

Gay Campaign Buzz

The gay caucus in the Vermont House of Representatives will grow by a third, if Jason P. Lorber's hopes and plans are realized. Lorber is running for the seat in the Chittenden-3 House District being vacated by Progressive Steve Hingtgen. Hingtgen is running for lieutenant governor, facing either Jan Backus or Cheryl Rivers for the Democrats, and incumbent Republican Brian Dubie.

Chittenden-3 is a two-member district representing just under 9,000 people in central Burlington and the Old North End. Lorber said. The other seat is held by Democratic Rep. John Tracey.

The 37-year-old Lorber moved to Vermont two years ago from California with his partner to open a second branch of the business he founded, Aplomb Consulting.

Lorber, who holds an MBA from

Stanford and authored a groundbreaking study of the nation's top business schools, ranking them on their welcome of gay graduate students, is becoming well known in the LGBT community as a stand-up comedian. Asked whether he thought that would help him on the floor of the House, Lorber joked, "Well, I can take that and my MBA and be sure to detect any funny business that might be going on." (There was no drummer to provide a rimshot.)

"Seriously, I think having a sense of humor is a way to open doors," the candidate concluded.

Lorber plans a grassroots campaign, knocking on every door in the district. He has a background in healthcare issues and will focus on affordability and access and ensuring access to medical marijuana for those who would benefit from its use. Currently he is collecting sig-

natures on his candidacy petitions, talking to members of the district, and recruiting volunteers.

Clavelle's Gay Communicator

Former Outright Director B.J. Rogers has joined the Clavelle for Governor campaign as its communications director. The job description includes being the campaign's official spokesman, press secretary, and issue researcher, Rogers said in a phone interview.

"I'm really excited about the campaign," Rogers said. "I'm convinced that Peter Clavelle has a winnable race. He offers a vision and a level of leadership that has been lacking in Vermont for the past two years."

Challenged on the candidate's avoidance of any endorsement of equal marriage for same-sex couples, Rogers stuck to Clavelle's

theme of support for "equality of rights." He continued, "Now is not the time for Vermont to engage in that battle. We're facing substantial challenges – economic, environmental, our energy future, and healthcare."

"Peter's position is one that supports equal access to the institution, or the rights of the institution," Rogers added. "Peter is in the right place on this issue, I have no doubt about that. He is working for the wellbeing of all Vermonters, including the LGBT community. He has been a staunch ally."

Rogers denied that the candidate's disinclination to issue a statement endorsing equal marriage for same-sex couples represents a political trade-off of LGBT equality for moderate and conservative votes. "Peter is focusing on the most immediate needs: sustainable communities and healthcare," Rogers concluded. ▼

Youth Declare Pride

BY JULIA F. KIMBALL

Burlington Mayor and gubernatorial candidate Peter Clavelle of Burlington stood on the front steps of City Hall on May 8 and declared the date Youth Pride Day in the city. For the 100-plus youth who turned out from 12 of Vermont's 14 counties (according to Outright Vermont's unofficial poll), Clavelle's presence as an ally was bolstering – but he wasn't telling them anything they didn't already know. Youth members of Outright, and their adult mentors, had worked for eight weeks to organize Youth Pride Day 2004.

The event, according to co-executive Director Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak, was "youth-driven, youth-celebrated, and youth connecting with youth – making those connections they can't make when they're stuck on the other side of Vermont in a school with no [LGBTQ] programming."

And the day brought many opportunities for youth to connect – with non-stop events from noon on Saturday to 8 am on Sunday. The proceedings started with a Speak Out on the steps of City Hall, where young people talked about their gratitude for the LGBTQ youth community and Outright, their hopes for the future,



Kimberly Pugh and Bekki Bruno, Youth Pride Co-chairs

the importance of voting, and Pride. The Speak Out was followed by, among other things, a march through downtown Burlington, workshops, a "mini-film festival," and the ever-popular prom.

"The prom is extra-special," Mulvaney-Stanak said, "These are young people who can't bring their boyfriends or girlfriends to their school proms because of the threat ... this is an opportunity for them to slow-dance, ask someone of the same sex to dance, and just get on down" without being hassled.

And get on down they did. According to Mulvaney-Stanak the prom night was a success – as was Youth Pride Day 2004, which also drew support from allies and

adult members of the GLBTQ community. The youth who attended made it clear that they would continue to put themselves out there for the remainder of the year, and that they'd be back for Youth Pride Day 2005. In the words of many of the youth at the Speak Out and the march (paraphrasing slightly): They're here, they're queer – and they're fabulous!

Outright Vermont is the only youth-focused GLBT organization in Vermont, according to Mulvaney-Stanak, and serves youth ages 12 to 22. For more information visit www.outrightvt.org. ▼

Julia F. Kimball is a recent graduate and a newcomer to Vermont.

Quebec

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from the United States when it comes to the struggles of gay and lesbian people. Canada, in general, is much more engaged, at home and abroad, on human rights issues. At the forefront of the national dialogue on human rights is Quebec, where the provincial government added sexual orientation to their Charter of Rights in 1977.

"One difference is the importance you give in the United States to the individual over the collective," said Pierre Blain, coordinator of the National Day Against Homophobia. "For us, the collective is very important. Human rights are not individual, they're collective."

Another significant difference is the government's role in promoting multiculturalism. Fondation Émergence receives funding from city, provincial, and federal governments. Sexual minority issues are treated the same as gender and racial minority issues.

"There are special programs to build better relations between citizens in society because we have multiculturalism," said Blain. "That means everybody comes from different perspectives. If they come from different perspectives they have a different point of view. We have special programs to help everybody understand."

Like racism for people of color and sexism for women, homophobia is a concept put forward by social theorists to explain why gay men and lesbians are oppressed by society. Fondation Émergence defines individual homophobia as

"an attitude, a feeling, a disease, and a wrongheaded aversion to homosexuals or homosexuality in general." In a society, the group says, homophobia is the systematic denial of the existence of queer people, the refusal to allow queer people equal access to the protections and benefits of government, and the use of law and public policy to deny queer people rights and liberties.

Discriminating in employment and housing, differentially enforcing sodomy laws, permitting bullying in schools, public health departments failing to gather data on queer people, and violence against queer people are all examples of homophobia. Heterosexual organizations are not the only perpetrators of homophobia, however. Gay organizations that malign or hide portions of the queer community they find unacceptable – people whose gender or sexual expression fails to conform to a narrow standard – also promote homophobia.

In 2003, Fondation Émergence held the first annual National Day Against Homophobia. Last year's theme, "Shocking? Yes, to a Homophobe," showed two hockey players kissing and two women dressed as brides. Other campaigns have included: "Let Me Be Happy" which targeted the families of young gay and lesbian people and "You Cannot Catch It" which promoted acceptance of gay and lesbian people in the straight community. ▼

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