

**Financial Planning is important
for anyone.**

**For gay and lesbian partners
it can be crucial.**

For same sex partnerships, proper financial planning can help ensure that you and your loved ones are properly protected. As a Financial Consultant, my goal is to meet your needs in a relationship based on trust and professionalism, working closely with your attorney or CPA to develop a strategy based on your unique situation and objectives.

Call me for a free consultation.

Mitchell Rosengarten
Financial Consultant

(802) 775-4371 or (800) 628-2132

90 Merchants Row
Rutland, VT 05701

THIS IS WHO WE ARE. THIS IS HOW WE EARN IT.

SMITH BARNEY
citigroup

Smith Barney does not offer tax or legal advice. Please consult your tax/legal advisor for such guidance.
©2004 Citigroup Global Markets Inc. Member SIPC. Smith Barney is a division and service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc. and its affiliates and is used and registered throughout the world. CITIGROUP and the Umbrella Device are trademarks and service marks of Citicorp or its affiliates and are used and registered throughout the world. THIS IS WHO WE ARE. THIS IS HOW WE EARN IT is a service mark of Citigroup Global Markets Inc.



**BLACKWOOD
& DANON, PC**
attorneys

90 Main Street
P.O. Box 875
Burlington, VT 05402
802-863-2517
fax: 802-863-0262
info@blackwoodlaw.org

Providing legal services addressing issues important to LGBTIQA individuals and families – adoptions, wills, estate planning, employment and education issues, civil rights, personal injuries, and small business matters.



Psychoanalysis
Individuals & Couples

Pastoral Counseling
Jungian orientation

9 Center Court
Northampton MA
413-584-2442

River Road,
Putney VT
802-387-5547

Janet Langdon, Mdiv, NCPsyA

jliesl@sover.net

Wilkommen for Lesbians & Gays Vermont Gay Tourism Association Markets to Us

BY EUAN BEAR

Waterbury – If you read national gay and lesbian magazines – in print or online – you’ve seen them, maybe even got a few ads in your email inbox or pop-ups or -unders at certain websites: pitches urging you to come to the gay-friendly environs of Philadelphia, or Miami, or Key West. What you may not know is that municipal budgets – public money – pay for a lot of those ads. Vermont has nothing like it.

At least, not from the state’s tourism budget.

Enter the Vermont Gay Tourism Association (VGTA), a group of business owners, some gay, some straight, all of whom want to welcome lesbians and gay men as customers for their inns, restaurants, catering establishments, even a graphic design shop. The president of the 30-member group is Jeff Connor, co-proprietor with his wife of the Grünberg Haus, a B&B in Waterbury.

“Vermont was named one of the top ten destinations by *Out & About*, coming in third after Paris and Hawaii,” Connor says. “We need to take advantage of all that we have to offer a market that the state is not marketing to.” Vermont was the only rural destination to make the list, scoring higher than Provincetown and Montreal.

The group was incorporated in April, 2003, well ahead of the November, 2003, Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling requiring the state to recognize same-gender marriages. Thirteen inns and B&Bs are showcased on its website’s lodging page, located from Montgomery Center in eastern Franklin County to Shaftsbury, midway between Manchester and Bennington.

“Vermont is a great destination for gays and lesbians,”

Connor declared, “and not just for civil unions, but anytime. That’s why our slogan says ‘Romantic adventure for all.’ It’s just a terrific place to get away.”

Connor and his wife are relative newcomers to the state – and to the hospitality business. When the Ohio couple bought the Grünberg Haus four years ago, Jeff had a career in marketing consulting, making him a natural choice to head up what is essentially a marketing association.

“I wanted Jeff to be president of the association,” said VGTA Treasurer Willie Docto, co-proprietor of Moose Meadow Lodge in Waterbury with his partner Greg Trulson. “I wanted the most visible person in the association to be a straight man who is gay friendly, so the association comes across as gay-friendly, not gay-owned.”

Asked how potential guests would know that Grünberg Haus or Moose Meadow Lodge are ‘gay friendly,’ Connor said, “Well, just the fact that they found us on gay-related travel sites, or saw our brochure, or caught us at our booth at the Gay Travel Expo in New York City.” According to the group’s website, U.S. gay and lesbian travel could represent a \$54 billion market.

Docto said gay and lesbian guests are not necessarily looking for copies of *Outweek* in the lobby, but at how the hosts will treat them. “They want hosts who are not appalled by two men looking for a room with one bed.”

The members’ appeal is that they welcome everyone with a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere, Connor added. There is no standard for “gay-friendliness” among the members of the group. Some might display gay or lesbian magazines, others don’t. “We don’t go out of our way to provide gay-related information or entertainment. We have no TVs [at Grünberg Haus] so there are no videos. It’s really that we [VGTA members] know each other. It’s

never been a problem.”

The eligibility requirements page on the VGTA website (www.vermontgaytourism.com) is blank. The benefits page lists a number of items, mostly marketing-related, but also a discount at members’ businesses for other members and preference in referrals.

Connor said that gay and lesbian couples have held civil unions at the B&B, which other straight guests have asked to attend. “They were fascinated by the whole idea of a civil union. Some of the couples [being united] have been together decades.” But, he admitted, “We always have a few people who don’t like gays, Jews, blacks, foreigners. Sometimes I think they don’t like themselves.”

“Many gay tourism companies market resorts and cruises for singles, and now there are some for families, but not for couples,” Docto said. “Massachusetts closed its doors to out of staters [for legal marriage]. Vermont is unique. Our doors are open.”

Docto continued, “We formed the VGTA to compete with other areas that are aggressively marketing to the gay community. When you go to the Montreal website, there’s a button for ‘Montreal, Gay to Z.’ Florida cities like Miami/Ft. Lauderdale and Key West are marketing to lgbs. Philadelphia has \$900,000 to market to us [over three years] – and those are [local or state] government funds. We businesspeople have to somehow compete.”

The association’s main goal is to recruit more members from throughout Vermont. “We’ve got 30 members, we’d like to have 100.” Publicity costs money, he noted, and the more members who contribute, the more publicity they can generate. Membership costs \$150 per year. ▼