

# Samara Supporters Take Back the Statehouse

BY BARBARA DOZETOS  
ABOVE THE FOLD NEWS SERVICE

More than 75 people gathered at the Vermont Statehouse on August 3 to celebrate the \$92,000 in grants and college scholarships the Samara Foundation of Vermont has awarded since 1998 to organizations and individuals who support the state's GLBT community.

"I loved having Samara supporters take back the Statehouse after a year of endless diatribe full of lies and misinformation about the GLBT community - being put forward in the statehouse," said Samara Executive Director Bill Lippert. "It was very satisfying to have the Cedar Creek Room filled with folks who were celebrating our community and our rightful place in the midst of the Vermont community."

Just a few hours before the celebration began, Rep. Nancy Sheltra, R-Derby, led a press conference unveiling her proposal that would give notice and approval authority to parents of any school instruction pertaining to homosexuality, bisexuality, or "other alternatives to monogamous heterosexual sex within marriage."

Lippert said he was particularly pleased with the coincidental timing of the two

events. "There was a stark contrast between Nancy Sheltra's press conference full of mistruths and distortions about gay and lesbian people and our event, an affirmation of our community and the work of the organizations and the brave and courageous young people fighting homophobia in high schools," he said.

The outpouring of support for Samara, Lippert said, is proof that the foundation is meeting its mission to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities while it builds an endowment.

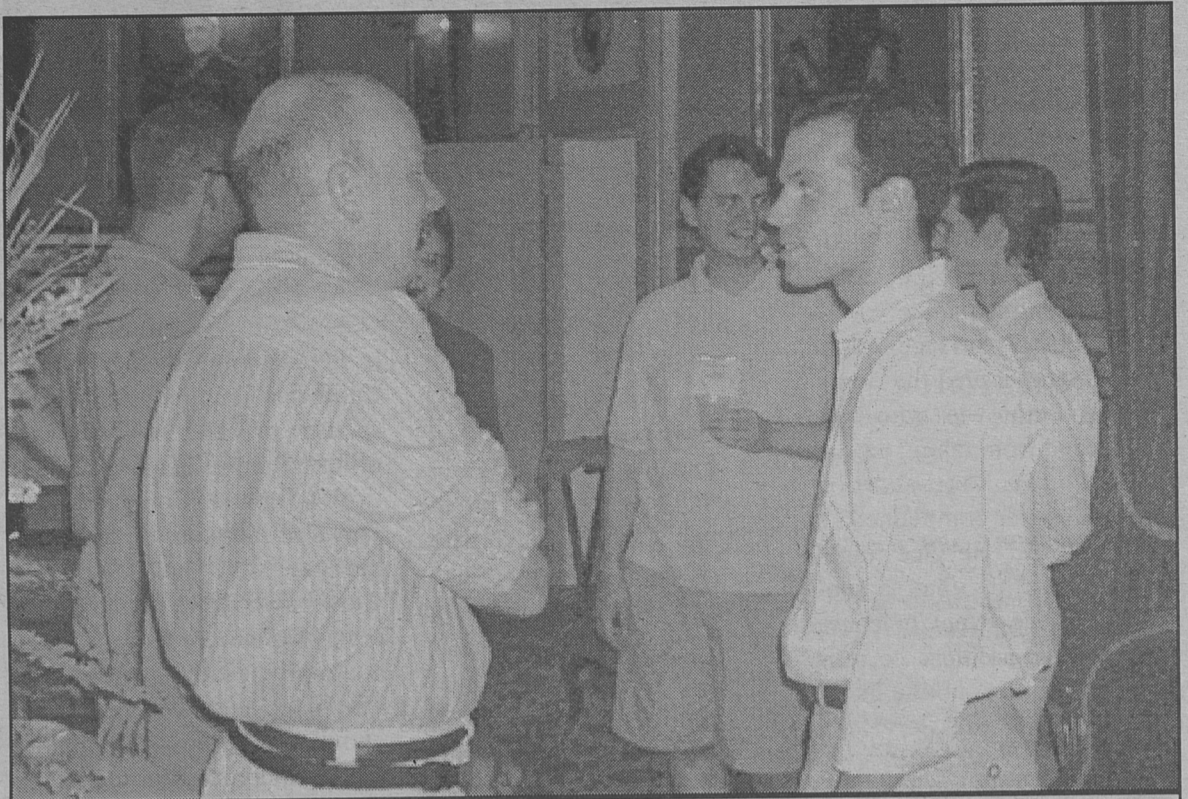
"The community has recognized the foundation is an opportunity to make an immediate difference as well as a lasting difference for the future," Lippert said. Many individuals, he said, have expressed particular pleasure with Samara's investment in the future with its scholarships to college-bound high school seniors.

During the reception, Samara Board President Linda Markin thanked those gathered and the many who were unable to be there in person for their volunteer work and financial support of the foundation. "It's up to us now to continue to build the organizations that make Vermont a state we want to live in," she said.

Samara, Lippert said, has proven to be a vehicle not just for LGBT people. "We increasingly see friends and family and allies supporting our work financially." The people gathered for the celebration - a cross section of Vermonters, he said, bore witness to the wide appeal of Samara's work.

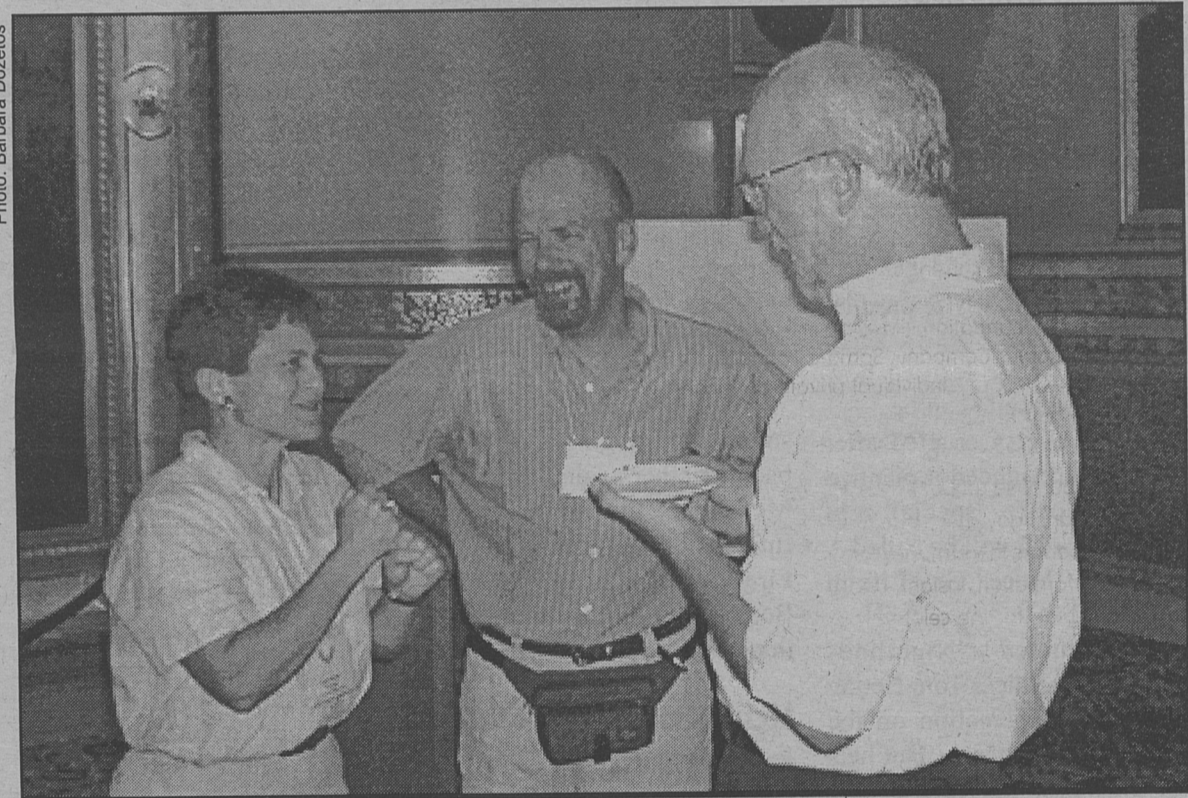
"I looked around the room and saw a range of fine people there that any community would be proud to welcome," he said. "And most communities do."

Photo: Barbara Dozetos



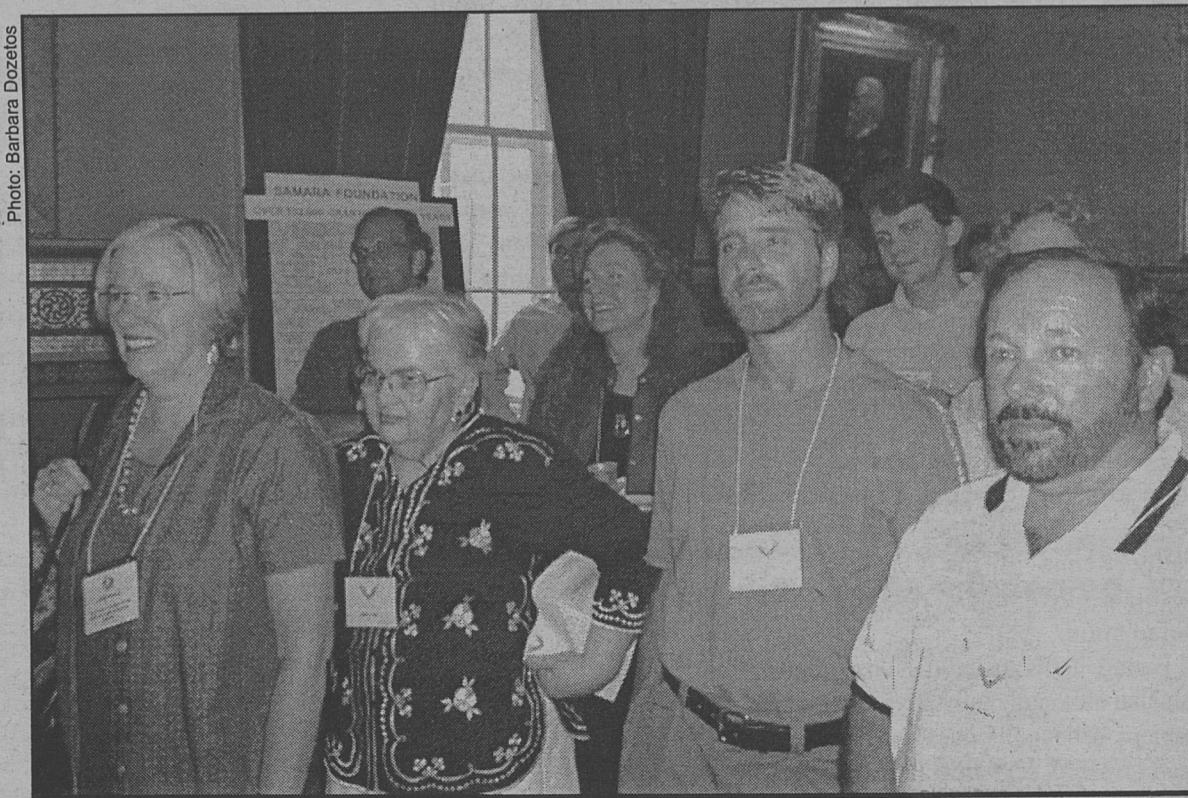
B.J. Rogers (right), Executive Director of Outright Vermont, thanked Samara and its supporters for the foundation's continuing support of his organization's work with GLBTQ youth. He is pictured with Howdy Russell, a member of Samara's board of directors.

Photo: Barbara Dozetos



(L to R) Samara Board President Linda Markin, Board Member Howdy Russell, and Executive Director Bill Lippert joined other staff, volunteers supporters, grant recipients, and scholarship winners in the celebration.

Photo: Barbara Dozetos



Nearly 80 people gathered in the Cedar Creek Room at the State House on August 3 to celebrate Samara Foundation's first three years of making grants and scholarships to organizations and individuals that strengthen the LGBT community in Vermont.

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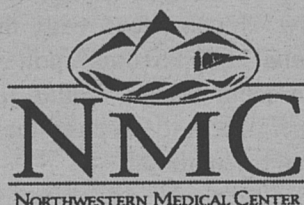
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