

R.U.1.2. Honors Goslant at Annual Gala

Howdy Russell Presents His "Gay Agenda" in Keynote

BY EUAN BEAR

Keith Goslant, a community activist for two decades and the gay community's liaison to the Governor for the past 15 years, "had no idea," that he would be honored as "Volunteer of the Year" at the R.U.1.2? annual fundraising dinner he said later. Perhaps the fact that a friend had furnished his ticket and dragooned him into attending should have given him a hint.

Goslant was honored for his consistent presence when bills that affect our communities came before the legislature, putting a human face on the issues. He received a plaque reading, "R.U.1.2? Community Center wishes to honor Keith Goslant as Volunteer of the Year 2002 for his exceptional work in strengthening our community over the past two decades by creating awareness about the lives of GLBTIQA Vermonters in Montpelier and beyond."

Now a Justice of the Peace and chairman of the Plainfield Select Board (in effect, "mayor" of the town), Keith has hardly slowed in his public service since his early days as a gay activist.

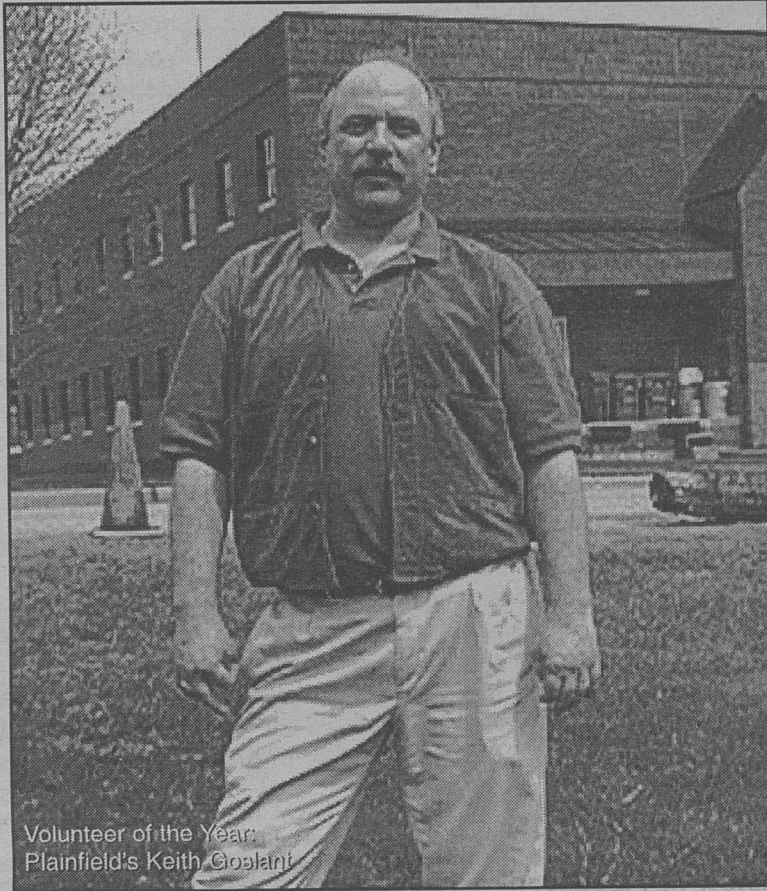
The dinner at which he

received his award was a gala event held at the Radisson Hotel in Burlington to raise funds for the R.U.1.2? community center. Longtime activist and native Vermonter Howdy Russell gave the keynote address, recalling a history of gay organizing in Vermont.

"I wanted to look into the future," Russell began, "but I kept being drawn back to our roots." He highlighted the fact that this year's Pride celebration in Burlington is Vermont's 20th. "Pride was first started by a group of women with a grant through *CommonWoman*," he recalled.

Marching in 1983 meant facing threats and the possibility of violence, Russell said, reminding the audience that there were no legal protections and that marchers risked losing jobs, housing and custody of their children.

His list of our communities' accomplishments included expanding a hate crimes law, passing a civil rights law, getting line-item funding for HIV services, domestic partner benefits for state employees, the right to adopt children, laws and regulations barring anti-gay harassment in schools, and the passage of civil unions legislation. "Who would have thought, 20 years ago, that we'd be where we are?"



Russell asked.

In addition, gays and lesbians established an infrastructure of our own, with a newspaper, Vermont Cares, Vermonters for Lesbian and Gay Rights (later the Vermont Coalition), Outright Vermont, and other organizations. Russell recalled that the Equal Rights Amendment was defeated in Vermont because of homophobia

— opponents played on fears that the law was a "back door" way to gain equality for gays and lesbians. "We put them on notice, we're not using the back door, we're coming right in the front door!" Russell said.

"If there isn't a homosexual agenda, then damn well ought to be one! And we ought to be spending energy articulating it

instead of denying it," Russell declared. His agenda has four items on it. First, "access to every child in Vermont to tell them that homosexuality is normal and good" (courtesy of Nancy Sheltra) — that is, "whoever you are is just fine with us."

Second, "We should establish greater connections to low-income, people of color, women, and others facing oppression. We can't leave people behind."

Third, "We need more elected GLBTQ members of the legislature — more women in the House, and more GLBTQ members of the Senate." He cited the work of Hinesburg Rep. Bill Lippert on civil unions as showing what a difference it makes "when they're talking with us and not about us."

Fourth, "We will not be satisfied with Vermont. We don't want to be an island of safety in troubled seas," Russell said. We must look beyond our borders to support and encourage similar changes in other states and on a federal level.

Russell concluded with the declaration, "We are a tremendous asset. Vermont is all the richer if more GLBTQs move here. We make Vermont better. And I am honored to stand side by side with you." ▼

WOMEN'S INTERGENERATIONAL DISCUSSION IN MIDDLEBURY

BY GAIL ZATZ

LEAD International (Leadership Education Action Diversity) and the Green Mountain Chapter of the Older Women's League joined together to co-sponsor a "Generation to Generation" discussion at Chellis House at Middlebury College in April. This was the fourth program to date; previous events were held in Montpelier, St. Johnsbury, and Burlington.

The Middlebury program drew 30 women of all ages, with a large showing of younger women from Middlebury College, including at least five women of color. Over pizza and brownies the discussion was lively. After introductions, participants broke into three smaller groups to create and discuss questions the participants wanted to ask of a woman of a different generation.

Among the questions recalled by some participants was "How do we get men to take us more seriously?" (asked by a college student). The answer from the oldest

woman there was "Stop smiling at them." Other questions included a request to define feminism, and queries on how feminism has changed and whether it is still relevant. College students wanted to know whether it was easier or harder to remain an active feminist after leaving their academic enclave.

After the small group discussions, the whole group came together one final time for a group closing and final comments.

The programs aim to bring women of all ages together to share an evening of discussion while raising awareness and interest in issues that affect all girls and women and generating ideas about advocacy, action, and support across generations. The next intergenerational women's discussion is scheduled for May at Dartmouth College.

LEAD International is a non-profit organization, part of whose purpose is to support diversity and tolerance in our society. ▼

Al Perkins and Fran Moravcsik contributed to this report.

Women in Medicine National Conference Comes to Burlington

BY EUAN BEAR

The nation's oldest organization for lesbian doctors is holding its national conference and retreat in Burlington in July. Conference organizer Dr. Mara Vijups expects anywhere from 150 to 400 participants from among its 1700 U.S. and Canadian members.

The three-and-a-half-day conference and retreat offers continuing medical education workshops plus personal growth opportunities and recreational activities. This year's theme is the Women's Health Symposium. "Last year it was around bigotry. It's always a broad topic range," said Vijups, "with every specialty represented." Among this year's offerings: hormone replacement therapy, breast cancer, urinary stress incontinence, obesity, heart disease, and "gyneciatry."

On the more personal side, workshops will examine the effects of terrorism, discuss pluses and minuses of civil union, and "the person of the physician — how much of

ourselves do we leave at the examining room door, and how much do we take inside with us, and why," explained Vijups.

Women in Medicine, colloquially and affectionately referred to as "dyke docs," has played an important role in mentoring lesbian medical students, who are often isolated and in many locations subject to covert or overt harassment or discrimination. "I was a student member in 1990," recalled Vijups. "The women doctors I met then [at the national conference] are still my closest friends and mentors.

"We don't have role models in med school and residencies. So we try to be there as mentors and role models, not just as docs, but as parents, community members," Vijups continued. "We can provide references to residencies that are known to be safe, or accepting environments, or to schools that have and enforce non-discrimination policies and hospitals that offer domestic partner benefits, or maybe to a teaching hospital where one of us is on the faculty."

The group's membership, currently estimated at 1700, is open to M.D.'s and osteopaths (D.O.'s), medical school students and residents. The exact location of the conference is not publicized outside the membership to protect the privacy of attendees and to avoid potential future discrimination at home.

"It's not entirely safe here" in Vermont, said Vijups. "We still have to deal with the public, with everything going on in the legislature. That affects how patients treat you."

Asked whether she had heard of any recent discriminatory incidents at the University of Vermont College of Medicine (from which she graduated), Vijups said no. "That sort of thing has been forbidden and disciplined against since 10 years ago. But in many other places it's tacitly encouraged, and filing a grievance is sometimes worse than the harassment." ▼