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Our Bodies Our Minds

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Chittenden County's Directory of Health and Wellness Resources for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Questioning and Allied People

This **FREE** guide lists over 150 queer and queer-friendly mainstream and alternative health care providers.

Our Bodies, Our Minds can be found at the following locations:

- R.U.1.2? Community Center
- Burlington Community Health Center
- Imani Health Institute
- Outright Vermont
- Planned Parenthood's Mansfield Ave Clinic
- SafeSpace
- Spectrum Youth and Family Services
- Vermont CARES

Use the guide on-line at: www.ru12.org/vdhp.cfm

Our Bodies, Our Minds is published by the Vermont Diversity Health Project (VTDHP), a program of R.U.1.2? Community Center. For more information call R.U.1.2? at 802.860.7812

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known that the president during this time, Republican Ronald Reagan, did not even utter the word during his administration. It took celebrities, athletes and children to open the eyes of the public that the virus was spreading at a rapid rate all around them.

Today we have a lot of information on the spread of HIV, hepatitis, sexually transmitted disease and blood-to-blood infection. It seems that the gay population has gotten the message and the infection rate is tapering off within this sub-culture. What we are seeing is a rise in infection from the heterosexual population. Mainly the infections are in the intravenous drug using (IDU) population and the sexual partners of these people. What we are seeing is a rise of infection in women and youth to be exact.

Our hindsight shows us that though we cannot immediately change the behavior of these citizens, we can and should help keep them and society safe. Statistics show that the St. Johnsbury area has a higher rate of admitted intravenous drug use than even Chittenden County. With this information, the knowledge of the spread of certain diseases and the deaths of tens of thousands of people, we have the responsibility to act in a pro-active manner toward halting further infections.

Using a needle/syringe exchange as prevention of the spread of any disease just makes sense. The behavior is already there. The diseases are already there. The research is ongoing and supportive of syringe exchange prevention.

So, Senator and Selectmen of Caledonia County, when your son, daughter, granddaughter comes home with hepatitis C, HIV, or both, you can look back and say "I put that dirty needle back on the street for you."

Pleasant dreams!

Robert A. Larabee
HIV Consumer Advocate
Vermont People with AIDS Coalition

According to news coverage, the select-board of St. Johnsbury felt it was not consulted when the program was put in place, despite a letter sent to one member. It is requesting that the Department of Health rescind its permit for the program. DOH guidelines for needle exchange program permits require an organization to demonstrate "cooperation" from within the local community.

- EB

More "Press"-ing Concerns

I am writing in response to the article in last month's OITM titled "Kaufman Tapped As New RU12? Director: Next Queer Summit Planned." In the second part of the article you addressed the issue of press access to the Queer Summit and mentioned my role as meeting facilitator. After reading your account, I feel that several points need to be added to your description of the meeting.

At the beginning of the Summit you stated that you were going to report on the meeting in OITM and asked if meeting participants had objections. I appreciated that you asked directly. As with any process of response and dialogue, one person was the first individual at the meeting to object to having direct quotes appear in your article. We then spent at least half an hour talking about the issue of press coverage and the expressed desire that meeting participants feel safe in being part of a frank discussion. My recollection of this conversation is that several additional meeting participants expressed their agreement with the first participant who objected to direct quotes appearing in OITM. We then returned to the issue for a check-in during the afternoon part of the meeting to make sure that all were able to proceed with the agreement reached in the morning. That agreement, as I remember it, was that OITM was free to report on the content and outcome of the meeting but not include direct quotes.

This process is quite different from the statement in the OITM article "[O]ne participant objected to allowing direct quotes or active notetaking from the proceedings..." Facilitator Stan Baker allowed the objection to block direct media reportage of the process." My "allowing" was far from a quick decision and was based, I felt, on considerable discussion of the entire group with several participants in agreement and no strong disagreement expressed to block the way forward. Mountain Pride Media was also a participant in the Summit with two representatives part of the discussion, in addition to your presence as an OITM reporter. This dual relationship was part of the fabric of the day.

My understanding is that the Board and leadership of RU12? reached an agreement with OITM/Mountain Pride Media on participation and reporting for the second Queer Summit so that participants will know what arrangements with the press have been made.

Clearly all involved in Queer public meetings should expect press to be there. Queer meetings that are held

by invitation are a more complex matter and this is where I would like to see future discussion center. I agree that the issue of complete press coverage of non-public Queer events and meetings is of major importance. Making it possible for participants to feel safe in engaging in direct, and possibly contentious, discussion while still having open and accurate reporting is important. My concern as facilitator at the first Queer Summit was that the press access issue would consume a major portion of the day and keep us from the business at hand.

I would like to see a future comprehensive discussion of press coverage of Queer meetings, especially meetings held by invitation. I would be interested in being part of such a discussion. This might be a forum that OITM or Mountain Pride Media could sponsor.

This letter is meant only to add to or clarify portions of your last article on the Queer Summit. I applaud the direction that OITM is taking in becoming a major press force in Vermont. Recent reporting and articles have been impressive. I look forward to more conversation about these vital issues.

Stan Baker
Shelburne

The Mountain Pride Media representatives disagreed with the majority opinion blocking full coverage of the first Queer Summit, but chose not to insist, feeling that it was more important for the meeting to continue.

The "agreement" that was reached regarding press involvement in the second Queer summit was similar to the policy for the first Queer Summit, but issued before the meeting: I was again invited, but only on condition that I would agree to rely on "official notes" rather than on direct observations or quotes, i.e., prior censorship. I declined. The "official notes" from Queer Summit 2 can be found in the Community Compass section of this issue.

- EB

Your vote makes a difference!

November 5th is election day.