

Views: Creating Change

Imagine a 16-story conference hotel. Now imagine that for five days in November, every single room in the place (and most of the rooms in the surrounding area) were booked by LGBT activists. You might think that you'd never want to leave, especially if you were four LGBT activists from Vermont and the hotel was in Miami Beach, Florida, host city of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's 16th Annual Creating Change conference.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) is one of the country's oldest social justice organizations for the LGBT community. With more than 2000 participants from all across the country, Creating Change is the largest conference for LGBT activists in the nation. It works to

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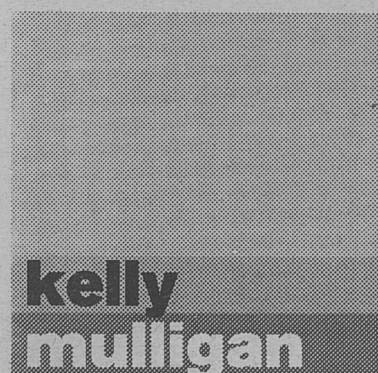
include LGBT activists of all stripes: Gay Straight Alliance leaders from a state college in Ohio work alongside

Love Call

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the result of this dialogue.

Several public forums will evolve into a Watershed Council for long term planning. The Council will bring together members of the community who have some stake in the watershed and are concerned about its issues. Working under a consensus-based decision-making model, the Council will prioritize issues, selecting problems, threats, and



LGBT community center board members from Los Angeles, Lambda Legal outreach coordinators from Atlanta, and HIV/AIDS educators from New York to educate themselves and each other on how to be better activists and advocates for the LGBT community.

The theme of this year's conference was a continuation of the past year's theme, "Building an Anti-Racist Movement for Social and Economic Justice." Conference attendees participated in discussions about racism and how to build an anti-racist movement. They could also attend institutes and workshops on dismantling institutional racism in LGBT organizations as well as building organizations that are multi-ethnically representational.

This year at Creating Change, Vermont was represented by three of us from the R.U.1.2?

opportunities upon which to focus planning efforts. Smaller focus groups will develop around specific environmental issues, such as erosion control, storm water runoff, deforestation and buffer loss, flow regulation and flood control, or access to swimming holes like Indian Love Call.

This process will give everyone the opportunity to become involved from the beginning, to be contributors to this crucial document in its defining stages. The gay community is whole-heartedly invited to

Community Center – Christopher Kaufman, Shawn O'Hara and me – and Kara DeLeonardis of Safe Space. In between fielding questions about Howard Dean and civil unions from other conference participants, we attended five days of institutes, skill-building academies and workshops on everything from bisexual activism to the feng shui of cyberspace, from building a winning coalition for Election 2004 to intersex advocacy. R.U.1.2? Executive Director Christopher Kaufman did double duty, serving as a faculty member for the pre-conference institute on community centers, sponsored by the National Association for LGBT Community Centers.

Creating Change is about more than just workshops and handouts, keynote speeches and informational statistics, though. Creating Change is an amazing opportunity for activists from all over the country to come together and share experiences and advice, successes and failures. Two thousand LGBT activists all crammed together in one Miami Beach hotel, and sometimes the conversations between participants about creative tools for funding are just as valuable as the funding workshops.

It's a chance to learn as well as a five-day-long pep rally for the kind of work that we do and how important it is that we keep doing it. And so, while we might have been hesitant to leave (our hotel was about a hundred yards from the beach), we returned home newly excited and full of lots of great new ideas for the LGBT activist work that we do in our community every day. ▼

Kelly Mulligan is the Program Assistant at R.U.1.2? Community Center.

join in this effort as people who enjoy the river and want to keep it safe and accessible. Information about basin planning and announcements for the first public forum will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. ▼

To get involved, call Em Richards, the West River Watershed Coordinator, at 802-254-5323 x109 or em.richards@vacd.org

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