

# PARKVIEW VIDEO & NEWS

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## National

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No. 1 killer of the nation's young and middle-age adults, bolstering the government's optimism that the deadly epidemic is slowing down. The disease is now the second leading cause of death for people between 25 and 44, driven by a 26 percent drop overall in the rate of AIDS deaths from 1995 to 1996, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said. Accidents, such as falls and car crashes, are the leading cause of death for the group that accounts for more than half the nation's workforce. Cancer is No. 3, the CDC said. The drop in AIDS deaths, included in the CDC's 1996 report on births and deaths, adds to encouraging earlier reports. Last year, the actual number of AIDS deaths declined for the first time since the epidemic began in 1981. Dr. John Ward, the CDC's chief of AIDS surveillance, tempered the news by noting that thousands of people are still living with AIDS and taking drugs that take a huge toll on the body.

### Cop gives medal back

NEW YORK—A police officer who won a medal from a gay cops' group has been suspended for 30 days for allegedly using sexual epithets when he gave the medal back after the ceremony, police said. The Gay Officers Action League gave Officer Lawrence Johnston a medal for valor at the NYPD's annual Medal Day ceremony at police headquarters, said Marilyn Mode, a police spokeswoman. He allegedly used "some very vulgar language with sexual innuendos" when he returned the medal shortly after the ceremony, Mode said. He has been suspended without pay. It was not immediately clear why Johnston was given the medal or why he returned it. The charges against Johnston have not been determined, pending an investigation, Mode said.

### Fund starts after teen suicide

SALT LAKE CITY, UT—Following the suicide of Utah gay student leader Jacob Orozco, the Tzabaco Catalog's Safe Schools Initiative and the National Youth Advocacy Coalition have established a memorial fund to

aid high school gay-straight alliances across the country. Orozco took his own life after a two-year battle against the Salt Lake City school district for formal recognition of East High School's Gay-Straight Student Alliance, a support group for students dealing with issues related to sexual orientation and homophobia. To donate to the fund, call 1-800-856-1667, reference Jacob. PlanetOut, the AOL-based gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender online community, and XY Magazine, the nation's leading publication for young gay men, have also announced their support for the fund.

### County to study benefits

CHAPEL HILL—The Orange County commissioners recently decided to study the idea of extending benefits to the domestic partners of unmarried county workers, including gays and lesbians. The idea is becoming more common in the Triangle, though it's sometimes been a controversial one: Chapel Hill is being sued by an anonymous plaintiff over its policy of offering such benefits. Carrboro offers similar benefits and Durham County recently began considering extending health insurance to partners of its employees. Several private firms in the area, including Glaxo Wellcome and IBM, also offer benefits to unmarried partners. With little comment, the commissioners voted unanimously to forward the idea to the county's Human Relations Commission for study and a recommendation.

### Cracker Barrel okay?

LEBANON, TN—The restaurant chain officially named Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Inc. is well-known in the South for home-style cooking at modest prices. In a calculated gamble, it is opening 70 percent of its new restaurants outside its core Southern market and altering its menu to reflect local tastes. But as Cracker Barrel looks for customers in new parts of the country, it's still dealing with the aftermath of an ugly episode that made waves in 1991. That year store managers fired between one dozen and two dozen gay men and lesbians, after Cracker Barrel headquarters issued a memo directing the managers "not to employ  
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