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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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# editorial

## Making a Difference

**B**y the time most of you read this, Vermont's biennial elections will be over ... or not, depending on whether one of the candidates in the races for governor and lieutenant governor received more than 50 percent of the vote.

Either you voted ... or you didn't.

You decided to have a say in who's going to run the state, make the laws, and change or maintain the policies that affect your life ... or you kept silent.

Voting is like coming out. It's not something you do just once, and that's it, though certainly the first time has the potential for emotional intensity. Like two years ago. A lot of us came out personally and politically to get the civil unions law passed and to vote for the people who understood something about oppression and equality and had the courage to vote for the law.

There was a lot of intensity as we told our stories. There was even more as we endured slanderous, hateful speech from legislators who claimed to represent us, but decided that "The People" they should "Listen to" didn't include any of us. And then, that fall, some of us worked on our first political campaigns: dropping off literature supporting pro-civil union incumbents, posting signs of our own urging Vermonters to "Keep It Civil," licking envelopes, making phone calls to get out the vote.

And once the campaign was over, the intensity died down. Most of us just wanted to be left alone to live our lives free

of harassment and with the same rights, privileges and responsibilities as our neighbors. We'd won a significant victory, got pushed back a little bit, but not enough to undo the law, and we thought we were done.

We're not done. Democracy is never done. Deciding whether to come out happens every time we meet someone new. And voting, that minimal level of participation in civic life, happens every two years on the statewide level.

One of the last things my dad did was apply for an absentee ballot for the September primary election. He'd had his electoral say in 21 biennial elections, and he was looking for one more. But he died before he could fill out the ballot. It might have been his last regret.

In September I went to visit a friend - who was dying of malignant melanoma - when he was still able to sit in his recliner, and we talked about politics and the elections. He asked for my recommendations, though he wasn't sure he'd live long enough to vote.

"Oh," I said, "you can vote any time after October 7, stop by the town clerk's office on your way to or from the doc's office."

"Yeah, well, I don't think I'm gonna be 'stopping by' much of anyplace," he came back.

A couple of weeks later, he was no longer in the recliner, but in a hospital bed in the living room where he could watch TV and see the dogs and the changing leaves out the glass doors into

the back yard. When I called, I asked his wife - also a friend - whether she'd been able to stop by and pick up a ballot for him. "He asked me just yesterday," she said, "and I told him you'd call and remind us, you'd be all over it."

It took a few more days for the logistics and the priorities to align, but she got the ballot, and mere days before he slipped into the visions and dreams that sometimes come with slow death, she read him the choices and she put an x in the box for the candidate he chose. He signed the affidavit and the ballot went in.

That's two deaths in my circle this fall: one who wanted to vote and couldn't, another who made sure even death wouldn't interfere with the chance to have his political say.

Some of us work so hard to get to vote, while others ignore the chance - for whatever reasons. We're not scared enough, or involved enough, or angry enough.

With the example of my dad and my friend so freshly before me, I cast my ballot on October 16th.

We're seeing now whether enough of us chose to vote to keep the gains we've made. We're seeing now how many of us thought we were done when the election of 2000 was over. We're seeing now how important it is to sustain some level of commitment and purpose and energy for the long political haul.

We're seeing now whether we've made a difference.

*Euan Bear*

## squibs squibs squibs

### Sex Play Now Legal in Alabama

An Alabama law banning the sale of sex toys was struck down last month by a federal judge as a violation of the right to privacy. "The fundamental right of privacy, long recognized by the Supreme Court as inherent among our constitutional protections, incorporates a right to sexual privacy," said U.S. District Judge Lynwood Smith Jr.

For the last four years Good Vibrations, a San Francisco-based worker-owned cooperative specializing in sex toys, has supported the American Civil Liberties Union case against the Alabama sex-toy ban. The 1998 law - part of a package of legislation strengthening the state's obscenity law - had banned the sale of

devices designed for "the stimulation of human genital organs."

In 2000, Good Vibrations collected an emergency supply of sex toys and collected nearly \$10,000 worth of products from generous vendors to distribute free to the unfortunate, toyless masses in Alabama.

Throughout the ban Good Vibrations argued that sex toys are not obscene and sexual gratification is indeed a basic human right. As Good Vibrations Sexologist and author Dr. Carol Queen says, "Alabama may have maintained that 'There is no fundamental right to purchase a product to use in pursuit of having an orgasm,' but we strongly disagree, and have for the last four years. What exactly do they think the constitutional right to the pursuit of happiness means?"

To celebrate the victory, the store will offer formerly depraved - oops, deprived - Alabama residents a 15 percent discount on mail order purchases for the month of November.

Now play nice - or nasty - y'all.

### Kiwi Fruits to Finance Gay Rugby

According to an email press release, Kiwi Fruits is the first ever LesGayBiTrans New Zealand calendar.

It is also a fundraiser for the Touch Blacks, the gay Touch Rugby Team going over to compete in the Gay Games.

The calendar "features 12 colourful, fun and quirky images of Queer New Zealand. Not only does it feature bars and clubs in Wellington, Auckland and Palmerston North, but also hairdressers, cafes, adult venues, milk company and an automotive company - all supporting the Queer Community in New Zealand and Australia!

The group printed only 3,500 copies, selling briskly at NZ\$10 "(3 quid)" so we may have missed our chance to get a gander at going down under. Check them out at <http://www.gaynz.com> or by way of Robert at [touchblacks@hotmail.com](mailto:touchblacks@hotmail.com).