

Official disputes Simon's views on abuse by gays

Researcher calls fliers 'grotesque distortion' of data

By PAUL BALDWIN
The Courier-Journal

Dr. Frank Simon's interpretation of information to conclude that there is rampant abuse of young boys by homosexual men is incorrect, a Kentucky Department of Public Health official said last night.

James Rittenhouse, Kentucky's HIV/AIDS surveillance coordinator, spoke after Simon at an "Aldermanic Night In" at which Simon presented the Louisville Board of Aldermen with

copies of 2,000 signed postcards of people opposed to a gay-rights ordinance.

Alderman Denise Bentley and Alderman Tom Owen are researching gay-rights issues in preparation for submitting an anti-discrimination ordinance to the Board of Aldermen. The last attempt at such a law was defeated in 1995.

In fliers Simon mailed to encourage attendance at last night's meeting, he cited a 1996 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study that said 543 males ages 13 to 19 got AIDS from having sex with other males. He coupled that with a 1989 report in a medical journal that says male homosexual adolescents, on average, are seven years younger than their sexual partners.

Rittenhouse disputed materials circulated by Simon that said of the

3,700 AIDS cases among children cited in a May 1996 CDC report, 86 percent were boys, and half of them were infected by adult homosexuals.

Rittenhouse said that 41 percent of adolescent males who developed AIDS were hemophiliacs and that only 33 percent acquired the virus through sexual means.

The author of the 1989 study, Dr. Sten Vermund, said in a letter to Fairness Campaign officials that Simon had created a "grotesque distortion of my study." Vermund contends that the article suggested that the study — which covered male homosexual youth ages 13-21, more than half of whom were ages 20 and 21 — may have had older sexual partners.

Last night Simon claimed that "homosexuals have a widespread sexual abuse of children."

"I do feel that it is outrageous for us to consider a law that would give special rights to this kind of behavior," Simon said in an interview.

Simon contends that the CDC's finding that the median time for an HIV infection to progress to AIDS is 10 years means that a 24-year-old man with AIDS would have been infected as a 14-year-old boy.

Last night Simon also distributed a nine-item package of information using other articles from various sources to try to prove his assertion.

One article, from a ministry that contends homosexuality is a learned behavior, contends that if homosexuals "accept Jesus Christ into their lives" they will be "delivered from the homosexual lifestyle."

The 75 or so of Simon's American Family Association supporters wore fluorescent stickers the size of a quar-

ter on their left lapels. An equal number of gay-rights supporters, many wearing T-shirts from the past two campaigns for an ordinance, sat on the other side of the room.

In August 1992 a measure that would have prohibited discrimination against gays in employment, accommodations and housing failed 8-4.

In March 1995 a modified ordinance that would have banned only job discrimination failed 7-4.

It takes two years before a defeated ordinance can be revived. Former Alderman Bill Wilson, who voted against the ordinance in 1995, was defeated last year by Bentley.

Bentley said that with other issues, such as the youth curfew and the mayor's crime plan, on the table, it's unclear just when a new gay-rights ordinance would be proposed.