

continued from previous page

like other forms of hatred, are not welcome in the U.K."

In the last weekend in February, the Westboro Baptist Church was due to picket another production of "The Laramie Project," the widely acclaimed documentary play about the brutal murder of gay student Matthew Shepard.

The production was being staged at the Performing Arts Center at Dominican University in River Forest, a suburb of Chicago. Students at the university had vowed to stage a "silent" counter-protest.

"[All the students] have been sick since they first heard about the Phelps' plans and saw their website to check it out. They couldn't believe the hateful talk on it," a spokesperson told UK Gay News by email.

The Westboro Baptist Church congregation is made-up from the extended Phelps family — Fred Phelps has 12 children who are all adults. The group is based in Topeka, Kan.

In addition to their notorious pickets at productions of "The Laramie Project," they also demonstrate at funerals of those who die from AIDS. The church's most infamous demonstrations are at funerals of military personnel who have been killed while serving their country in Iraq and Afghanistan.

— by Andy Harley. UKGayNews.org.uk

National News

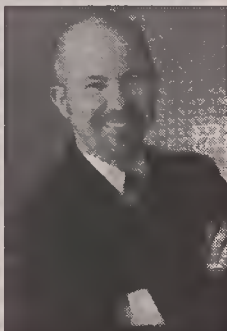
by David Stout Q-Notes staff

Mayor sued for anti-gay bias

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Lambda Legal has joined a First Amendment lawsuit filed by Central Alabama Pride (CAP) against Mayor Larry Langford, who interfered with the group's right to free speech last summer when he directed city workers to treat CAP differently than other groups are treated. CAP has held a gay pride parade through the streets of Birmingham every year since 1987, and its Pride banners have been displayed on city poles in accordance with municipal policy that extends this opportunity to a variety of organizations when they have events taking place in the city. However, in May of 2008, the mayor announced that he would neither sign a proclamation nor provide a permit for gay pride based on his religious beliefs that do not "condone that lifestyle choice."

Obama selects his AIDS Czar

WASHINGTON, D.C. — President Barack Obama has tapped Jeffrey S. Crowley to head the Office of National AIDS Policy. Crowley, a Senior Research Scholar at Georgetown



Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Legal Director Shannon Price Minter

University's Health Policy Institute and an openly gay man, will coordinate the federal government's efforts on HIV/AIDS policy and will help guide the administration's development of disability policies. Prior to his time at Georgetown, Mr. Crowley served as the Deputy Executive Director for Programs at the National Association of People with AIDS, overseeing the organization's public education, community development and training activities.

Lawyer awarded for marriage win

SAN FRANCISCO, Calif. — National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Legal Director Shannon Price Minter and San Francisco Chief Deputy City Attorney Therese M. Stewart have been recognized as Attorneys of the Year by *California Lawyer* magazine. Stewart and Minter were recognized for their achievements in the fight for marriage equality in California. Minter has guided NCLR's litigation and program work for over 10 years. He has been lead counsel in dozens of groundbreaking legal victories, including the California gay marriage case.

Gay immigration bill reintroduced

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Gay and civil rights groups applauded the reintroduction of the Uniting American Families Act, which would grant binational same-sex couples equal treatment under immigration laws by allowing them to sponsor their partner for immigration purposes. The bill is sponsored by Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT). The Task Force Action Fund, a longtime supporter of the measure, is working closely with Immigration Equality

and other ally organizations to garner congressional and presidential support for the legislation.

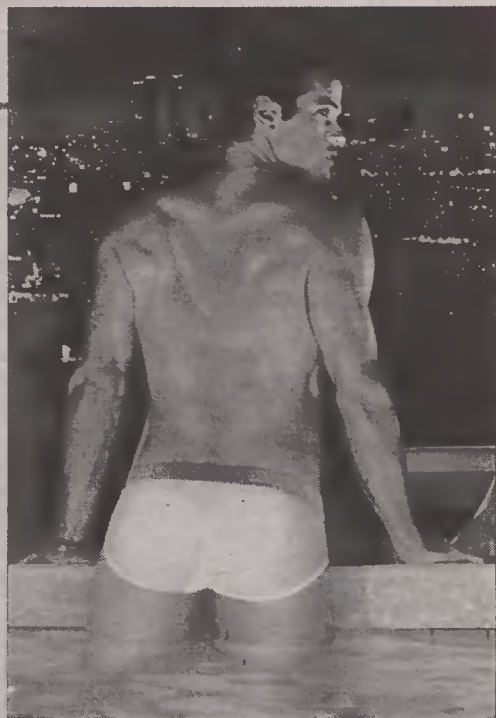
Dad fights court's gay restriction

ATLANTA, Ga. — In a case currently before the Georgia Supreme Court, gay dad Eric Mongerson is disputing a child custody agreement restriction which prohibits him from "exposing his children to his homosexual partners and friends." "The Court should do what it always does in divorce cases with custody issues, which is to focus on the needs of the children — placing a blanket ban on 'exposure' to gay people hardly helps a gay dad maintain his relationship with his children," said Beth Littrell, Staff Attorney in Lambda Legal's Southern Regional Office based in Atlanta. "What the ban does do is perpetuate prejudice and stigma against an entire group of people based solely on their sexual orientation, and that is just plain wrong."

Family court must decide custody

DETROIT, Mich. — The Michigan State Court of Appeals has held that a Michigan family court cannot refuse to hear a child custody case simply because it involves children whose parents are lesbians and the state has a constitutional amendment barring recognition of same-sex relationships. The adoption was completed when then-couple Diane Giancaspro and Lisa Ann Congleton lived in Illinois. They split after moving to Michigan. The family court's ruling left both party's parental rights unenforceable in Michigan, calling into question whether the children were effectively orphans in the state. ▀

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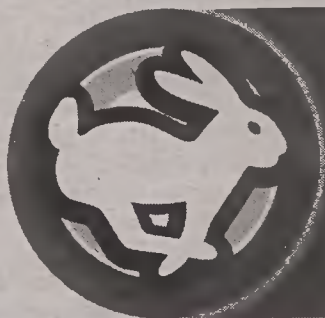
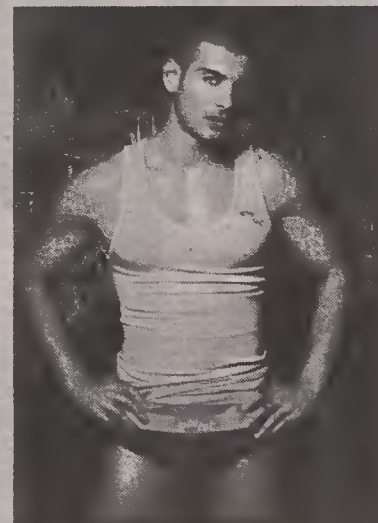


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