

national notes

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Partnership ordinance survives

CHICAGO—Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund and the City of Chicago successfully fought off an attempt to block implementation of a new city ordinance providing health and other employment benefits to the domestic partners of municipal workers.

The case, *Crawford, et al v. City of Chicago*, was brought by a local minister and others seeking to stop the health benefits ordinance. The opponents argued that the city did not have power under Illinois law to provide benefits to employees' domestic partners or in any way recognize unmarried couples. Rev. Hiram Crawford vigorously opposed the domestic partner ordinance on religious grounds.

Supporters said the ordinance would widen Chicago's safety net for its workers while offering gay employees compensation packages more like those offered to non-gay workers.

Race for Life

NEW YORK—Get Challenged and the American Foundation for AIDS Research (AmFAR) announced a cooperative effort to inspire people with HIV/AIDS and to challenge public attitudes about the disease.

The two groups will sponsor an all-HIV/AIDS crew in the grueling Transpacific sailing race from Los Angeles to Honolulu commencing July 2. The 2,200-mile, ten-day journey will be the first in a series of events aimed at demonstrating that people with HIV/AIDS can meet the new challenges of life.

AmFAR will assist Get Challenged in some marketing and fundraising aspects of this first project. A portion of all funds raised from the race, and future Get Challenged "challenges," will go to AIDS research supported by AmFAR.

Mothers speak out

LOS ANGELES—Children with HIV are dying despite advances in treatment for adults, reported several mothers of HIV-infected children at the 4th National Conference on Women and HIV. New treatments for HIV are offering hope for thousands. However, of the eleven drugs available to adults, only five have been FDA-approved for use in children. Ultimately, in the battle against AIDS, children are being denied access to the essential tools used to combat the virus.

The current standard of adult care, known as combination therapy, is not the standard for children. The lack of research and dosing information makes physicians leery of administering potent drug combinations to infants and children — despite current evidence showing that these "drug cocktails" may save lives. Without access to drug regimens formulated specifically for pediatric usage, the HIV outlook for children remains bleak.

Atlanta's fight for domestic partnership benefits

NEW YORK—Lambda Legal Defense and

Education Fund was joined by a host of Georgia civil rights groups in defending Atlanta's effort to extend benefits to dependent domestic partners of city workers.

Lambda and its allies filed a joint friend-of-the-court brief with the Georgia Supreme Court in *City Of Atlanta v. Morgan*, the case stemming from the Atlanta City Council's passage of a limited domestic partnership benefits ordinance.

The case was brought by Lamar Morgan, a city resident who contends that Atlanta did not have the power to enact such an ordinance. Lambda is supporting Atlanta's appeal of a lower court ruling which agreed with Morgan's view that the ordinance is identical to a 1993 benefits law which was also struck down (*McKinney v. City of Atlanta*).

Lambda's brief argues that the current ordinance focuses on the dependents of city employees and differs greatly from the *McKinney* law.

Atlanta's new domestic partnership bill offers health benefits to partners of city employees when the couple has registered as a partnership and the partner is dependent upon the city employee for financial support. Under the program, same- or opposite-sex couples can take advantage of the insurance, although they must pay 25 percent, and in some instances 100 percent, of the premiums to the city.

Not guilty in MA transexual death

CAMBRIDGE, MA—Activists are outraged at the lesser-charge conviction of a Massachusetts man tried for the death of transexual Chanelle Pickett, despite evidence that she had been strangled for eight minutes.

After two days of deliberation, the jury ruled that William Palmer was guilty of assault and battery and not guilty of voluntary manslaughter, second degree murder or first degree murder in the November 1995 death of male-to-female pre-operative transexual Roman "Chanelle" Pickett. Palmer will be sentenced to not more than two and one-half years in prison.

Death sentence for cop shooting

CAMDEN, NJ—A transexual was sentenced to death for killing a police officer who had responded to the shooting of two other law enforcement officers in the defendant's house.

The jury said Leslie Ann Nelson deserved to die for fatally shooting Haddon Heights Patrolman John Norcross when he responded to the shootings in April 1995. The sentence makes Nelson the only woman on New Jersey's death row.

The jury spared Nelson from a second death sentence in the killing of prosecutor's investigator John McLaughlin, who had gone to her home with a warrant to search for weapons. In that death, Nelson faces life in prison with parole eligibility after 30 years.

A third officer, Detective Richard Norcross, the slain patrolman's older brother, was wounded five times in the attack.

Nelson, 39, was not in court when the verdict was announced, but pleaded for her life, saying she was prepared to spend the rest of

See NATIONAL on page 23



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