

# R.U.1.2? Receives Grant

> continued from page 1

social, cultural, artistic, and educational missions. The new director will be in charge of all day-to-day management and organization of the center.

The Gill Foundation's 21st Century Initiative for Non-Urban LGBT Community Centers grants \$2 million to support and establish new community centers in non-urban communities across the country.

OITM's Joel Nichols recently spoke with Don Eggert about the grant.

## How did R.U.1.2? originally get started?

The project to organize a community center in Vermont began during a series of open community-wide meetings held at the University of Vermont by two undergraduate students working on a community development project for their Sexual Identities class. Consensus from these winter 1998 meetings indicated that there was a need for a permanent, public venue for the expression of our LGBTIQ community.

## What is the current staffing conditions? How many people volunteer there now?

We have 20-25 unpaid volunteers who work on the board of directors, sit on committees, plan sup-

port groups, host social events, and help out with mailings.

## It seems like the queer community in Burlington is growing. Is there a way to quantify the number of people the Center serves?

In December we began tracking the number of people who use "Headquarters" on a day-to-day basis. The following groups currently meet on a regular basis: Both Sides Now, Dignity Vermont, Vermont Diversity Health Project, GLBT Alcoholics Anonymous, and Center Book Club. Regular events include GAYme Night, Movies & Munchies, Two Coming Out Support Groups for adults (one mixed-gender, one women-only), and a women's drop-in social.

## This Gill grant represents a major advance for R.U.1.2?. How did the board become aware of the initiative?

At NGLTF's 2000 Creating Change Conference for grassroots progressive LGBT organizers in Atlanta, the Gill Foundation announced the 21st Century Initiative for Non-Urban Community Centers. We were encouraged to apply because we received general operating support from Gill in 2001 and met

the proposal guidelines.

## What are the qualities of the ideal executive director sought by the board?

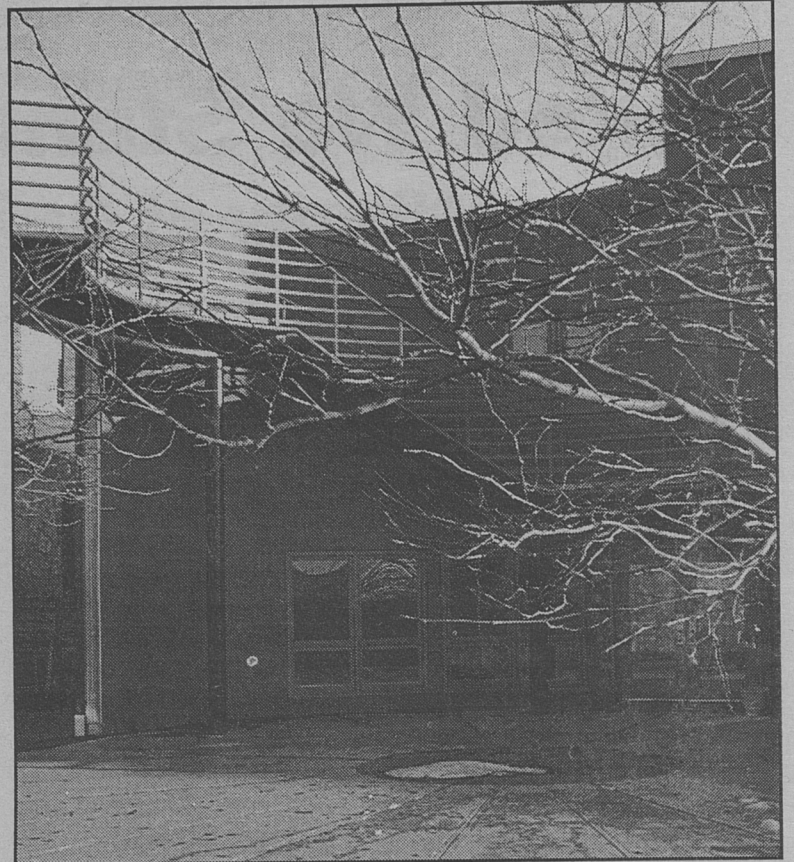
R.U.1.2? would benefit from an executive director who has significant experience in non-profit management and is willing to guide a relatively new organization through an exciting and turbulent period of growth. We want to hear from candidates who are not afraid to get out into the community, listen to people's needs and concerns, and devise a plan of action that makes use of the expanding resources at our community center. Essentially, our executive director will be a leader who focuses his/her efforts on outreach to LGBTIQ Vermonters both within, and outside the walls of R.U.1.2? Headquarters.

## There aren't that many gay jobs around. How many applicants do you expect?

It is hard to say. We think it's a great job for someone who wants to work full-time for our community and make a real impact on the lives of LGBTIQ Vermonters.

## How will the center grow with the new executive director?

We hope that the E.D. will be more accountable to the needs of our community and be available as a public representative of the center. Having someone in this position allows us to be at the table when important decisions



R.U.1.2?'s headquarters on Burlington's waterfront.

are being made that affect our lives. We look forward to having an E.D. that will help us secure the long-term funding necessary for establishing a space of our own.

## What are the immediate goals?

Our immediate goals will be to keep the center open and available for anyone who needs to use it, especially during business hours. We need to keep our current programs strong by constant-

ly recruiting new volunteers with fresh ideas.

## What do you hope the Center will do in the long term?

As the Headquarters reaches its capacity we will be planning for expansion to a facility that will house multiple meeting rooms, a library, a cybercenter, gallery space, event space, and offices for other like-minded organizations. ■



Racine with Mountain Pride Media's Carrie Rampp in January

# Racine Connects with LGBT

> continued from page 1

tinuing need. Outright Vermont, which had been performing as many as 80 school-based presentations a year in recent years, saw the number of requests for these presentations drop to just 8 in 2001. "It became an environment of intimidation," explained Rogers, noting that four invitations to visit schools were revoked within a week under pressure from anti-gay activists.

In Rogers' view, though, the important work of coordinating a Safe Schools program geared towards providing safety for LGBT youth in schools and tools to educators to develop and support a safe environment, has not been effectively pursued by the Department of Education. Rogers cited a lack of leadership within the current administration as a key impediment to the appro-

priate pursuit of safe schools. State government is not standing up and saying "we are going to make Vermont's schools safe for LGBT youth." Nor is the government welcoming Outright Vermont back into our schools to continue its important work. Palmer noted that this silence of the state government makes it complicit in the erosion of our schools as safe environments for

all students. Palmer encouraged Racine to lead the next administration in being a pro-active partner with existing community groups. "The necessary partnership is not currently coming from the state."

Renfrew similarly questioned the silence of our state government, and the Commissioner of Education specifically, in failing to condemn a Nancy Sheltra-led initiative in the state legislature to ban acknowledgment of same sex relationships in Vermont's schools except as the cause of HIV infections and AIDS. Sheltra's initiative seeks to eliminate any conversation in the schools that might foster support for LGBTQA youth. By Sheltra's standard, if you are not condemning homosexuality, you are promoting it. Here again, Renfrew sees a state government that "is running from the gay issue." Renfrew also took Racine and other political leaders and top administration officials to task for not publicly challenging the gay-bashing being perpetrated by some Republican legislators. Racine responded that "we have a quiet state government right now. It's on cruise control. It needs to change."

And change seems very much a part of Racine's agenda for his own administration. "The upcoming change in administration will provide an opportunity

to review how business is being conducted throughout state government. Perhaps over the past ten years, in the absence of a real shake-up, elements of the administration may have become unresponsive."

## A Montpelier Roundtable

At his January 8th roundtable discussion in Montpelier, attended by twelve members of the LGBT community, Racine asked the participants to "Tell me what you think should be different. What has state government done well, and what has it not done well?" Carrie Rampp underscored our community's concern for LGBT youth and reiterated B.J. Rogers' call for a stronger partnership between the state and Outright Vermont in addressing safe schools concerns.

Chuck Kletecka criticized the Department of Health, and its AIDS Program in particular, for its "failure to listen to the community on policy issues." Kletecka asserted that there is a damaging lack of communication between the Department of Health and the community, and that the Department of Health poses barriers to community-driven initiatives around HIV prevention and the provision of methadone treatment. The result of the lack of a working partnership between the Department and

> cont'd on page 35