

NGLTF's Foreman to Keynote R.U.1.2? Dinner

R.U.1.2?'s Executive Director Christopher Kaufman has announced that Matt Foreman will be the keynote speaker at the Community Center's annual fundraising dinner on April 11.

Foreman confirmed his commitment to address the Vermont organization's supporters. "I am honored to be invited to speak in Vermont," he said.

Foreman, who reportedly always wears cowboy boots, has been the director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force since last May. Before that he directed Empire State Pride Agenda for six years, during which there were significant advances toward legal equality for gay men and lesbians in New York. Foreman also has done a six-year stint with the New York City Anti-Violence Project.

"NGLTF is a leader in the national queer community working on issues that we care about and that affect our lives. Matt's voice will be very important in the coming year," said Kaufman. "NGLTF has a local organizing focus, and I look forward to seeing what Matt's message is for us, especially

regarding how we can support others around the nation."

Another area Kaufman hopes Foreman will address is how to mobilize the LGBTQ community to vote in the upcoming elections. Kaufman added that there is already an initiative begun by the National Association of LGBT Community Centers called "Promote the Vote."

Foreman's recent statements have been calls for both caution and increased activism in response to such celebrated legal advances for the lesbian and gay communities as the *Lawrence v. Texas* Supreme Court decision and the ruling on gay marriage in Massachusetts.

Asked about this trend in a phone interview, Foreman said, "It's a persistent problem of our own movement and the way that non-gay people look at our communities that there's a huge disparity of where we actually are and where they think we are. The vast majority of LGBT people have no rights, much less relationship protections. People tend to over-value symbolism."

For example, he said, "People com-



Matt Foreman

pletely missed what the *Lawrence* decision said at its core: that police could not come break down the door to your bedroom and

arrest you for having sex. And half of Americans disagreed with the decision."

Foreman said that with the *Lawrence* decision and the Massachusetts ruling, the extreme right now has "the best wedge issue" it could have wished for in order to stay in power. Celebrating is fine, he added, as long as we recognize that there's a lot of work to do to implement those decisions. He held up Vermont as a model of grassroots organizing around gay marriage, even though the effort fell short of that goal and resulted in civil unions.

"The amount of grassroots organizing you did in Vermont, plowing the fields, appearing at county fairs, talking to people, is light years ahead of anything anyone has done in at least 48 other states," Foreman declared. "We are in serious trouble: never, outside of Vermont, have we won a marriage fight." ▼

Information on the R.U.1.2? Community Center fundraising dinner is available from the Center: call 802-860-7812 or check the web site, www.TheCenter@ru12.org.

Unity Project Meets Goal; Three Levels of Grants Offered

The Unity Project, a collaborative fundraising effort between the Vermont Community Foundation and the Samara Foundation, has reached its goal of raising \$200,000 outside the LGBTQ community in Vermont. Meeting the goal releases a \$100,000 matching grant from the national organization Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues.

Once administrative costs and an endowment grant are deducted, \$230,000 is available for LGBTQ projects and organizations in Vermont.

"All the commitments are in hand, although some are pledged over time," said Bill Lippert, director of the Samara Foundation. "The funds were raised outside the LGBTQ community," he emphasized. "What that means is that we've opened new doors, received new dollars from new donors."

The project aims to have those new donors build relationships with the Vermont LGBTQ community and continue their giving.

"The Unity Project gave us the opportunity to talk about the needs of our community with people we've not met before," Lippert continued.

Under Unity Project guidelines, there are three levels of grants: under \$1,000, which can be applied for at any time until June 3, 2005; program grants of up to \$10,000; and strategic partnership grants of over \$25,000. The larger two categories of grants can be applied for in 2004 and/or 2005.

The smallest grants are designed to support high school Gay-Straight Alliances and anti-harassment projects. Outreach to existing and emerging GSAs to publicize the mini-grants and review of the applications will be done by Outright Vermont, with support from the Unity Project.

Lippert stressed that the Unity Project funds were not intended to "create new programs that would need continuing funding." Another important aspect of the Unity Project,

according to Lippert, is that its grant guidelines are based on a community-wide self-assessment.

"The collaboration between the Samara Foundation and the Vermont Community Foundation is not new," declared Ann Jones-Weinstock, Vice President for Donor Relations and Communications at the Vermont Community Foundation. What is new, Jones-Weinstock said, is that "The Vermont Unity Project goes beyond our own quiet grant-making. It's more public and higher profile."

The Vermont Community Foundation is made up of 485 constituent funds, some of which made donations to the Unity Project.

"While the formal fundraising phase is over for this project," Jones-Weinstock added, "our continued engagement isn't ending. It's the end of a project, but not of the mission."

Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues Executive Director Nancy Cunningham said that Vermont is one of 33 community founda-

tion partners, and, she said, it's one of the most successful. Eleven projects have LGBTQ partnerships, including VCF and Samara. "Vermont is a really, really good model. It's unique in that it's the only statewide partnership," said Cunningham. Most are either city- or county-based projects.

Among the national granters involved in Funders for Lesbian and Gay Issues are the Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, the Aaron Diamond Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the David Geffen Foundation, the Gill Foundation, the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Ms. Foundation for Women, Open Society Institute, and the Philip Morris Companies. ▼

Guidelines for Unity Project grants are on the Samara Foundation and Vermont Community Foundation web sites: www.SamaraFoundation.org or www.vermontcf.org.

PRIDE Recharged, VT Parade Set for July

In a major departure from 21 years of lesbian and gay pride history in Vermont, the newly recharged Pride committee has scheduled the 2004 Pride parade and festival for Saturday, July 10. The reason for the scheduling was given by PRIDE Committee Co-chair Lee Kahrs as, "It's after the July 4th weekend, and it doesn't conflict with other states' Pride celebrations."

Kahrs, in a phone interview, said the PRIDE Committee's membership is almost completely new, with Mary Abar the only

holdover from last year. "We don't have any transfolk, but other than that we're pretty covered [in diversity] by age, gender, and sexuality," she said. Michael Glidden is the other PRIDE co-chair.

The new committee is not attempting "to re-invent the wheel," but will build on the processes and experiences of the former committee members. Among the committee's goals is getting a web site up and running by the end of January. Another goal is getting the word out and recruiting volunteers.

"We're putting a new, positive, energetic spin on this one day for Vermont," Kahrs, a journalist working for a mainstream daily, explained. "We'll invite all the [political] candidates. We're not going for a statewide series of events, but we're inviting everyone to come" from across Vermont.

Kahrs is a relative newcomer to Vermont, although she and her family spent summers in Addison. She was a stage manager in Manhattan in September 2001, and decided it was time to leave when jobs evaporated in

the months after the World Trade Center attacks.

Speaking about the Pride parade, she said, "We want to raise the roof, make it fun again, increase participation. The energy on the committee is really good."

The PRIDE Committee is organized into four sub-committees: the parade; the waterfront; advertising and media; and fundraising. There are currently nine "full-time" committee members, Kahrs said, and they will be recruiting volunteers for the sub-committees. ▼