, MA 02653

MISSION: *Promote the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered persons, their families and friends, through Support, to cope with an adverse society; Education, to enlighten an ill-informed public; and Advocacy, to end discrimination and secure equal civil rights.*

MEETINGS: 7 pm on the third Monday of each month at First Parish Church, Brewster; everyone is welcome. For information call 508-240-2737 or 508-432-8119.

MEMBERSHIP: Dues-paying members support the efforts of PFLAG both locally and nationally. Ten dollars goes to PFLAG National (includes subscription to *Pflagpole*), and the balance is used for our own Newsletter and the purchase of pamphlets, books, and videos. Our fiscal year begins October 1.

OFFICERS: Co-Leaders, Pem Schultz & Rob Lewis; Treasurer, Martha Berndt; Corresponding Sec'y, Betsy Cochran; Publicity, volunteer needed; Newsletter, Joann Figueras and Doris Scherbak; Program, volunteer needed; and Library, Randy Kendell;

NEWSLETTER: Published four times a year. Send articles to PO 1167 or e-mail joann@pflagcapecod.org.

WEBPAGE: www.pflagcapecod.org

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Checks payable to PFLAG/Brewster. Mail to Martha Berndt, 2 Englewood Dr. H-5, Harwich, MA 02