

news

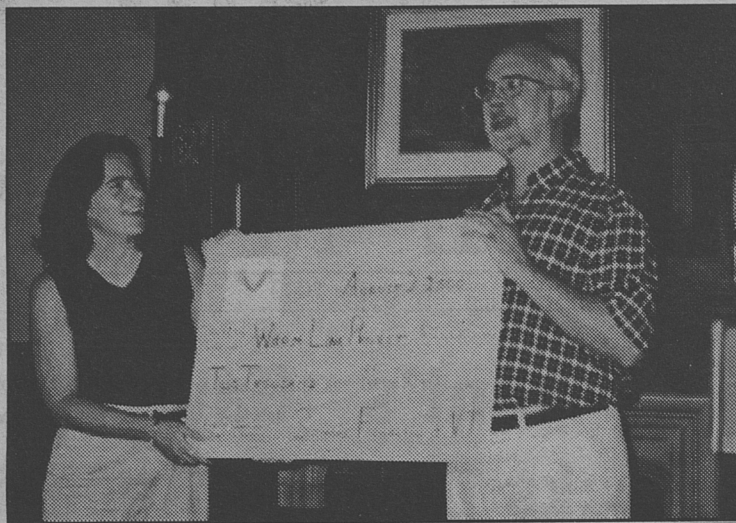
# Same-sex Domestic Violence 'Warm Line' Receives Funding

By BARBARA DOZETOS

Victims of same-gender domestic and sexual violence in Chittenden County will soon have a new resource backed financially by a fund that supports the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community in Vermont.

The Same Sex Domestic and Sexual Violence Subcommittee of the Chittenden County Domestic Violence Task Force recently received a \$2000 grant from the Samara Foundation of Vermont to develop a phone line for survivors of same-sex domestic and sexual violence. The service is referred to as a 'warm line' because it will not be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as a hotline would be.

Celia Cuddy, executive director of the Women's Rape



Celia Cuddy, Executive Director of the Women's Rape Crisis Center accepted the \$2000 grant from Bill Lippert, executive director of the Samara Foundation of Vermont.

The Rape Crisis Center operates a hotline in Chittenden County. According to Cuddy, 15 percent of their calls come from people who are assaulted by a partner. Last year, the hotline received at 25

calls from men who had been raped or battered by men, and more than 50 resulted from women attacking other women. Same-sex violence can be a hate crime, Cuddy told the crowd. A presumably straight man will rape a man perceived to be gay, claiming to give the victim "what he is asking for." Currently, the only resource

The line will offer absolute support, regardless of who you are and who you love.

Crisis Center, and a self-described lesbian survivor of same-sex domestic violence, told a press conference in August that violence occurs in somewhere between a quarter and a third of all relationships. "Members of our community are not immune to the difficulties in our culture," she said. "No person should experience violence in a relationship."

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Same-sex violence can be a hate crime, Cuddy told the crowd. A presumably straight man will rape a man perceived to be gay, claiming to give the victim "what he is asking for." Currently, the only resource

for individuals who suffer same-gender domestic attacks or rape is to call the rape crisis hotlines. While those lines are usually eager to help, Cuddy said it is critical to establish the visibility of the warm line directed at same-sex abuse. "Too many gays and lesbians have endured violence alone," she said. The stigma of being abused by a member of the same gender keeps most victims in the GLBT community from seeking help. She said many people call the existing hotlines saying, "I don't know if I'm calling the right place" or "I don't know if it was rape."

Public awareness, said Cuddy, is the first step: to let the community know the line exists and that same-sex domestic violence or rape is as much a crime as that between members of opposite sexes.

The warm line will be staffed by people sensitive to the situations and needs of gay

# CUs Having Mixed Impact on GLBT Campaigns

By JASON WHIPPLE

"May you live in interesting times" runs an old Chinese curse.

Curse or blessing, Rev. Brendan Hadash expects to be doing just that this fall, as do many other GLBT candidates vying for seats in the legislature in the wake of passage of the civil unions law.

"There are a lot of Take Back Vermont and Ruth Dwyer signs up here in the Northeast Kingdom," said Hadash. The Unitarian Universalist minister from St. Johnsbury said he's yet to see much reaction, negative or positive, to his fledgling Democratic candidacy for an Essex-Orleans seat in the state Senate.

"But it will be interesting running as an openly gay man up here," he said.

In the face of very vocal, very visible opposition to civil unions and civil-union-supporters under the Take Back Vermont banner, candidates' expectations about the events of campaign season vary on that "interesting" theme, and widely.

Bob Bland, a Democratic candidate in the Orange 2 House race, is already facing his opposition quite literally: two Take Back Vermont signs have been posted on his own Vershire property, pointed directly at his home and his GLBT pride flag.

Bland refused to take down the signs, saying he would wait for the perpetrators to remove them. He hoped the incident would spur silent supporters into action.

"Lots of people are coming out of the woods to let the world know that hate folk are a

small minority in this part of the world," wrote Bland in an open letter to local papers.

Judith Lashof of Sudbury also hopes to capitalize on backlash to the backlash.

"Running for office as a lesbian now is exciting," said Lashof, who is seeking a House seat in the Addison-Rutland-2 district. "I've gotten wonderful encouragement and support from the Democratic Party." She said that many of her campaign volunteers and contributors have been motivated specifically by the issue.

In contrast, civil unions don't seem to have figured into the Windsor-5 House race at all.

"I have been talking to voters about issues that they identify as being important to them: the cost of prescription drugs and Act 60," said Randon Guy of Chester, a Democratic candidate in the Windsor-5 House race. "Civil unions are not a big issue here."

State Senate candidate Jerry Acosta of Burlington said he's aware the political climate is heated, and is prepared for negative reaction, but so far has seen none. Acosta said he does expect to be touted as "the gay candidate."

And Karen Kerin, a Republican from South Royalton challenging Rep. Bernie Sanders for the state's sole U.S. Congress seat, said the issue has not affected her campaign directly. Kerin said the issue will likely have an indirect and ongoing impact as part of the larger issue of perceived legislative unresponsiveness to the wishes of constituents. ▼

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If a tree falls  
in the forest,  
and it isn't listed in the *OITM*  
calendar,  
does it still  
make a sound?

Use the Calendar  
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