

letters

Euan Bear, Editor
 Art Director
 Copy Editor
 Susan Papp

Good Writing

Kudos to Kevin McAteer on his beautifully written, perceptive preview of Nora Mitchell's powerful new work, the performance piece *Minus Music*. I thought it a particularly nice match, editorially, of writer and subject.

Suzi Wizowaty
Burlington

The West Coast Likes Us

As a friend of Lee Lynch, I benefit (among other ways) from receiving your publication. Thanks for all the work you do; it's one of the best I've read. Keep up the good work!

Nel Ward
Newport, OR

Transgender Clarification

I am responding to Judith Beckett's letter in last month's issue of OITM concerning legal protections for transgender Vermonters. At the time she wrote the letter, she was unaware that transgender Vermonters are in fact protected under Vermont's hate crime law. In 1999, through the hard work of a member of the transgender community, gender identity was added as a protected class.

In 2000, a bill was introduced which would have added gender identity to the Vermont anti-discrimination law. That was the same year that civil unions was debated and legislators felt it would have been too much to address both issues. The following year, because so many new legislators were elected who were not supportive of glbt issues, that same bill was not introduced.

This year, Equality VT (formerly the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights) will discuss the possibility of introducing the bill again with supportive legislators. In order for the bill to pass, it is imperative to build a coalition of organizations and individuals who

support changing the anti-discrimination laws to make it illegal to discriminate against transgenders.

If you are interested in being part of this coalition, or have a question on legal protections and rights, please contact Equality VT at 802-496-4333 or email renfrew@sover.net. You can also obtain information about bills which we have supported or opposed over the past several years at www.equalityvt.org.

Virginia Renfrew
Equality VT

I saw a letter to the editor, and an apology from the editor, for a mistake in a story suggesting that Vermont does not include transgender people in its hate crime laws. In fact, Vermont does have statutory language that explicitly includes transgender people. In 2000, the legislature passed, and the governor signed, a bill adding "gender identity" as a protected category.

This is the language from the state code: "'Protected category' includes race, color, religion, national origin, sex, ancestry, age, service in the armed forces of the United States, handicap ... sexual orientation and gender identity, and perceived membership in any such group." VT. STAT. ANN. tit. 13, §1458 (Supp. 2000).

Best,
Paisley Currah
Transgender Law and Policy Institute & Associate Professor, Dept. of Political Science
Brooklyn College of The City University of NY

Actually, author Judith Beckett originally wrote (December 2002) "In California and Vermont, gender identity and expression are protected under hate crimes provisions." During the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a transman she was talking to told her that was not true, so she endeavored to correct the "error" with her letter. Thanks to several readers who either emailed Judith or emailed or buttonholed me in

the last month, we now know that her original statement was accurate: if you are assaulted or your property is vandalized or damaged because of your gender expression, the perpetrator – if caught, tried, and convicted – may face increased penalties for participating in a hate crime. And we regret our error in not checking the statute for ourselves. – EB

Concern for Youth

I am following up on our phone call of today [January 7] re: the dropping of the resources for students that you have carried for many months. These resources listed the towns / schools that had in-school organizations that could be of help to glbt/allies that needed help or support.

I called a few weeks ago with the complaint that the paper had dropped the reference to Woodstock area sources (since they did not have an in-school org. I appealed that it be re-inserted as it was a reminder to all that they still needed a resource to contact whereas many of the surrounding towns did have their own school-based resource. Much to my surprise, the entire list of resources was dropped. This does not show as big a commitment to youth that I thought the paper had. Besides, I was going to use your listings to show the Woodstock area supt. that these in-school resources were lacking and that other schools had a resource close to their students. Please rethink your decision to drop this resource in print as it is a very visual reminder to students and adults who has and doesn't have resources.

Besides not all kids will go to a computer to get their info. Have you ever been in a library/school and seen people looking over others' shoulders to take a look at what you have on your screen?

Please bring the hard copy back. I have been trying to make a change in Woodstock for a couple of years and have not been successful as yet. I was very active in a Cambridge, MA, high school in the establish-

ment of the sensitivity to glbt issue many years ago when I was teaching there.

Peace.
Bob Richards
Woodstock

There was no deliberate philosophical decision not to provide this information, or to delete it permanently from our Source section. Because of budget concerns, we have had to cut the paper from 36 pages to 32, and one of the pages to go was one of the three Source pages, which we have published for several years as a service to the community. All of the Source information is always available online.

My first attempt to cut the section resulted in some headings being followed only by the online address where readers could go for the full version. At the last minute before going to print, we found we still had too much Source and not enough page, so the last column (including part of the Women's listings and the entire Youth section) had to be cut from the print version. If we had a sponsor or underwriter for the Source section, it could be printed again in full.

The listings in the Source are free; some may be out of date because the organizations or contact people have not provided corrected information. As a result, we have questioned just how much attention our readers pay to this section of the paper and how useful it is. We have also considered maintaining it online only and discontinuing the print version. Your letter suggests that we should revisit this issue. In the meantime, if any person or business would like to support this service by sponsoring or underwriting the costs of printing the Source listings, please let us know. – EB

Strange Trip

cont'd from previous page

and people, from Jeffersonville Falls and that great little bookstore in Lyndonville to Curtis Barbeque in Putney and the Clothes Barn in St. Albans.

"I took it on as a mission to increase the distribution of the newspaper by delivering it personally and talking to people in all of the small towns and cities of the state," he recalls in an email from Germany. "I tripled the number of drop-off sites while meeting an amazing array of people through out the state. I was always amazed at the pockets of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people from a multitude of backgrounds, who make up the diasporic community the paper sought to serve. I was always struck by the desire to create and build community of the people I met."

Barb Dozetos was on the Board of Directors and volunteered as a copyeditor for OITM before she was prevailed upon to become editor beginning with the November 1998 issue. It was, as she remembers, a "very exciting time."

"Because of my position at the paper, I got a front row seat for the birth of civil unions. The most thrilling moment for me was sitting – literally – in the front row of the Supreme Court for the oral argu-

ments in *Baker v. Vermont*. I knew then that I was watching history being made. Among the many gifts my tenure as editor brought, what I'll cherish the most is the opportunity to know personally people I'll always look to as my personal heroes: Bill Lippert, Susan Murray, and Beth Robinson."

When Barb Dozetos left in December of 2000 (she is now a freelance journalist and national secretary for the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association), the ruling had been issued, civil union legislation had been passed, and one of the least civil, most vicious state election campaigns in Vermont's history resulted in a House determined to repeal or eviscerate the law recognizing gay and lesbian relationships, held in check by a Senate with a precariously slim pro-civil union majority.

Jason Whipple followed Barb Dozetos in the editor's chair, taking on his first post-graduation professional job. Whipple, now a teacher in Brattleboro, saw the paper through 2001, the first backlash year.

"I agreed to take this job because I wanted to feel like I was part of a community," he wrote in his farewell editorial in the March issue of OITM. "I was certain that my experience as the editor of a community paper would grant me automatic access to a family that I desperately needed. Unfortunately, this did not

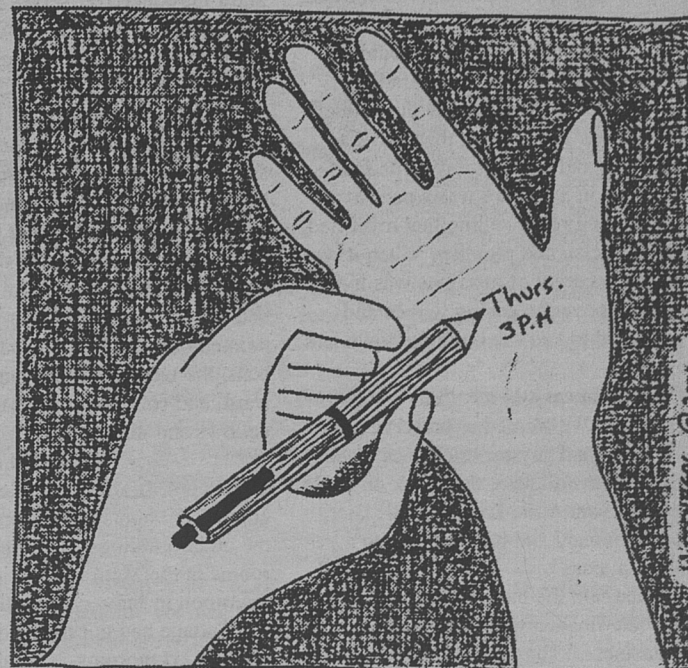
happen. I have really only found a handful of individuals with whom I could connect. This trip has been worth that alone."

My year began with confidence tinged with panic ("I know I can do this, but *how?*"), and has for the most part been rewarding. The feedback about OITM's coverage of our communities has been overwhelmingly positive, not only in direct comments and letters, but in the number of people willing to trust us with their stories, their opinions, their hard times and glad times. Without you – readers, writers, artists, organizations, advertisers, volunteers, board and committee members, drivers, stuffers, web gurus, fundraisers, donors, distribution sites – we could not exist. As I wrote to each of the former editors: We stand on your shoulders!

Euan Bear

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at witt's end leah wittenberg



EARLY PALM PILOT