

news notes

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Q-Notes Staff

Carolinas Phelps targets NC

WINSTON-SALEM, NC—Rev. Fred Phelps and members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, KS have notified the campus newspaper of Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem that they plan to picket the university on October 30 to coincide with Parents Weekend. Phelps is the minister who operates the "www.godhatesfags.com" web site and who organizes very loud and disruptive protests at GLBT events. The planned picket is in protest of Wake's antidiscrimination clause which protects lesbian, gay and bisexual students and because Maya Angelou is on faculty. Phelps characterized Angelou as a "pervert" and "dyke lover." There has been no official public statement from the student newspaper, the administration, nor on Rev. Phelps' web site, so it may just be a rumor. Regardless, there is talk of organizing a counter-protest if he does appear.

Supreme Court rejects appeal

WASHINGTON, DC—The Supreme Court let stand a ruling involving a North Carolina case that public school teachers have no free-speech protection against being disciplined over the curriculum materials they select. The justices, without comment, rejected the appeal of Buncombe County, NC, drama teacher Margaret Boring who was punished for letting students put on a controversial play. The appeal argued that her free-speech rights were violated, but a federal appeals court ruled, 7-6, that teachers have no such rights when it comes to school curriculum. The ruling is not a decision and sets no national precedent. But it allows the 4th Circuit Court's ruling to stand — and continue to be binding law in North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia and West Virginia. The Lee Blessing play *Independence* focuses on a single mother and her three daughters, one of whom is a lesbian and one of whom is pregnant and unmarried.

National Memorial defaced

HOULTON, ME—The new amphitheater in Monument Park has become the latest target of vandalism in Aroostook County. The rear interior wall of the amphitheater is composed of more than 620 memorial bricks that were donated by people from the community and elsewhere. One of those bricks states "Gays Are People Too." Recently, someone used white spray paint to write the words "Yeah Right" and drew an arrow pointing to that brick. The brick itself was not harmed, but more than 40 others received paint damage.

Girl killed over gay friend

SHERMAN OAKS, CA—James Andrade, 63, shot his 19-year-old daughter to death and then committed suicide because he was angry at his ex-wife for marrying another man and at his daughter for having a gay friend, according to a suicide note, police said. Andrade drove to his ex-wife's home and waited inside the house until his daughter, Diana, returned. When she came home, she and Andrade sat down on a living room couch and began talking, Los Angeles Police Det. Stephen Fisk said. Diana's stepfather was watching television in the same room with his back turned to them. Her mother was in her bedroom. "He was sitting on the couch talking with his daughter and then, for no apparent reason — there was no argument, no harsh words — he shot her and then turned the gun on himself," Fisk said. Investigators searched Andrade's car and found a shotgun and an empty vodka bottle. Coroner's officials who inspected the body found a second gun and a note in his pants pocket, Fisk said.

Gay laws in California

SACRAMENTO, CA—Governor Pete Wilson vetoed dozens of bills just before the legislature adjourned, including a measure ordering health insurers to offer domestic-partner benefits to employers. The Republican governor, who leaves office in January, also said no to a bill that would have created a new system

for reporting cases of HIV by code numbers instead of names; current reports are only of AIDS cases. Wilson did sign a bill that allows creation of AIDS Awareness license plates. He has never supported expanding health-care options for domestic partners. The bill he vetoed would have forced health insurers to offer the coverage, but not make employers buy it. Also signed by Wilson was a bill which makes it a felony to knowingly expose an unaware person to HIV or AIDS through sexual contact.

Chalk wars

BOWLING GREEN, KY—Members of the Western Kentucky University Lambda Society, a gay and lesbian group, chalked seven meeting announcements on sidewalks around campus. The rugby team had done similar chalkings and the messages stuck around for two weeks and an environmental group had created messages four times the size of Lambda's. It's a common practice on campuses nationwide. But when Scott Taylor, building director at the Downing University Center, spotted two of the group's signs near his building, he informed them they'd have to be removed. He also barred the group from meeting at the center until the signs were gone. Matt Leffler, Lambda's president, argued that chalk messages aren't specifically prohibited in the University Center's Policy and Procedures Manual and pointed to common school practice. But Taylor cited rules in a separate manual on damag-

ing or defacing school property. A compromise was reached and the meeting allowed to go on. Taylor also approved the group's banner which was hung in the main lobby of the student center between banners for the Campus Crusade for Christ and the Christian Fellowship. Shortly thereafter, the two Christian banners were taken down for reasons unknown.

GLAAD names media director

LOS ANGELES, CA—The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) has named Scott Seomin to the position of Media Director, the position formerly held by Chastity Bono. Seomin had a productive tenure in public relations for *Entertainment Tonight* and has been a features writer, a field reporter for *Extra* and was the first media director for E! Entertainment television. He also represents *ET* anchorman turned musician John Tesh.

Blue Cross loses

PHILADELPHIA, PA—Independence Blue Cross tried unsuccessfully to stop publication of the *Philadelphia Gay News*, apparently because the weekly paper carried a story about a settlement between the insurer and an AIDS patient over disputed benefits. Publisher Mark Segal said Common Pleas Judge Pamela Cohen Dembe denied a motion by Blue Cross to have the paper removed from vending boxes, bookstores and newsstands. The story that prompted

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Blue Cross's motion concerned a lawsuit filed by Jim Halle, who alleged that Blue Cross dropped his coverage in 1992 after he began submitting claims for treatment of HIV. The story said Blue Cross has tentatively agreed to pay Halle \$22,500 annually for 15 years, or until his death. The tentative settlement was to remain secret, but a *Philadelphia Gay News* release said a court clerk gave a copy of the agreement to a contributing writer for the paper. The story said the insurer argued in court papers that it had canceled Halle's insurance because he moved out of the coverage area.

Riggs Amendment dumped

WASHINGTON, DC—The US House overwhelmingly passed the VA-HUD Appropriations Conference Committee report and it did not include the anti-gay Riggs Amendment. The Riggs Amendment would have prohibited the city of San Francisco from using any VA-HUD funds to enforce that part of its anti-discrimination ordinance which requires city contractors to offer domestic partner benefits to its unmarried employees. The Hilleary Amendment which sought to freeze spending on the Housing Opportunities for People With AIDS program at FY '98 levels was also dropped.

No eviction

LINCOLN, NE—A federal judge has barred the eviction of an HIV-positive man who
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