

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic. Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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Vermont Scouts: Is There Change in the Wind?

By: JUANITA L. LERCH

OITM Staff Writer

Last summer, the Green Mountain Council of the Boy Scouts of America wrote its first nondiscrimination policy, which unlike the National policy permits gay Scouts and Scouts leaders. The Vermont chapter now has "a policy of inclusion of all people regardless of their sexual orientation."

This differs from the Boy Scouts' national organization. Gregg Shields, a spokesman for Boy Scouts of America, said the organization makes no attempt to discover a person's sexual orientation. But Shields said if it's discovered that a Scout or Scout leader is gay "the individual would probably... not be extended membership."

Mark Noel, Director of the New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting, said "This is the first time we've seen Gregg Shields and other people from National talking in terms of 'probably' and national making 'recommendations' about membership instead of strictly enforcing National's memberships standards as they have in the past." Noel went on to say that "This is encouraging news. But, until a publicly 'out' Scout or Scout leader is accepted, this issue is not going to be resolved."

The reason for this change, according to Noel, is "an internal membership turn around." At the Annual Meeting of the Boy Scouts of America in Boston on June 1, 2001, nine major metropolitan councils submitted a resolution, which embodies a policy interpretation that is respectful of differing views, but allows Scouting to move ahead in a less divisive and more positive manner.

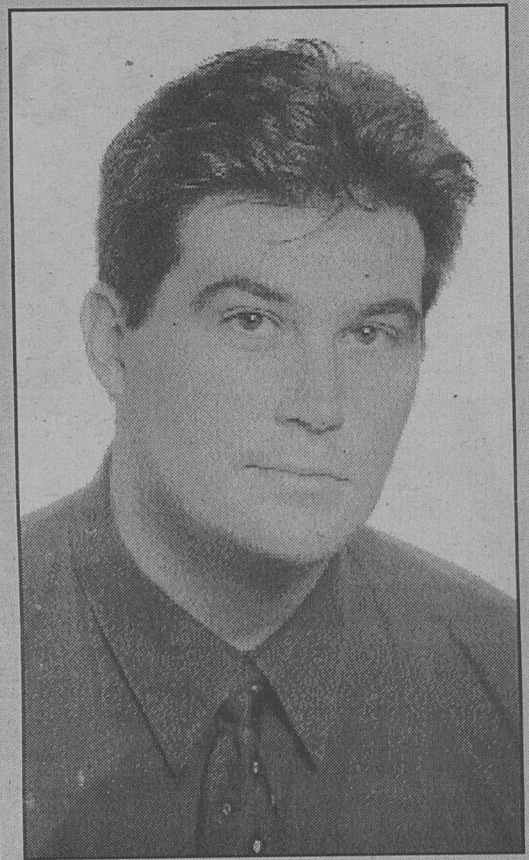
Since the Annual Meeting, awareness of the Proposed Statement has continued to grow across the country. Today there are thirty-seven councils that endorse this resolution that states that discretion for membership standards be left to local councils and to local chartering organizations. "Thirty-seven councils out of 306 isn't great, but it shows a significant movement for change coming from within the ranks of the BSA," says Noel.

The Boy Scout council has also lost thousands of dollars after the Supreme Court decision, as local governments and nationwide organizations like the United Way have withheld grants, citing nondiscrimination policies. BSA's membership has also been affected by this controversy, especially in the Northeast, which reports a 7.6% decline in their August figures, which is up from the February statistics.

In an interview with this reporter, Mark Noel, NECIS Director, intends to take advantage of these new developments from the Green Mountain Council and the national BSA, by applying for a position with the Green Mountain Council as a Merit Badge Counselor for Rifle and Shotgun Shooting. Noel is highly qualified for the position, citing numerous certifications from the National Rifle Association and his prior law enforcement experience. A former Eagle Scout and once active Scout Leader, Noel was relieved from his position when he went public with his gay sexual orientation.

"Quite a few scouters have correctly recognized the religious discrimination that is inherent in forcing acceptance of these membership standards, and many have recognized the negative influence that these highly publicized membership policies have had on the youth in the program. Change-especially on this scale-is still painfully slow, but progress IS being made," says Mark Noel.

For more information on the New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting, log on at: www.necis.org or call (603) 387-7731. For the Boy Scouts of America, Green Mountain Council: <http://users.aol.com/gmcbasa> or call (802) 244-5189. For the Boy Scouts of America: <http://bsa.scouting.org>



Mark Noel, ousted from the Boy Scouts of America based on his sexual orientation, recently created New England Coalition for Inclusive Scouting (NECIS).

Correction

In the December issue of OITM, it was incorrectly stated that Robert Appel, recently appointed as the new executive director of the Human Rights Commission, was appointed to lead the Human Rights Campaign. The Human Rights Campaign is another organization that works on human rights issues for the GLBT community here in Vermont, but not the organization that Mr. Appel is now directing.

We apologize for any confusion that this may have caused.