Observing Tucson And
The Greater Arizona Community

OBSERVER

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Tucson Observer Archives

Senators: Lift Ban On Gays Donating Blood

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - The time has come to change a policy that imposes a lifetime ban on donating blood for any man who has had gay sex since 1977, 18 senators said, reported the AP on 365Gay.com.

"Not a single piece of scientific evidence supports the ban," said Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., who joined 16 other Democrats and independent Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont in writing Food and Drug Administration Commissioner Margaret Hamburg. The lawmakers stressed that the science has changed dramatically since the ban was established in 1983 at the advent of the HIV-AIDS crisis. Today donated blood must undergo two different, highly accurate tests that make the risk of tainted blood entering the blood supply virtually zero, they said.

The senators said that while hospitals and emergency rooms are in urgent need of blood products, "healthy blood donors are turned away every day due to an antiquated policy and our blood supply is not necessarily any safer for it."

Brian Moulton, chief legislative counsel for the Human Rights Campaign,the nation's largest gay rights group, said they are hopeful that the policy, last reviewed in 2006, will change under President Barack Obama, "who is interested in looking at all the policies that have a discriminatory effect." The goal, he said, is "to have policies in place that are based on the science" rather than "any discriminatory idea about our community."

The senators' letter noted that in March 2006, the American Red Cross, America's Blood Centers and the American Association of Blood Banks reported to an FDA-sponsored workshop that the ban "is medically and scientifically unwarranted."

The FDA, in a statement, said that "while FDA appreciates concerns about perceived discrimination, our decision to maintain the deferral policy is based on current science and data and does not give weight to a donor's sexual orientation."

It said that while some groups favor relaxing restrictions, others, "such as those representing the hemophilia community, support continuation of the current policy."

People with hemophilia, a bleeding disorder, require periodic transfusions and in the past, before screening techniques were improved to ensure blood was HIV-free, were among those most at risk of contracting the virus.

Kerry compared the effort to lift the blood donation ban to legislation he backed in 2008 to end the law banning people with HIV from traveling and immigrating to the United States. That ban was lifted last year.

Also signing the letter were Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Dick Durbin and Roland Burris of Illinois, Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, Sherrod Brown of Ohio, Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey, Bob Casey of Pennsylvania, Russ Feingold of Wisconsin, Mark Udall and Michael Bennet of Colorado, Al Franken of Minnesota, Maria Cantwell of Washington, Carl Levin of Michigan, Tom Harkin of Iowa, and Mark Begich of Alaska.

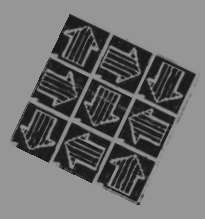
1 In 2 LGBT Regularly Cyberbullied

IOWA CITY, IA (Observer Update) - One out of every two LGBT youths are the victims of cyberbullying, a new Iowa State University study found, reported 365Gay.com.

In a study of 444 junior high, high school and college age students between the ages of 11 and 22, the researchers found 54 percent reported an incident of cyberbullying within the past month. Cyberbullying, in the study, included "electronic distribution of humiliating photos, dissemination of false or private information, or targeting victims in cruel online polls," according to an ISU statement.

The bullying resulted in a range of negative emotions, researchers said. More than 1 in 4 in the study reported suicidal thoughts, 28 percent felt anxious about school and nearly half (45 percent) expereince depression.

"There's a saying that we've now changed to read, 'Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can kill," said Warren Blumenfeld, the study's lead author, in the statement. "And especially at this age – preadolescence through adolescence – this is a time when peer influences are paramount in a young person's life. If one is ostracized and attacked, that can have devastating consequences – not only physically, but on their emotional health for the rest of their lives."



'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', Court Ruling Creates Dilemma For Military

Air Force Major Margaret Witt of an Air Force major from Washington state who was dismissed from the military after she was found to have been in a lesbian relationship.

SEATTLE, WA - A pressing legal reality for the "don't ask, don't tell" standard for gays serving in the military is that the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals has already struck down the way it's practiced in much of the Western United States, reported the AP on Huffington Post.

The 2008 ruling, while largely overlooked, would force the military to apply a much higher threshold in determining whether a service member should be dismissed for being gay. The government declined to appeal the ruling by the three-judge panel, which leaves it standing as law in the nine states covered by the court. That means gay military members at bases in the West technically have greater protections than their colleagues across the world.

Although it doesn't appear that the military has ever applied the more stringent standard, the court case presents several problems for the Pentagon now that the Obama administration has embarked on a yearlong review of "don't ask, don't tell."

"It's muddled things up for the military," said Rep. Vic Snyder, an Arkansas Democrat who serves on the House Armed Services Committee. "They really haven't started grappling with it yet, and I don't think they know how to respond."

Defense Secretary Robert Gates acknowledged in congressional testimony recently that the Pentagon must devise "new rules and procedures" in response to the San Francisco-based 9th Circuit's decision.

At issue is a ruling in the case

The court ruled that for a gay service member's discharge to be constitutional, the military must demonstrate that the firing promotes cohesion or discipline in the unit.

That is a much higher standard than what has been practiced since the "don't ask, don't tell" policy took effect in 1993: The military simply has to show that the person has engaged in homosexual activity, made statements about being gay, or tried to marry someone of the same sex.

The two standards represent a thorny issue for the Armed Forces, and military brass are keenly aware of the dilemma. The military branches say they haven't changed how they go about issuing "don't ask" dismissals in the states covered by the 9th Circuit - Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

But if the military is found to have been discharging people within the 9th Circuit without applying the higher standard, it could be forced to pay punitive damages in federal court, some lawyers say.

Furthermore, if the military cannot demonstrate a gay member's discharge would hurt the unit, that person might end up serving openly - even as others around the globe continue to be discharged. The military is currently in the midst of a 45-day effort to analyze how to apply "don't ask, don't tell" more humanely through administrative changes to the policy, and the standard is one thing being

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A family member of the Tucson Gay Museum

UPDATE

TGLBTCC Meeting March 18

Dr. Matt Heinz

TUCSON (Observer Update) - The March March Breakfast Meeting of the Tucson Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Chamber of Commerce will take place Thursday, March 18, 7:30 A.M., at the Hotel Tucson City Center Conference Suite Resort, 475 N. Granada.

"Big changes may be in store for health care in AZ; get the skinny at our March Breakfast Meeting"

The featured speaker will be Dr. Matt Heinz, Arizona District 29 member, Arizona State House of Representatives. Matt will speak on several current initiatives including his efforts to propose and pass in Arizona a health care bill that would enable most Arizona citizens to purchase health insurance on the same basis as state employees.

$20 members/ $25 guests. $5 discount for members and guests who RSVP by Monday, March 15,615-6436 or info@TucsonGLBTChamber.org.

Mexican-American Gay And Lesbian Authors Panel March 14

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Mexican-American Gay and Lesbian Authors Panel at the Tucson Festival of Books (University of Arizona Campus) on Sunday March 14. Moderator Bob Diaz will direct a panel discussion from 10:00 to 11:00 AM on Sunday March 14 at the Integrated Learning Center - Room 150 with:

Rigoberto Gonzalez is the author of two poetry books, "So Often the Pitcher Goes to Water Until It Breaks" and "Other Fugitives and Other Strangers"; two children's books, "Soledad Sigh-Sighs" and "Antonio's Card"; the novels "Crossing Vines" and "The Mariposa Club"; and the memoir "Butterfly Boy."

Felicia Luna Lemus is the author of the novels "Like Son" and "Trace Elements of Random Tea Parties." Her writing has appeared in anthologies including "Lengua Fresca: Latinos Writing on the Edge" and "Fifteen Candles: 15 Tales of Taffeta, Hairspray, Drunk Uncles, and other Quinceañera Stories."

Manuel Munoz is the author of two collections of short stories, "The Faith Healer of Olive Avenue" and "Zigzagger." He received the Whiting Writers Award in 2008, a National Endowment for the Arts literature fellowship, a New York Foundation for the Arts fellowship and a 2009 O. Henry Prize for a short story.

Tucson Festival of Books at the University of Arizona Campus is open to the public. Events take place Saturday and Sunday March 13-14, 2010 from 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM. Parking and admission are free. This program is part of the library's Nuestras Raices: Celebrating Mexican-American Authors, Arts and Culture. For additional information please see tucsonfestivalofbooks.org, the Library's website at library.pima.gov, or call 791-4010.

It's Time To Show Your Pride

TUCSON (Observer Update) - This weekend kicks off the 33rd year of Tucson Pride! At the beginning of the year, we meet to start planning another year of Pride activities.

We are very fortunate to have an active board of directors and dedicated volunteers that make this event possible. This year has been especially difficult due to the many changes we have made along with the financial difficulties that we all have faced. There could be no event if it weren't for our sponsors, volunteers, and gracious partners.

For more information go online to tucsonpride.org.

Help EON Help The LGBT Youth

TUCSON (Observer Update) - Wingspan's youth lounge was the first and remains the only drop-in center for LGBT youth and their allies in the whole state of Arizona.

The EON youth lounge is a safe place for youth 23 and under to be themselves and talk with one another about sexual identity and the issues they face. LGBT youth who are homeless can receive food and supplies as well as comprehensive counseling and support for finding housing. Youth are also empowered to be leaders through the peer leadership group and can participate in sexual health workshops.

In January, 73 youth visited EON for a total of 295 duplicated visits. You can check out photos of the lounge and staff on EON's Facebook page or learn more on Wingspan's website. Eon is an amazing treasure that Wingspan and Tucson provide for our LGBT youth.

We need your help in supporting this unique and valuable work.

Due to recent city budget cuts, the youth lounge will not receive $10,971 of funding that was expected in this fiscal year. The two grants from the city that were cut supported part of Eon staff salaries, provided program support and helped pay about $8,000 for operation expenses and rent.

Help close the gap left by city budget cuts by giving online today. Your support will help bring life, hope, and empowerment to our next generation of LGBT leaders.

Eon and Wingspan know how to do a lot with a little. Every donation matters and makes a difference. Thanks.

To donate, go online to: wingspan.org/content/donations.php.

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Calling for friendly and reliable people to join SAAF's Client Services Team as volunteer Peer Counselors.

If you are interested in offering peer support to clients, educating on HIV/AIDS and more, contact Volunteer Resources at 628-7223 or volcoord@saaf.org

SAAF.org
Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation

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The Observer

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'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', Court Ruling Creates Dilemma For Military

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looked at.

Rep. Snyder suggested that the Defense Department cure the problem by making the venue for all "don't ask" dismissals fall within the 9th Circuit, so that all service members would have the same rights.

The issue is typically referred to as the "Witt standard," named after Air Force Maj. Margaret Witt. She was a decorated flight nurse at McChord Air Force Base in Washington who shared a house in Spokane with her longtime partner and was honorably discharged two years short of full retirement. She then sued.

A three-judge panel in the 9th Circuit upheld "don't ask, don't tell," but granted constitutional protections to gay service members targeted for discharge, saying the military had to show that their firing furthered the goals of the policy, such as military readiness or unit cohesion.

The decision became law as soon as it was issued, but it wasn't until last June that Obama announced that the government would not appeal.

The ruling also reinstated Witt's lawsuit against the Air Force, which is headed for trial in federal court in Tacoma.

Witt argues that her dismissal actually hurt troop readiness and morale. There was a shortage of flight nurses at the time, she says, and one of her colleagues, a sergeant, resigned in protest of her dismissal.

"Don't ask, don't tell" prohibits the military from asking about the sexual orientation of service members but requires discharge of those who acknowledge being gay or engage in homosexual activity, even in the privacy of their own homes off-base.

More than 13,500 service members have been fired under the law since 1994, according to the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network, which is lobbying for the law's repeal. Defense Department figures show 1,047 people were discharged in 2008 and 2009. It's not clear how many of those were in the 9th Circuit or how many occurred after the Witt ruling came down. Spokeswoman Cynthia O. Smith said the department does not have a breakdown of dismissals by military base.

"Given the complexity of the legal issues involved and the ongoing litigation in the Witt case, DoD is working closely with the Justice Department to ensure that we are complying with our legal obligations in the 9th Circuit and elsewhere," she said.

Lt. Col. Victor Fehrenbach, an F-15 fighter pilot from Idaho, said the Air Force refused to apply the higher standard during his discharge proceedings last year.

"If the burden of proof was on the Air Force to prove that my presence was detrimental to good order, discipline, morale and unit cohesion, there would have been a different outcome," he said. "If the Witt standard had been followed, I would be continuing to serve with no problems whatsoever."

When gay service members sued over their dismissals in the first decade of the policy, courts historically accepted the military's argument that having gays in the service is generally bad for morale and can lead to sexual tension.

But the judges in the Witt case said the legal landscape changed when the U.S. Supreme Court in 2003 struck down a Texas ban on sodomy as an unconstitutional intrusion on privacy. The 9th Circuit said that the landmark decision opened the door for the courts to take a fresh look at the constitutional rights of gay Americans.

Tucson Observer Archives

Vatican Rocked By Gay Prostitution Scandal

ROME (Observer Update) - The Vatican is reeling from allegations of a gay prostitution scandal that has already claimed the services of two men, Rome-based La Repubblica reported.

A probe into corruption charges in the awarding of public works contracts by Italy's Civil Protection Agency has also unearthed an alleged organized gay prostitution ring involving Angelo Balducci, a former member of the board of Italy's public works department and a consultant to the Vatican on major construction projects.

Balducci, now behind bars, held an esteemed post in the Vatican serving in The Gentlemen of His Holiness, an elite group of ushers who serve visiting dignitaries. La Repubblica reported that Ghinedu Ehiem, a Vatican choir performer originally from Nigeria, provided men, including seminarians and students of ecclesiastic colleges, for Balducci, a married man. In nearly a year of wiretapped conversations leaked to the Italian media, Ehiem details the men of Balducci. "I have a situation in Naples," Ehiem says in one conversation. He continues every two or three days, "I have a situation from Cuba," "a German recently arrived from Germany," "two blacks" and "the player."

Another contact, Lorenzo Renzi, is heard explaining the job to a potential client. "Do not break his cock!! You need the money ... put a little music, you take out the [inaudible] ... you drop the Viagra there. And away!" Both men have reportedly lost their Vatican posts. Balducci's lawyer called publication of the conversations "shameful," adding that the Italian media had no right to publish material unrelated to the investigation.

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9PM - KARAOKE INSIDE &
CHEAP ASS DRINK NIGHT

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EDITORIAL. . . . . .

(Editors Note - The following was a column written for the March 9 edition of the Arizona Republic by columnist E.J. Montini on HB 2148, dealing with the adoption process in the state of Arizona. Proponents of the bill say it will help raise kids while Montini in this article showed the real intention. A must read and then a must act by going online to eqfed.org/campaign/hb2148_adoption, and letting their legislators know to vote against the bill.)

Last month, state Rep. Warde Nichols told me he wasn't trying to inhibit or impede gay men and women when he introduced a bill giving preference to married couples in matters of adoption. Nichols, the sponsor of HB 2148, told me, "If there were an anti-gay-adoption agenda with this bill . . . if that was my goal, it would be clearly spelled out in the bill. I wouldn't shy away." I took him at his word.

Nichols was a supporter of the first attempt to ban gay marriage in Arizona, the one that failed because it also would have eliminated benefits for heterosexual domestic partners. He and state Sen. Jack Harper, among others, were mentioned in news articles as being among the politicians most strongly pushing the idea. Nichols also supported the gay-marriage ban that eventually passed in 2008.

So did Harper, who often spoke of his pride at being instrumental in getting the anti-gay-marriage proposition on the ballot. Harper also has sponsored a bill in the Legislature that would ban gay individuals from adopting. It hasn't yet gone anywhere. So, even though Nichols said that his aim was not to exclude gay individuals from adopting, people like Ron Adelson of the nonprofit agency Aid to the Adoption of Special Kids were a little suspicious. "One can't help but wonder if 'single' in this context is a substitute for 'same-sex,'" Adelson told me a while back. "This sounds like a group of politicians trying to appease their base."

There have been previous proposals to make it more difficult for single individuals to adopt. The reason Adelson and others have opposed those proposals is that single people often step forward to serve as foster parents and then as adoptive parents for children with special needs. It would be nice to say that there are more parents looking to take in such kids than there are kids in need. But that is not close to being true.

So the people who step forward and give their time, money and hearts to kids without families, well, they are angels on earth. Given the dire economic straits that the state is in, and the subsequent cutbacks in just about every department, we cannot afford to alienate any of those generous individuals.

And Rep. Nichols said that was not his aim with HB 2148. He told me last month, "If there is a mother and father available and they are in the system, they should be moved to the front of the line. They should have first option on the child."

Recently, a single heterosexual woman (she pointed this out in her e-mail) sent a note to a group of legislators expressing her opposition to HB 2148. She believes it is a bad idea to make it more difficult for people like her to adopt, adding that while single individuals often step forward to serve as foster parents, this bill would tell them "they are not good enough to keep (the children) permanently."

In response, she got an e-mail from Sen. Harper that read:

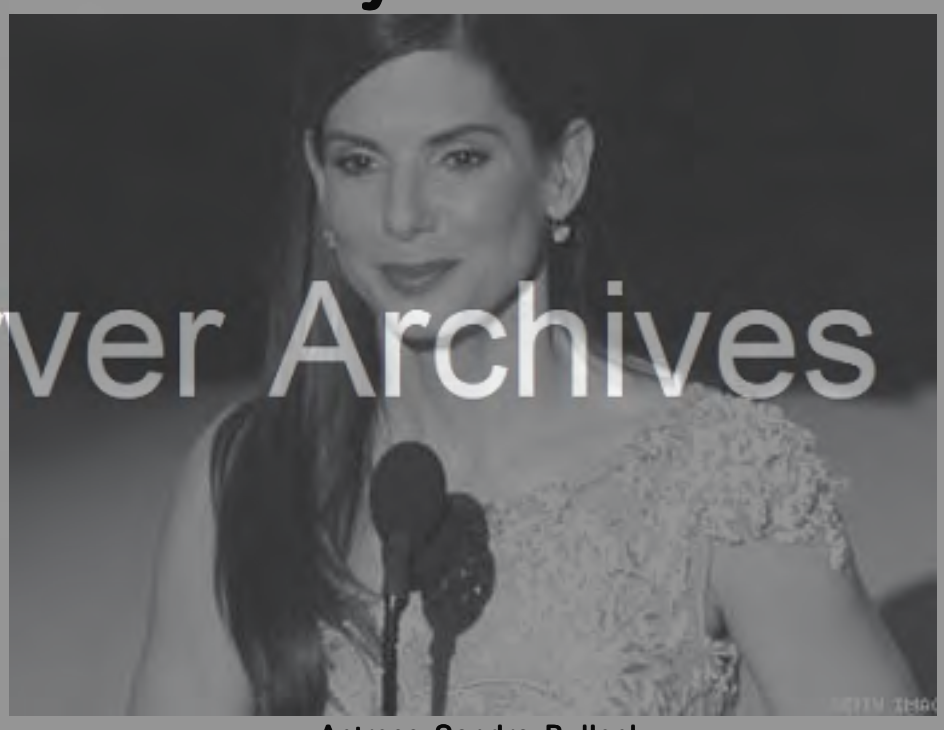
"I am sorry that the legislation is clumsy, but it accomplishes the goal that we are trying to achieve. It's hard to single out gay and lesbian couple [sic] with proper wording in statute."

I contacted the offices of Nichols and Harper to ask which of their statements most closely represents the actual motives behind the bill.

Nichols responded, "Mr. Harper may have his own reasons to support my bill, but they are his own reasons. I told you if it was my intent, I would not shy away from it."

I didn't hear from Harper. There was no need. As he said, the bill "accomplishes the goal." And it does, I guess, as long as the goal has nothing to do with helping children.

Sandra Bullock Gets Emotional, Gay Inclusive



Actress Sandra Bullock

LOS ANGELES (Observer Update) - Sandra Bullock was named Best Actress in a Motion Picture for her work in The Blind Side at Sunday night's Academy Awards, and her acceptance speech walked the same line of humor and drama that won her the Oscar, reported advocate.com.

The actress predictably thanked her costars, producers, and husband, but then turned emotional when she dedicated the award to all of "the mothers who take care of the babies and the children no matter where they come from."

She thanked one mother in particular – hers. Bullock thanked her mother, Helga, for forcing her to practice piano and for teaching her not to ride in cars with boys. But she also thanked her for teaching her that there is "no race, no color, no class system ... no sexual orientation that makes us better than anyone else."

Earlier in her speech, Bullock singled out each of her co-nominees, including Meryl Streep, who she said was "the best kisser." Bullock planted one on Streep when the two tied for Best Actress at the Critics Choice Awards

Bullock holds the rare distinction of also being named Worst Actress of 2010. She took home the Razzie for her film All About Steve Saturday night.

Neil Patrick Harris kicked off the evening with a decidedly gay vibe, serenading the crowd with an old-school Hollywood opening number.

Catholic Preschool Won't Let Student Return Because Of Lesbian Parents

BOULDER, CO (Observer Update) - A Catholic preschool in Boulder, Colo., will not be getting an "A" for Acceptance after telling a lesbian couple their child is not allowed to return to the school next year, reported 365Gay.com.

Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic School decided a student would not be allowed to enroll as a result of the sexual orientation of the child's parents, according to an NBC 9 News report.

In a statement to 9 News, the Denver Archdiocese wrote that parents at the school are expected to follow teachings of the Catholic Church including that "Homosexual couples living together as a couple are in disaccord with Catholic teaching."

"No person shall be admitted as a student in any Catholic school unless that person and his/her parent(s) subscribe to the school's philosophy and agree to abide by the educational policies and regulations of the school and Archdiocese," the Archdiocese's statement explained.

The news station reports legal experts stated it is legal for the school to enforce the discriminatory policy.

MD Lawmakers Clash Over Marriage

ANNAPOLIS, MD (Observer Update) - The state of Maryland was embroiled in the battle for marriage equality as committees in the state's house and senate heard arguments in favor of and opposition to same-sex marriage, reported advocate.com.

A senate committee heard testimony on a proposal to legalize same-sex unions in the state and one to deny recognition to those authorized by other states, the Associated Press reported. "I do believe that if any law were proposed to legalize gay marriage, it would not pass the Maryland senate, and if it did, I believe it would be petitioned to referendum," senate president Thomas V. Mike Miller said. "I don't think we're going either forward or backward on either bill."

Members of the house of delegates argued over the issue, The Washington Examiner reported. A bill to legalize same-sex marriage and one to amend the state's constitution to prevent such unions are before the house. "Heterosexualness is in danger," said Del. Emmett C. Burns Jr., a Democrat from Baltimore County. "I never thought I would live to see this day."

During the hearing Burns also said a picture of two men kissing, from the front page of The Washington Post, was disgusting, to the dismay of many same-sex couples in attendance. He also said gay couples cannot be compared to interracial couples. "I cannot hide my color," the African-American delegate said. "Gays and lesbians can hide their relationships."

Heather Mizeur, a delegate from Montgomery County, spoke about her wedding to her partner in California before the passage of Proposition 8. "We give over 400 rights to families who are married in this state," she said. "But because we don't live [in California], we get no rights associated with this piece of paper."

The issue of same-sex marriage has come to the forefront in Maryland because of the marriage equality law going into effect in neighboring Washington, D.C., and the state attorney general's issuance of an opinion that Maryland can recognize same-sex marriages performed elsewhere.

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Much Ado About Nothing

by Jack Melichar

Theatre Review

"Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion." Thus the narrator opens the Tennessee Williams classic, THE GLASS MENAGERIE, which my friend, Michael and I were fortunate enough to attend on its opening night. The play is presented by The Arizona Theatre Company. THE GLASS MENAGERIE is the third show in ATC's "AMERICA PLAYS! Celebrating Great American Stories".

The play is set in St. Louis in 1937, and is called "a memory play, its action drawn form the memory of Tom Wingfield, the narrator and a character in the play. He is an aspiring poet who toils in a shoe warehouse to support his mother, Amanda, and sister, Laura. Mr. Wingfield, Tom and Laura's father, ran off years ago and, except for one postcard, has not been heard from since.

Amanda, originally from a genteel Southern family, regales her children frequently with tales of her idyllic youth and the scores of suitors who once pursued her. She is disappointed that Laura, who wears a brace on her leg and is painfully shy, does not attract any gentlemen callers. Amanda decides that Laura's only hope must lie in marriage, and begins selling magazine subscriptions over the phone to earn the extra money she believes will be needed for Laura to attract suitors (this is the first case of telemarketing I have ever heard of!). As the play progressed, I began to believe that Amanda was hoping to live vicariously through Laura. That is all of the plot I am going to divulge. I certainly wouldn't want to ruin it for you. Suffice it to say it is not a particularly happy ending.

Kudos to Noel Joseph Allain (Tom Wingfield), Catalina Maynard (Amanda), Barbra Wengerd (Laura), Brian Ibsen (Jim O'Connor, the hoped for suitor) and Jay Golden (the violin player. Their performances were virtually flawless. A great job ladies and gentlemen. Thanks for a great evening of theatre.

As usual with ATC, the sets were exquisite and a joy to behold. Thank you Darcy Scanlin. Michael and I each gave the show a thumbs up (one each).As an added incentive to get you little missies of your dead butts (be they little or not so much so), you can purchase wine, beer and cocktails which you can enjoy while luxuriating in the show.

THE GLASS MENAGERIE will play at the Temple of Music and Art (330 S Scott Ave.) Through March 20, and will be in Phoenix March 25 through April 11. For ticket information call 520-622-2823 (Tucson Box Office) or go online to www.arizonatheatre.org.

And on a sad note. On March 1, the community lost one of its unique characters, and I lost a good friend, Ron (Granny) Jordan. He was one of the first people I met upon arriving in Tucson, and I had the good fortune of knowing him for over 20 years. I shall miss his unique sense of humor (some might call it warped), his intelligence and his genuine curiosity. I shared too many delightful moments and stimulating conversations with him to forget him.

Au revoir, mon ami. Je vous ai aimé.

Gaymers Can Go Gay On XBOX Live

SEATTLE (Observer Update) - In an update to Microsoft's Terms of Use and Code of Conduct policy, Xbox 360 gamers are now allowed to create profiles that use the words gay, lesbian and transgender, something that previously frequently resulted in suspension of accounts for what gaymers were told was "offensive."

"I'd like to announce an update to the Xbox LIVE Terms of Use and Code of Conduct which will allow our members to more freely express their race, nationality, religion and sexual orientation in Gamertags and profiles," wrote Marc Whitten, Xbox Live general manager, in a letter on the Xbox Web site, 365Gay.com reported.

"Under our previous policy, some of these expressions of self-identification were not allowed in Gamertags or profiles to prevent the use of these terms as insults or slurs. However we have since heard feedback from our customers that while the spirit of this approach was genuine, it inadvertently excluded a part of our Xbox LIVE community."

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DADT Panel Promises Fair Study

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - At a House panel meeting, leaders of the study on 'don't ask, don't tell" promised an honest assessment of whether allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly might distract troops in battle, reported 365Gay.com.

"Military readiness and effectiveness must retain primacy here," Gen. Carter Ham, head of U.S. Army Forces Europe and a coleader of the study, told the panel. "That is what you expect of us, that's what the nation expects of us." The hearing was the first in the yearlong debate at the Pentagon and in Congress on whether the military should repeal the 17-year-old law that bans service members from "acknowledging they are gay or engaging in homosexual behavior," the Associated Press reported.

"I would ask those who oppose repeal to join us on the right side of history," Rep. Susan Davis, chair of the House Armed Services personnel subcommittee said. Pentagon general legal counsel Jeh Johnson said he anticipates the review will consider all aspects of "don't ask, don't tell," including prohibitions on oral and anal sex.

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Calif. State Senator Says He's Gay After DUI Arrest

SACRAMENTO (Observer Update) - California Republican state Sen. Roy Ashburn said Monday he is gay, ending days of speculation that began after his arrest last week for investigation of driving under the influence, reported 365Gay.com.

Ashburn, who consistently voted against gay rights measures during his 14 years in statewide office, came out in an interview with KERN radio in Bakersfield, the area he represents. Ashburn said he felt compelled to address rumors that he had visited a gay nightclub near the Capitol before his DUI arrest.

"I am gay ... those are the words that have been so difficult for me for so long," Ashburn told conservative talk show host Inga Barks. The 55-year-old father of four said he had tried to keep his personal life separate from his professional life until his March 3 arrest. "When I crossed the line and broke the law and put people at risk, that's different, and I do owe people an explanation," he said.

Ashburn was arrested after he was spotted driving erratically near the Capitol, according to the California Highway Patrol. Shelly Orio, a spokeswoman from the Sacramento County district attorney's office, said a breath test showed the senator's blood-alcohol level was .14 percent, or .06 points above the legal limit. The next day, reports surfaced that Ashburn had left Faces, a gay nightclub, with an unidentified man in the passenger seat of his Senate-owned vehicle.

"The best way to handle that is to be truthful and to say to my constituents and all who care that I am gay," he said. "But I don't think it's something that has affected, nor will it affect, how I do my job." Ashburn has voted against a number of gay rights measures, including efforts to expand anti-discrimination laws and recognize out-of-state gay marriages. Last year, he opposed a bill to establish a day of recognition to honor slain gay rights activist Harvey Milk.

Equality California, a group that advocates for expanded gay rights and other issues, said it consistently gave Ashburn a zero rating on its scorecard. The group's executive director, Geoff Kors, said that he hopes the senator's revelation will lead to a change in his voting patterns.

Senator Roy Ashburn

"He's still the same person, only living more honestly," Kors said. "I hope his own self-awareness will result in him no longer voting to deny people the most basic rights." Ashburn said his votes reflected the way constituents in his district wanted him to vote, not necessarily his own views. "I felt my duty - and I still feel this way - is to represent my constituents, not my own point of view, not my own internal conflict," he told Barks. He said he planned to continue voting on behalf of what he sees as the majority viewpoint in his district, which includes parts of Kern, Tulare and San Bernardino counties.

Ashburn has been on personal leave since his arrest but was expected to return Monday to the Senate. His spokesman, Noel Libang, did not immediately return a call from The Associated Press seeking comment.

In the radio interview, Ashburn said he is drawing on his Christian faith, and he asked people to pray for him. He said he does not plan to run for any public office after his term ends this year.

Gay Marriage Law Comes Into Effect In Mexico City

MEXICO CITY (Observer Update) - A law allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry has gone into effect in Mexico City, advocate.com reported.

The law, which was passed by the city's local assembly in December, gives gay people full marital rights, including the right to adopt. Mexico City is one of the first capitals in Latin America to fully recognise gay marriages.

Judith Vazquez and partner Lol-kin Castaneda hope to become one of the first couples to marry under the new law. "It's the end of our fight and the beginning of life in freedom in Mexico City," Ms Vazquez told the BBC. "This is a great, historic moment for the whole of society in Mexico City," added Ms Castaneda.

With this law - and previous legalisation on abortion and some form of euthanasia - the Mexican capital has become a liberal and progressive island in what remains a mostly conservative nation, says the BBC's Julian Miglierini in Mexico City. But local gay activists say homophobic attacks are still frequent across the country, where people continue to face discrimination in the workplace for being gay or are attacked when displaying public affection to a person of the same sex, our correspondent adds.

Both the Catholic Church and conservative groups oppose the legislation, and the centre-right government even tried to get a ruling by the Supreme Court to block Mexico City from issuing gay marriage licences; they have so far been unsuccessful.

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Perkins Invite Pulled Over 'Don't Ask'

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - Tony Perkins, a critic of the president's pledge to reverse the ban on gays in the military says Andrews Air Force Base pulled back a longstanding invitation for him to speak because of his views.

Perkins, the president of the Family Research Council, is complaining publicly that he was invited last fall to speak this past at a prayer luncheon on the Maryland base, but two days after the President's State of the Union Speech, Andrews disinvited him. The Family Research Council has been lobbying lawmakers to oppose the repeal of don't ask don't tell. "Do not let our military be used to advance a radical sexual agenda," says an item on the council's web site.

Comments like that were too much for the military base. "As a former Marine officer, I'm sure you understand the situation in which we find ourselves," Air Force Chaplain Lt. Col. Gary Bertsch wrote Perkins as he cancelled the invitation. "As military members we are sworn to support our Commander in Chief, and are forbidden to make or support statements which run counter to our roles as members of the armed forces."

"The Chaplain's office retracted Mr. Perkins' invitation after his recent public comments made many who planned to attend the event uncomfortable," the Andrews base public affairs office said in a statement issued to CNS News, politico.com reported.

"This was a local decision made by the chaplain's office who wanted the luncheon to be inclusive for the entire base community," the statement said. "The chaplain's office respects and defends Mr. Perkins right to express his opinions, and regrets any inconvenience to him. We thank and respect him for his prior military service."

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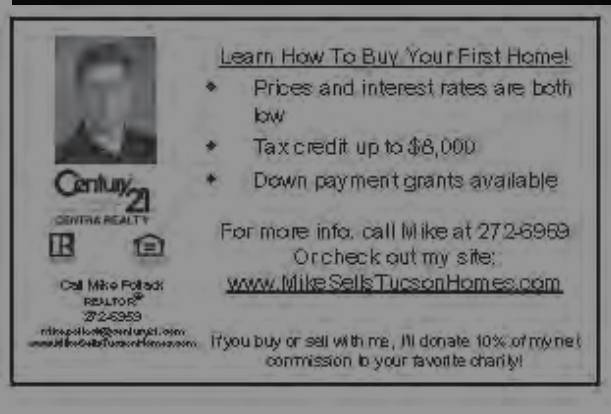

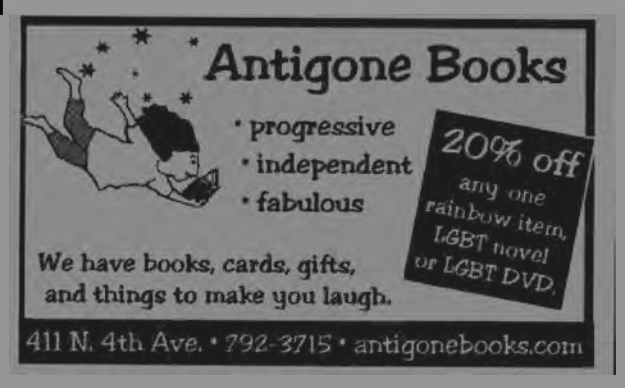

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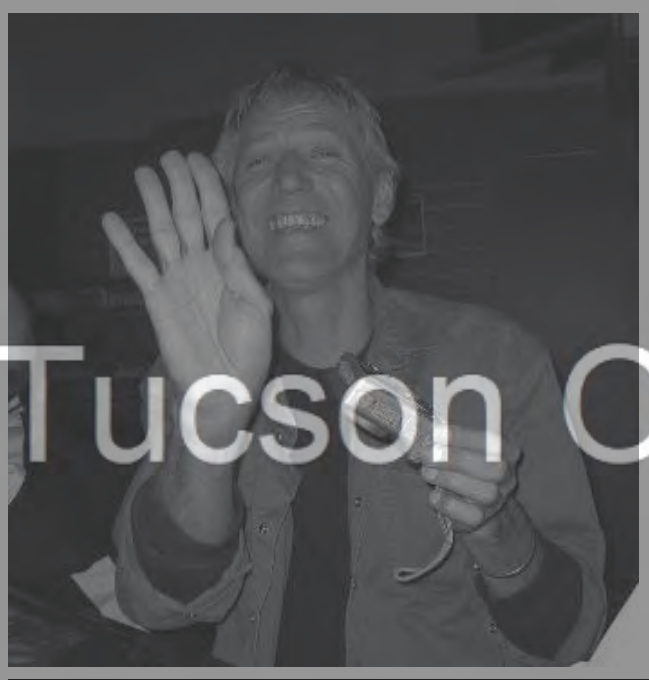

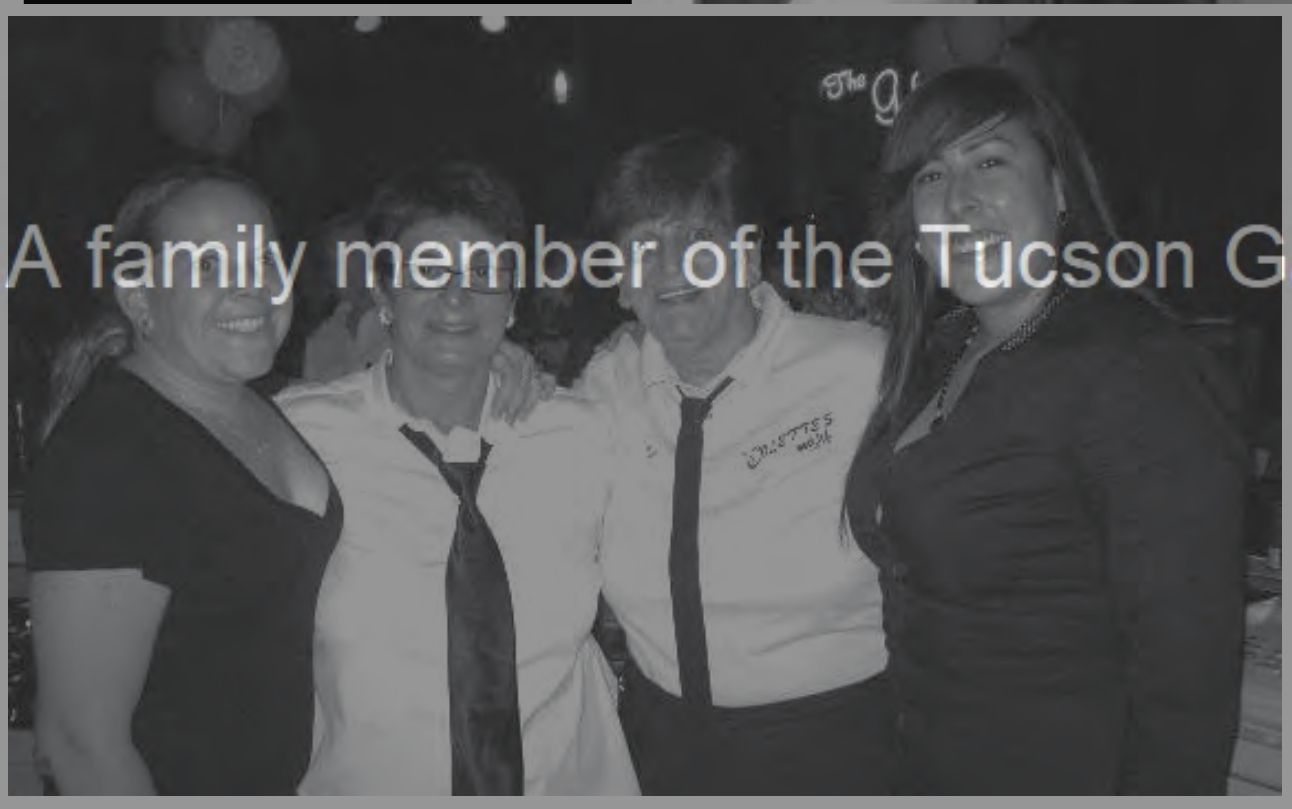

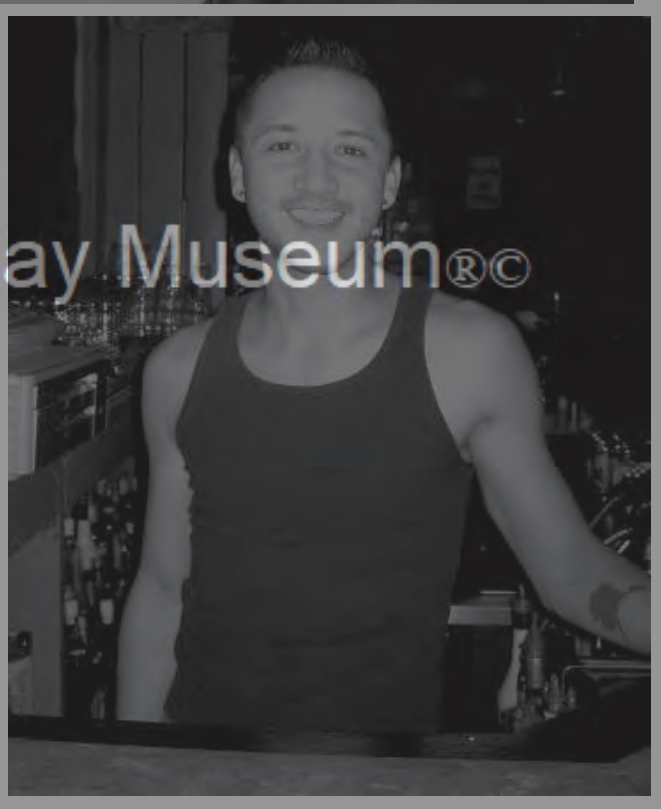

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More Men File Sexual Harassment Suits

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Observer Update) - Jonathan Pilkington's boss wouldn't take no for an answer, reported the AP on 365Gay.com.

During more than two years as a food runner at an upscale steakhouse in Scottsdale, Ariz., Pilkington says his male supervisor groped, fondled and otherwise sexually harassed him more than a dozen times.

"It was very embarrassing," Pilkington said. "I felt like I had to do something because the situation was just so bad." Now Pilkington, a married father of two, is the star witness in a federal lawsuit against Fleming's Prime Steakhouse & Wine Bar and one of a growing number of men claiming they are victims of sexual harassment in the workplace.

From 1990 to 2009, the percentage of sexual harassment claims filed by men has doubled from 8 percent to 16 percent of all claims, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Women still file the overwhelming majority of sexual harassment claims with the EEOC and state and local agencies. But lawyers at the commission say they've noticed the increase in complaints by men - more than 2,000 were filed in 2009 out of about 12,700 cases.

Male claims made up about 12 percent of all cases a decade ago, but the percentage has continued to rise even as the overall number of sexual harassment complaints has declined. And last year, the percentage of lawsuits the EEOC filed on behalf of male victims hit an all-time high, making up 14 percent of all cases.

"It's certainly possible that there's more sexual harassment of men going on, but it could just be that more men are coming forward and complaining about it," said Ernest Haffner, an attorney in the EEOC's Office of Legal Counsel.

While some cases allege harassment by female supervisors or co-workers, most charges involve men harassing other men. Sometimes it's unwelcome romantic advances. Other times, men are picked on because they are gay, perceived as being gay or not considered masculine enough for the work setting.

In the past, some employers might have shrugged off such antics as "boys will be boys" horseplay or fraternity-type behavior. But the EEOC has been filing more lawsuits involving male victims, saying it wants to send a message that such behavior is unacceptable and unlawful.

In November, for example, the Cheesecake Factory restaurant chain agreed to pay $345,000 to six male employees who claimed they were repeatedly sexually assaulted by a group of male kitchen staffers at a Phoenix-area restaurant. The EEOC said the abusers would drag some victims kicking and screaming into a walk-in refrigerator, touching and grinding against the victims' genitals and take turns simulating rape. The company denied the allegations but agreed to make a financial settlement and educate its employees and managers about sexual harassment.

Susan Strauss, a consultant who advises companies about how to avoid sexual harassment in the workplace, said she's seeing more cases in which men are subject to a sexualized form of hazing. "If you don't fit the masculine stereotype or are viewed as effeminate, you get picked on in a sexual way to demean you," Strauss said.

Cases involving women making unwanted advances toward men may also be rising as women make up a growing part of the work force. Last year, the Regal Entertainment Group, which operates a national chain of movie theaters, agreed to pay $175,000 to settle a lawsuit by a male employee who claimed a female co-worker repeatedly grabbed his crotch at work.

When the employee complained to his supervisor and the theater's then-general manager, he claims, she failed to stop the harassment and instead retaliated against the victim with unfair discipline and lower performance evaluations.

The number of cases filed by men has grown steadily since a landmark Supreme Court ruling in 1998 held that same-sex harassment is a valid claim under federal anti-discrimination laws. That ruling involved an offshore oil rig worker who said he was subject to humiliating sex-related treatment by other workers, including being sodomized in the shower with a bar of soap.

In Pilkington's case, he claims the restaurant's chef would grope and pinch his genitals or grab his backside when Pilkington walked to the kitchen or stock room. Despite his complaints to the restaurant's operating partner, he says the conduct didn't stop.

After one incident, Pilkington lost his composure and yelled at the chef, making a scene. Days later, he was fired - an action he claims was retaliation for his complaints. An EEOC lawsuit on behalf of Pilkington and three other current and former employees is pending.

"I think maybe it's just harder for males to come out and file a complaint because of how embarrassing it is," Pilkington said. "When I talk about it I get this nauseous feeling in my stomach."

The restaurant has denied the charges. In a statement, the company that owns Fleming's said the restaurant "has always been committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace free of harassment for all of its associates."

Many victims are hesitant to come forward because they are afraid of being considered unmanly or being derided by co-workers, said Mary Jo O'Neill, a regional attorney in the EEOC's Phoenix District office.

"All sexual harassment victims feel humiliated, lacking control and power," O'Neill said. "This has a different twist because everyone expects that they would be able to handle it and take care of it themselves." Pilkington has since moved on to another job. While he is embarrassed by the publicity his case has received, he says it was the right thing to do. The EEOC lawsuit seeks damages for him and other workers alleging harassment, along with back pay and compensatory and punitive damages.

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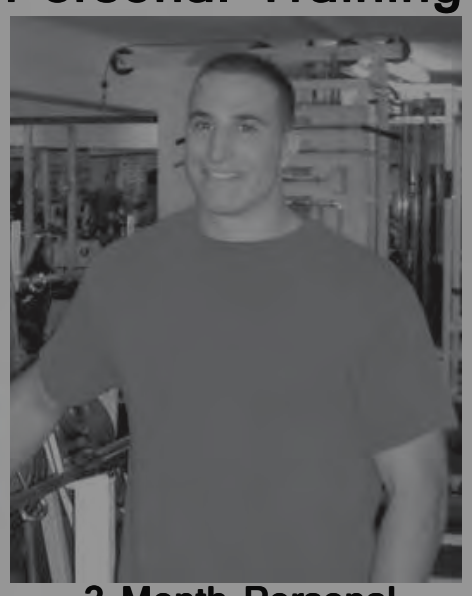

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DAILY BAR CALENDAR

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THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am It's Latin Sunday like the good ol' days. Catch DJ Dmenace spinning the best Cumbias. Get your Bucket of Beer ... 5 Bud Bottles for $5!

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open 11am. Beer Bust Sunday - $1 draft beers (12 oz), domestic only; $2.25 domestic long necks.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. Karaoke on the Patio 4-8:30pm. Burger BBQ 5-8pm + $1 pint draft. 9pm-close Karaoke inside with Troy & $1.50 Well or Domestic Beer, $2.50 Call or Premium Beer. DJ Hurricane on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Peter's Build Your Own Bloody Mary Bar 11am-2pm. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excluding special events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-8pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar 2pm-2am. Beer Bust 2pm-7pm. Karaoke with Michael D 9pm-Close. Drag Bingo every other Sunday 8-9pm. Check our Ad for Special Events or Parties

MONDAY

THE BIZ - Closed for employee training.

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 p.m. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Bucket o" Beer - $10 Domestic, $12 Imports and microbrews (4 beers to a bucket, for 2 or more people, Some brands excluded).

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close $5 Scratch Long Island Varieties. 9pm-close DJ Hurricane with "All Request Music".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am. Happy Hour 11am--8pm (excl spec events) Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm Back Pocket Patio Bar 8pm-close. Karaoke with Michael D. 9pm-close.

TUESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 and Game Night all night long. Play Wii, beer pong and pool with the staff.

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3-8. $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. Pitcher Special $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.00 lg. Pitcher (excluding Blue Moon & Dos XX Amber).Girlz Nite Out. Girlz pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Ladies only Texas Hold 'Em Poker 6 p.m. Y-Not Karaoke with Anna at 8pm

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestic Beer. 8pm-close "2'sDay" - $2 Well or Domestic Beer. DJ Q 9pm-close.

WOODY'S - Open 11am- 2am. Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close, Caribbean Party Night with Woody's own Specialty Mojitos, Caprioskas and Martinis with Tucson's Hottest Bartenders.

WEDNESDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Wild Wednesday 18+ Party with DJ White Shadow spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and top 40 remix dance of today. 21+ NO COVER. 18+ $8 Cover.

COYOTE MOON PUB -Open 3pm. Happy Hour All Day $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitchers. Karaoke with Ynot Entertainment at 9pm.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. "Diva-Licious" show w/Bunny FuFu. 11pm - -close "Reverse Happy Hour". DJ Q Inside & DJ Mike Lopez playing 80s music on the Patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am;. Happy Hour 11am-8pm excl. special events). Ful Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Bar open 8pm-close. Service Industry Employee Special All Day Long - $1 off all drinks except schnapps and draft. Different Themed Underwear Party 9pm-close with $1.00 off for those who participate (excl. Schnapps and Draft). Retro 80s & 90s Dance with DJ Clint 9 til close..

THURSDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8pm. Y-NOT Karaoke 9pm-2am with Meco pouring the best drinks in town. Come out and play.

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints, $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg.. Pitcher. Boyz Nite Out - boys pay only .75 for well liquors or domestic drafts 8-10pm. Bicardi Thursdays - $3.00 Bicardi Rum - all flavors.

IBT's -Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 10pm-close "Boyz Nite Out" w/Bartenders in their underwear. DJ Hurricane spinning Top 40 & DJ Mike Lopez on the patio. $1.75 Long Island, $1.50 Tequila Shots, $3 Skyy Cape Cods and $4 Skyy Cosos.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl Spec Events); Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-10pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 8pm-close. Cheap Party Day **FREE POOL**, $1.00 PBR Longnecks, $2.00 Tecate Longnecks. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm - close..

FRIDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm-2am. Happy Hour 5-8 pm. GoGo Fridays with 2-4-1 drinks for the ladies til midnight. Catch Shorty spinning the hottest Hip Hop, R&B and Top 40 remix dance of today.

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open 3pm. Happy Hour 3 - 8 pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 Sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Pitcher. $2.75 All Mexican Beers and Dos XX Amber. Dance lessons at 7pm $5 per person, Country Dancing 8:30 p.m. to close with DJ Pat.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 9pm -close DJ Hurricane inside. 10pm-close DJ Mike Lopez with "I'm a Sexy Bitch Night" on the patio.

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 11am-8pm (excl spec events). Full Menu Kitchen open 11am-11pm Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Enjoy the Live Blues/Motown/ Soul sounds of Simon Crown 6-9 p.m.; Request your favorite Music Dance Night with DJ Clint 9pm-close. Monthly Birthday Party every 2nd Friday Night of the month.

SATURDAY

THE BIZ - Open 5pm - 2am. Latin night with Latin Drag Show the 1st, 3rd and 4th Saturdays of the month. DJ Dmenace spinnin' the best Cumbias, Salsa & Merengue. $3 pitchers and $2 Tequila shotz all night long!

COYOTE MOON PUB - Open at 2pm. Happy Hour 2-8pm, $2.50 well, domestic longnecks & pints. $3.50 sm. Pitcher/$5.50 lg. Plus check out the bartenders choice of shot specials. $5.00 cheese-burger & fries. $3.00 Cuervo and $4.75 Jager Bombs. Check our calendar for the Saturday Night Special Entertainment.

IBT's - Open Noon. Happy Hour Noon-8pm, $2 Well or Domestics. 5-8pm Karaoke on the patio $1Draft Pints. 9pm "Saturday Starrlett's" w/Bunny FuFu & Janee Starr. After the show, DJ Q spinning inside & 10pm-close, DJ Mike Lopez with the "Party on the Patio".

WOODY'S - Open 11am-2am; Happy Hour 10am-8pm (excl spec events); Full Menu Kitchen open11am-11pm. Back Pocket Patio Bar open 5pm-close. Techno and Top 40 Dance with DJ Jeff 9pm til close. Check our ad for Twice-A-Month Special Events or Themed Parties.

Bar Calendar Special Events

SATURDAY, MARCH 13
WOODY'S - Meow Mix ... Check it out!

SUNDAY, MARCH 14
WOODY'S - Woody's First Lock Up.!!!

Poet's Corner

DOGTOWN
by Ron Rose

The cobbled streets of Milkbone, where sleeping dogs do lie,
In Dogtown, Arizona, beneath the desert sky
The Mayor is Pat Pit bull, no gangs do rumble here
Graffiti non existent, pit bulls in still such fear
Border collies hunt illegals, chihuahuas go to jail
Coyotes sent to prison, they're carried by the tail
Policing is terrific, police dogs do their job
Our police chief rides a Harley, and really scares the mob
Deputy Rottweiler, rides shotgun at his side
A nasty doby pincher, along just for the ride
Our ethnicle population, in ghettos they do dwell
French quarter for the poodles, their houses are quite swell
The English are so proper, Spaniels, Setters, too
They seldom come a "cropper" the Queen would love this crew
These Irish, these Red Setters, chase rabbits all the day
The Afghans have their habits, strange in every way
We also have our athletes, Boxers lead the list
If I failed to mention them, they'd hit me with their fist
In Dogtown, Arizona, our leaders bark and growl,
Yes, living here in Dogtown, will really make you howl.

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Water of Life
Metropolitan Community Church

"It is the greatest of all mistakes to do nothing because you can only do a little." Sydney Smith, (1771-1845)

Sunday Worship: 10:15am Wednesday Worship 7:00 p.m.

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Travelers Can Donate To AIDS Fight With Just A Click

(UNITED NATIONS) With a simple click, U.S. travelers buying airline tickets via some travel agencies and Internet sites can now donate $2 or more to fight AIDS in developing countries.

The United Nations and former President Bill Clinton launched the donation effort called MassiveGood. It aims to supply low-cost drugs for the developing world, helping medical workers and health officials fight HIV and AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis and improve maternal and children's health.

Major ticket distributors Amadeus, Travelport and Sabre Holdings Corp. and corporate buyers such as American Express Business Travel and Carlson Wagonlit Travel will offer the donation option to the companies that buy travel through them. The software to process the donations was developed by Amadeus.

Travelers will see the donation option when it's offered by ticket sellers like Travelocity and some travel agents.

The option will show up like any other choice in buying a ticket, along with adding a car rental or hotel. Tickets sold directly through airline Web sites aren't part of the program.

"I think this will catch on all over the world. And this is basically an institutionalized version of what we saw happen after the Haiti earthquake, where people were texting in $10, or $5 in Canada, in the automatic systems," Clinton said. "These systems, I predict, will empower ordinary people to change the future of the world in ways that we can only begin to imagine."

The money goes to the Geneva-based Millennium Foundation, founded in 2008 to find innovative ways to finance U.N. health goals, and the U.N.-funded UNITAID, an international facility for purchasing drugs hosted by the World Health Organization, also in Geneva.

Some of the money also will go to the Clinton Health Access Initiative and others who provide treatments in poor countries. Giving what the group calls a "micro-contribution" is optional for everyone involved. The idea for it was raised by Dr. Philippe Douste-Blazy, a cardiologist and former French foreign minister.

Douste-Blazy, who chairs the Millenium Foundation and UNITAID, and is the special financing adviser for U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, said it builds on the 2006 "microtax" on airplane tickets that 16 nations adopted to help raise more than $1 billion.

"Hundreds of thousands of women, children and men will be able to access the most precious of human rights, the right to health care," Douste-Blazy said, calling the donation effort a "great citizen movement around the world."

Ban called it a simple idea that would be expanded to European nations, then elsewhere. "We hope MassiveGood will be become a truly global phenomenon," he said.

Gays In Anti-Gay States Prone To Depression

NEW YORK - Gays and lesbians who live in states that ban same-sex marriage – such as Mississippi – are more likely to suffer from alcoholism, mood disorders, or anxiety, according to a study by the American Public Health Association, reported advocate.com.

Researchers report that gay people who live in states prohibiting legal recognition for same-sex couples are 248.2% more likely to experience general anxiety than those in states without such bans. Residents of antigay states are also 41.9% more likely to suffer from alcoholism, 36.6% more likely to have a mood disorder, and 36.3% more likely to have psychiatric comorbidity, or simultaneous presence of two disorders.

The antigay policies do not seem to affect heterosexual people, the researchers noted.

The full study can be found in the American Journal of Public Health.

Virginia AG Seeks To Cut Gays From Higher ED Discrimination Policies

RICHMOND (Observer Update) - Virgina's attorney general sent a letter to state colleges and universities asking officials to end policies banning discrimination based on sexual orientation, The Washington Post reported.

Ken Cuccinelli II, a Republican, wrote that it is up to the discretion of the General Assembly to offer protections to gay and lesbian state employees. The Washington Post story stated the Legislature, as recently as this week, declined to take that postion.

"It is my advice that the law and public policy of the Commonwealth of Virginia prohibit a college or university from including 'sexual orientation,' 'gender identity,' 'gender expression,' or like classification as a protected class within its non-discrimination policy absent specific authorization from the General Assembly," he wrote.

All of Virginia's leading colleges and universities have language offering protections on the basis of sexual orientation, something Cuccinelli said was done "without proper authority."

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