

# PlanetOut announces 'Person of the Year'

*Gay.com and PlanetOut.com honor the public figure that has done the most for the LGBT community in 2004*

by Trea Robinson

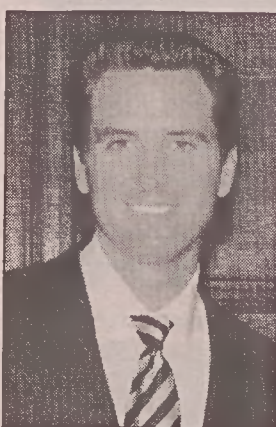
SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — PlanetOut Inc., a global online media company serving the gay and lesbian market, unveiled Dec. 15 the winner and runners-up of the fourth annual PlanetOut Inc. "Person of the Year" awards. The awards recognize the people that most profoundly impacted the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in 2004. Person of the Year award nominees come from politics, film, television, music, travel, business, fashion and sport.

"2004 has been a decisive year in gay and lesbian history," said PlanetOut News Director Tom Musbach. "Something that none of us thought we would see in our lifetime unfolded before our eyes in the form of a monumental stand for civil rights in this country. San Francisco's same-sex wedding parade was a defining event for our community this year, both in America and abroad."

**Gavin Newsom, San Francisco Mayor**

According to PlanetOut Inc. editors, "By allowing same-sex couples to get married in San Francisco last February, Mayor Gavin Newsom changed history, changed lives and changed the national debate about marriage equality. He is the obvious choice for Person of the Year for 2004."

The 36-year-old's decision to let City Hall issue marriage licenses to gay and lesbian couples sparked a month-long wedding parade,



Planet Out's 'Person of the Year': Gavin Newsom

with couples flying in from all over the world to wed. The phenomenon became known to many as the "Winter of Love" and news media broadcast images from City Hall of hundreds of loving couples enjoying a right that had always been denied them. Newsom has said he was moved to act after seeing President George W. Bush lend support for a constitutional amendment to protect the "sanctity of marriage" during

his State of the Union speech. The decision made Newsom a lightning rod for criticism to many people, including fellow Democratic leaders, and a hero to many others.

In addition to choosing the "Person of the Year," PlanetOut has also named some notable runners-up, including:

**Ilene Chaiken, Executive Producer, "The L Word":** It may have taken executive producer Ilene Chaiken nearly three years to convince Showtime that America was ready for a TV series about lesbians, but her persistence paid off. In yet another groundbreaking move, Chaiken persuaded Subaru to participate in an "L Word" storyline — as a gay-friendly company that steps up to the plate to sponsor Dana, an openly gay female athlete.

**Amelie Mauresmo, Athlete:** The openly lesbian French tennis player (and Olympic silver medalist) is currently the number-one woman player in the world. After coming out in 1999, Mauresmo has had to endure comments about her athletic style not being "feminine enough."

**Teresa Heinz Kerry, Philanthropist:** In a presidential campaign dominated by Republican antipathy and Democratic apathy, Teresa Heinz Kerry stood out as a rare kind of hetero hero. While her husband largely shied away from one of his most loyal voting blocs, rarely mentioning his long record of LGBT support, Heinz Kerry took on the role of unofficial ambassador. At the Democratic National Convention she invited gay delegates to "call me Mama T." The crowd burst into chants of "Mama T," "Mama T." She got a similarly enthusiastic response from gay audiences across the country.

**Peter Staley, Activist:** AIDS activist Peter Staley has some impressive credentials. As one of the founders of ACT-UP New York, he's been involved in the fight against HIV from the beginning. As the founder and proprietor of AIDSmeds.com, he's been vital in dispensing information and tips on HIV medications, statistics and coping strategies worldwide. But it's been his work this year against the crystal meth epidemic in the gay community that really drew the attention of PlanetOut's editors. Using his own money, Staley launched a campaign with the provocative headline, "Huge Sale, Buy Crystal, Get HIV Free!" in New York this summer that drew the world's attention to the problem and served to shock some gay men out of their complacency.

To access a slideshow highlighting PlanetOut Inc.'s Person of the Year and to view a complete list of runners-up, visit [www.planetout.com/news/newsom/](http://www.planetout.com/news/newsom/) or [www.gay.com/news/newsom](http://www.gay.com/news/newsom).



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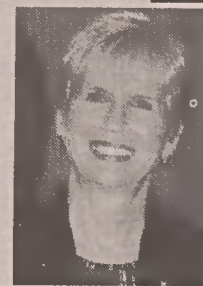
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