

News

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for 38% of new AIDS cases reported in the United States. Dr. Ross Herron of American Red Cross Blood Services said the policy doesn't exclude most gay men from donating because they're gay, but because of their behavior with other gay men.

Sodomy law upheld

HOUSTON, TX — Texas' sodomy law was upheld by an appeals court March 15 in the case of two men charged with having sex in a private home. The nine-member Fourteenth Court of Appeals voted 7-2 to overturn a June ruling by three members of the same panel that said the law was unconstitutional because it forbids sex between same-sex partners, yet it allows the same acts between heterosexuals. The sodomy law was challenged after John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner were arrested on Sept. 17, 1998, and charged with engaging in homosexual conduct. Harris County sheriff's deputies entered Lawrence's apartment after receiving a false report of an armed intruder inside and found the men having sex. Texas has had a sodomy law since 1860 but decriminalized it for opposite-sex partners in 1974.

SLDN gets grants

WASHINGTON, DC — Servicemembers Legal Defense Network (SLDN) announced March 20 that it has received multiple year grants totaling \$30,000 from the Paul Rapoport Foundation, to be used in assisting service members harmed by "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue, Don't Harass." The total grant amount includes a two-year, \$20,000 general operating grant and a two-year, \$10,000 matching grant.

Under the terms of the matching grant, all new and increased donations to SLDN will be matched by the Rapoport Foundation. The Rapoport Foundation, based in New York, has a strong history of funding projects addressing the concerns and needs of the lesbian and gay community.

Wrong about Beddingfield

WASHINGTON, DC — Contrary to earlier reports, it seems gay, conservative, Republican activist Tom Beddingfield will not be advising the Bush administration on gay and lesbian issues after all. Charles Francis, a Washington, DC-based public relations executive whom the *Washington Post* calls a Bush "family friend who is openly gay," says if anyone were appointed to advise the president on gay and lesbian issues, he'd be in the loop. Francis says Bush hasn't appointed Beddingfield to any position. Mr. Beddingfield, who had said he would be the Bush liaison for gay and lesbian issues, was an activist on gay issues in California, angering the gay political establishment with his conservative views. For example, he supported Proposition 22 last spring, which now prohibits same-sex marriages in California.

Queen makes hall of fame

CLEVELAND, OH — The glam-rock band Queen was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of fame in a ceremony March 19 featuring a rare live performance by the surviving members of the band. Queen, whose lead singer was the openly gay and highly colorful Freddy Mercury, was one of thousands nominated for admittance to the Hall this year, 28 years after the recording of the group's self-titled first album. Performers become eligible for consideration 25 years after their first recording was re-

leased. A musical featuring the songs of Queen is in the works and is slated for opening in London late this year, to coincide with the tenth anniversary of Mercury's death.

VFW to host Boy Scouts

SOUTH RIVER, NJ — While an East Brunswick synagogue will not support the Boy Scouts of America as long as it bars gays from leadership positions, South River veterans are eager to open their doors to the group. Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post 1451 has invited any interested troop to use its 23-acre property off Reid Street for camping or meetings. VFW members were dismayed when Temple B'nai Shalom closed its doors to Boy Scout Troop 252 and Cub Scout Pack 250 after prohibiting groups that discriminate on the basis of gender or sexual orientation from using their facilities. In January, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the leadership of Reform Judaism, urged member temples, like Temple B'nai Shalom, to withdraw sponsorship from the Scouts.

Merger is out, for now

LOS ANGELES, CA — The titans of gay media, PlanetOut and Liberation Publications (LPI) halted their merger last week, citing changing market conditions. The original merger deal no longer reflects the new, more realistic values of the two privately held companies after the dot.com nosedive of this past winter. PlanetOut's other merger with Web company Online Partners, parent of Gay.com, nears completion with a California state review March 21. Liberation Publications is owner of *The Advocate* and *Out* magazines.

International

Court affirms lesbian mothers

JERUSALEM — Jerusalem's High Court of Justice ruled March 20 that the rabbinical courts were unauthorized to decide on a request by a man to prohibit his ex-wife from letting their children spend time with her lesbian partner. The decision paved the way for the two divorced women and their children, who live in a communal settlement in the North, to meet as a family legally for the first time since May 12, 1999. The women appealed to the High Court in January 2000, after a lower court agreed it could not rule on the plaintiffs main petition — reduced child support; then ruled that the women were setting a bad example and upheld the ex-husband's request for reduced visitation. When the women appealed, the Chief Rabbinical Court upheld the lower court. In overturning the decisions, the High Court ruled that once the rabbinical court had decided it was not authorized to rule on the question of child support, it automatically should have disqualified itself from dealing with his secondary request.

Gay liberal elected mayor

PARIS — Socialist Bertrand Delanoë, one of France's few openly gay politicians, claimed a victory for "courage and reason" as he was declared the French capital's first left-wing leader since 1871. The left also appeared to have taken France's third city, Lyon, which has also been a traditional right-wing bastion for many years. Mr Delanoë's victory in Paris against Philippe Seguin, the candidate for the right-wing RPR, signified a powerful rejection of the city's existing system of government, which is closely associated with French President Jacques Chirac, who served as mayor for 18 years. ▼

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