

# Kaufman Tapped As New R.U.12? Director

## Next Queer Summit Planned

BY EUAN BEAR

**C**hristopher Kaufman, 33, is the new Executive Director for the RU12 Community Center. The selection was confirmed in mid-July by Board President Don Eggert.

The search process was extended when the Center's first choice candidate turned down the job. In the second round of searching both locally and nationally, ironically, the successful candidate was located in Burlington. Kaufman, who has a Master's degree from the London School of Economics and extensive experience in nonprofit groups and grassroots organizing, is a former staff member of Outright Vermont, Burlington's queer youth services organization; he was profiled in the July 2002 issue of *Out in the Mountains*.

"Christopher had said during the application process that he had always taken on a lot of responsibility in the background of various organizations," said Eggert. "He wants to put his skills to work out front now, and we can give him that opportunity."

"My two priorities are Board development and training and expanding the circle of involvement, and getting a physical location," said Kaufman, also known in Faerie circles as Pippin. "The Center needs to find its place among the whole realm of social justice movements, including labor, women, and environmental and economic justice groups." Environmental and fair education funding movements suffered in the Civil Union backlash, he said, wondering whether the political and funding implications of civil unions were completely thought out. Kaufman seeks to rebuild or establish connections with straight allies.

Kaufman says he belongs to the queer caucus of the National Organizer's Alliance, which provides him with support for working with allies and strategies to prevent the

right wing from dividing progressive movements through wedge issues.

He hopes to build a statewide involvement, he said, using Outright Vermont's model of organizing. "While it's appropriate to remain in Burlington as a center, I would like to diversify the Board geographically and to offer events and support groups in other parts of the state."

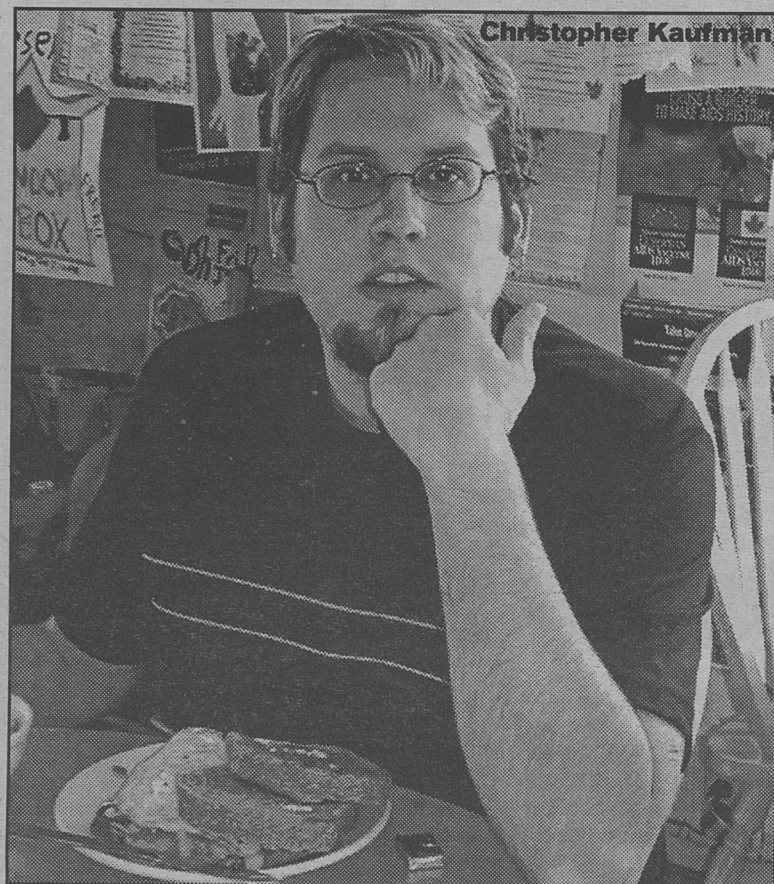
At the same time, RU12? has qualified to hire an Americorps/VISTA worker, Kristian Kemp-DeLisser, who will begin work this month. One of the requirements of the program is at least one (other) full time employee, a requirement met when the Center designated funds for an executive director.

Kemp-DeLisser, 23, was the best of "four or five" gay candidates to respond to the Center's advertising, said Eggert. "He has a strong organizing background and a B.A. from the journalism school at Syracuse University. He's originally from Connecticut and came to Burlington to pursue graduate studies at UVM."

Anyone can apply for an Americorps/VISTA position, explained Eggert, "Of course, you have to take a vow of poverty," he joked. The program is a favorite of nonprofit organizations because the federal government pays part of the salary of each Americorps/VISTA worker. It is administered by Burlington's Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO). "An organization applies to CEDO," Eggert said, "and they decide if we're worthy" and meet the criteria. An Americorps/VISTA worker must commit to working 40 hours per week, not be in school, and not hold a second job.

**Second Queer Summit Slated for Aug. 24: Will Press Have Access?**

One focus for the new RU12? Executive Director will be on continuing the Center's efforts at increasing collaboration among LGBTQIA



Christopher Kaufman

organizations statewide through a series of "Queer Summit" meetings. The first meeting of representatives from nine organizations was held in mid-May.

Although the meeting was attended by a reporter from *OITM*, one participant objected to allowing direct quotes or active note-taking

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from the proceedings. The objection was based on a concern that participants would not feel able to speak "frankly" about challenges and issues if they knew they might be quoted in

print, or that ideas expressed in the heat of discussion might reflect badly on the organization or its representative when taken out of context. Facilitator Stan Baker allowed the objection to block direct media reportage of the process.

The agenda for the August meeting will focus on establishing a

fund-raising calendar shared by all the organizations in order to avoid scheduling conflicts and multiple appeals to the same donors. A second focus will be on establishing a central

clearing house for board and volunteer recruitment. Both of these issues were identified as major concerns by the first summit's participants. There is no word yet on whether press will be allowed access to the upcoming organizational summit meeting.

Representatives at the first Queer Summit came from R.U.12? Community Center, the Cronos (a social organization for women over 40), Vermont CARES (an AIDS service organization), SafeSpace (serving survivors of domestic violence in same-gender relationships), Mountain Pride Media/*OITM*, Outright Vermont (GLBTQIA youth), the Vermont Diversity Health Project, the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), and the Vermont Pride organizing committee. All but one of the organizations represented were based in Chittenden County; VCLGR is a lobbying group based in Montpelier.

Commenting about the denial of press access, Carrie Rampp, who was then the president of the Mountain Pride Media board of directors, said, "It's ironic that one of the goals of the meeting was to get more people involved, but the delegates were unwilling to allow press access. If we don't express our problems and issues publicly, then how will we get more people involved? I would hope that the process would be more transparent and open to public scrutiny."

Eggert, like other organizational representatives, agreed that limiting press access might be necessary to allow for "candid" speaking. "It is more difficult to get specific about issues or challenges, particularly when an organization is looking for help. We all want to put our strongest, best face forward to the people we serve." The group hopes to expand its reach to organizations outside the Chittenden County population base. Nearly two dozen organizations who "should have been present" were listed by the May participants. The Community Center Board is coordinating the meetings. ▼

# Samara Grants \$40 Grand

## Highest Total Grants For One Year

**A**ccording to a press release from the Samara Foundation of Vermont, it has awarded scholarships and grants totaling \$40,000 to four high school seniors and 12 organizations serving the Vermont gay community. Samara first awarded grants in 1998 and now has distributed over \$130,000 throughout the state. This year's amount is the largest round of giving in the foundation's history.

Four Vermont high school seniors will be receiving \$1,100 Samara Scholarships for 2002. The receiving seniors are Madeline Veitch of Putney; Gabriel Mulley of Norwich; Bailey Miranda of Fairfax; and Tara Sun Vanacore of Bridport. The Samara Scholarship was established as an investment in the future of Vermont stu-

dents who oppose discrimination and prejudice and who stand for the elimination of homophobia in our society. Eleven Vermont high school seniors have been recognized as Samara Scholars since the awards were established in 2000.

Organizations funded in Samara Foundation's Year 2002 grant cycle benefit the Vermont gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities in a wide range of areas including HIV prevention, youth services, education, media development, health and community service, social service, and initiatives to address same-sex domestic violence.

HIV prevention outreach to men in Bennington County was the focus of a \$3,000 grant awarded to the

AIDS Project of Southern Vermont. Expanded youth services for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning youth throughout Vermont are supported by two grants. Outright Vermont was awarded \$7,000 to match gifts in their 2002 major donor campaign. Parks Place Community Center in Bellows Falls received \$1,000 to host a program called Sharing Our Unique Truths (SHOUT), a four-day skill-based risk reduction workshop for "at-risk" girls aged 13 to 15.

A \$1,000 grant to the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association and a \$6,000 grant to Mountain Pride Media aim to support fair media coverage and enhance communication for the LGBT community of Vermont.

A \$3,000 grant was awarded to SafeSpace, a social service organization working to end physical, sexual and emotional violence in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning people.

Education, advocacy and outreach were the focus of three Samara grants this year. The Gay Lesbian Education and Resource Network (G/LEARN) in Norwich was awarded \$1,500 to provide education and support to students, parents, and teachers about issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. \$1,500 was also granted to the National Organization for Women: Vermont, to help produce a voter guide, showing how Vermont Senators and Legislators voted on issues relating to women, the LGBT community and civil rights. The Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force received \$5,000 to support grassroots organizing and to insure that they will have a continuing presence at each of the local fairs in Vermont.

The Vermont Diversity Health Project, a project of R.U.12? Community Center received \$1,000 to help build and coordinate a network of Vermont-based GLBTQIA trainers and technical assistance providers for health and wellness professionals seeking to improve their services for GLBTQIA Vermonters.

Celebration of our communities' achievements was supported by a \$3,500 grant to Pride Vermont. Faerie Camp Destiny was awarded \$1,500 to assist with their community programs.

The Samara Foundation, with offices in Burlington, is one of a network of gay and lesbian community foundations across the county. Samara Foundation is a charitable foundation whose mission is "to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow." ▼