

Gay fair at school sparks public ire

By Ted Gotsch
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A health fair held at Lee High School in Springfield yesterday has rekindled discussions of homosexual issues and their appropriateness in the public forum in Fairfax County.

About 125 people attended the Northern Virginia Lesbian and Gay Health and Mental Health Fair, according to Jim Lopresti, its organizer. The half-day program featured several booths staffed by members of health and mental health groups, 31 seminars and a keynote speech by Gary De-Carolis, an official with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Mr. Lopresti, a psychotherapist in mental health services at the Whitman-Walker Clinic, said the issues discussed in the information sessions varied widely, from "Choosing a Therapist" and "Breaking the Silence Confronting Lesbian and Gay Domestic Violence" to "Safer Sex for Women: Wet, Wild and Well" and "Gay Bashing: The Situation in Virginia."

Mr. Lopresti said there did not appear to be any protesters at the fair. "It didn't get distracted by political hype," he said.

But Fairfax County Supervisor Elaine N. McConnell, Springfield Republican, said she was hearing plenty from her constituency.

She did not attend the program herself but said she had received four calls of complaint within an hour and expected her office phone "will be ringing off the hook" tomorrow.

Miss McConnell said her callers "were incensed" with some of the fair's exhibits, particularly one booth that focused on the subject of "Safe Sodomy."

Miss McConnell said the issue of who can use a school for programs should be more closely examined.

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declaration remained in force.

Thus Mr. Clinton began his second annual military pilgrimage to counter the widespread view in the ranks that he still holds the anti-military views expressed in a 1968 letter explaining why he avoided the draft during the Vietnam War.

White House Press Secretary Dee Dee Myers said there is no conflict between Mr. Clinton's articulation of pride in the military and his avoidance of service.

"I don't think that's relevant. He's the president of the United States," she said.

She said the president believes the soldiers who served in World War II should be honored for their sacrifices and he will call for others to build on that sacrifice.

"That was a clear war to stop aggression," she said.

Tomorrow Mr. Clinton will again call for respect and appreciation for those who serve in uniform, and families who endure separations and occasional loss of life, when he presents two Medals of Honor posthumously for heroism in Somalia.

The families of Master Sgt. Gary I. Gordon and Sgt. 1st Class Randall D. Shughart will accept the medals, the first awarded since the Vietnam War, for heroism in a Mogadishu firefight last Oct. 3 that took 18 American lives. Both servicemen were members of the U.S. Army Special Operations Command at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Other plans include:

- Dinner Tuesday with Stephen Ambrose, author of "D-Day, June 6, 1944: The Climactic Battle of World War II." Also attending will be House Minority Leader Robert Bob Michel, Illinois Republican, and Rep. Sam Gibbons, Florida Democrat, who both were involved in the invasion.

- Wednesday's address to the graduating class at the U.S. Naval

Gingrich slams gay school programs

Cites 'recruitment' in counseling guise

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A day after his lesbian sister lobbied Capitol Hill on homosexual rights, House Speaker Newt Gingrich criticized school programs that portray homosexuality favorably, particularly any that use "active homosexuals" to counsel teen-agers.

Speaking yesterday at his daily news conference, Mr. Gingrich said some school programs offered to counter discrimination give homosexuals a forum for promoting their way of life.

"I don't think we want people out with 'Heather Has Two Momies' in first grade explaining that homosexuality is a reasonable alternative in lifestyle," the Georgia Republican said.

The book he mentioned, by Leslea Newman, is a story about lesbian parents. It was second on the American Library Association's 1994 list of books people tried to ban.

Mr. Gingrich's concern was not limited to the primary grades.

"You have had, clearly, examples of what is in effect recruitment in so-called counseling programs," Mr. Gingrich said. "So I'm very cautious about the idea that you want to have active homosexuals in junior high school and high school explaining to young people that they have all these various wonderful options."

Mr. Gingrich's comments came a day after he met with his lesbian half-sister, Candace Gingrich, who had come to the Capitol to lobby.



Candace Gingrich says her half-brother is ill-informed.

The two said they have a strong relationship, but Miss Gingrich suggested he was ill-informed about homosexual-rights issues.

Homosexual-rights activists, who are meeting with lawmakers this week on such issues as AIDS funding and protection against discrimination, said Mr. Gingrich's comments yesterday reflected a caricature of sex education, not the reality.

"It's unfortunate that the speaker would repeat allegations that aren't backed up by facts," said Doug Hattaway of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "Young gay people face discrimination and violence in schools and some communities have begun modest programs to address those problems. Those local communities should decide how to address these issues, not the federal government."

Mr. Gingrich also rejected the idea of passing a federal law protecting homosexuals from on-the-job discrimination.

Employers should not inquire about the sexual preference of an employee, Mr. Gingrich said. But if they do and fire the employee, he said, there should be no recourse to the federal courts.

"I am not prepared to establish a federal law that allows you to sue your employer if you end up not having a job because of a disagreement that involves your personal behavior," he said. "Does that mean a transvestite should automatically have the right to work as a transvestite? I don't think so."