

# Beth Stroud Continues Fight

## Former Minister Will Appeal Methodist Church's Decision

**G**ermantown, PA – Beth Stroud, who was stripped of her ministerial credentials by a United Methodist Church court in December for being an avowed and non-celibate lesbian, has decided to appeal her case to a panel of the Northeastern Jurisdiction, which covers twelve states plus the District of Columbia. According to a report in the Gay City News, the appeal process will begin in May.

Stroud said on her website that the decision was arrived at thoughtfully, and that her appeal is "a worthwhile step that could help keep an important discussion

alive in The United Methodist Church" over the status of homosexuals within the church's membership.

Stroud was found guilty by a 13-member panel of being "an avowed practicing homosexual" on December 2. The next day, the same jury decided her penalty: removal from the ministry. Her local congregation, however, has kept Stroud on the job as a lay minister.

*Gay City News* reported that Stroud's appeal would be based on two factors in her trial and penalty: first, that the presiding minister excluded from the

panel any members who could not in principle accede to the United Methodist Church law barring practicing homosexuals from the ministry; second that the law barring gay and lesbian ministers is superseded by other sections of the constitution and discipline of the church regarding inclusion and affirmations of the sacred worth of all persons.

A third possible area of appeal was that presiding retired Bishop Joseph Yeakel did not allow Stroud to cite the finding of a Seattle Methodist church court in the case of openly lesbian Rev. Karen Damman, who was judged

not guilty and allowed to retain her credentials.

The Northeastern Jurisdiction could uphold the Pennsylvania Conference Court's decision, order a retrial in Pennsylvania, or refer questions on interpretation to the United Methodist national Judicial Council. Regardless of the outcome, it seems a foregone conclusion that the issue of lesbian, gay, and transgender people's inclusion in Christian church membership and authority will garner attention across the nation. ▼

## 135 Pearl Needs Help

**B**urlington – Robert Toms, proprietor of the gay-identified bar 135 Pearl has asked his communities for help to keep the bar open.

"The Smoking ban has hurt – not just us but the whole town," said Toms, citing that along with a downswing in the economy.

Toms said the bar and building have been on the market since last year, and that he wants to "pass the torch" to someone who will continue its ties to the community.

He identifies the bar as "a safe place for everybody," rather than as a gay bar.

Toms said small business loans are unavailable as lenders are leery of liquor liability. ▼

# Farrell to Resign from VT CARES

## Decision Not Linked To Changes in CDC Funding, says director

**B**urlington – In furtherance of what might be considered a slightly early New Year's resolution, Vermont CARES director Kendall Farrell sent a letter to her colleagues on December 29 announcing her intention to resign from the non-profit AIDS services and prevention agency. Her resignation will become effective in May.

Farrell has been working with Vermont CARES for about

nine years, the last three as director. "It is just time for me to see what other potential opportunities there might be," said Farrell in a phone interview. Asked if she had something else in mind, she laughed and said, "No, actually I plan to take the summer off."

Farrell said she knew when she signed on that it was a commitment to stay through the financial decision-making that

resulted in the agency's opting out of state-administered federal prevention funding.

"The agency's funding is stable, our programs are in a good place, it just seemed like this was a good time to leave," Farrell said. In connection to the prevention-funding controversy, Farrell said that one staff member's position had been cut that would have been funded through the CDC, but the staff mem-

ber had decided to leave even before the decision was made.

The director denied that her decision to resign was related to the agency's opting out of federal funding through the Vermont Department of Health for prevention services. In mid-September, Farrell announced in press releases and a full-page ad in the local weekly that the agency would not apply for AIDS prevention funding from the

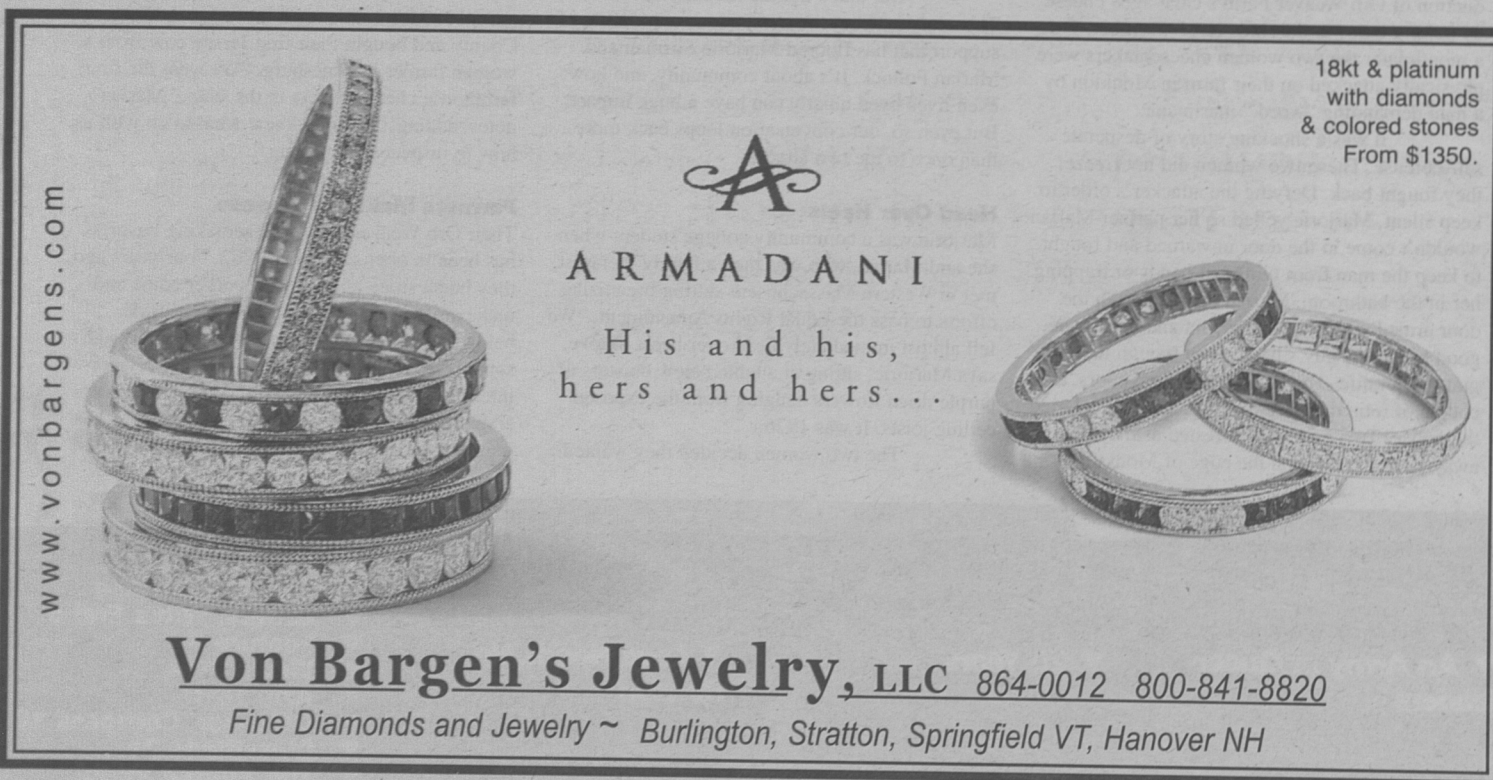
CDC through the Vermont Department of Health. The decision reflected the agency's concerns about restrictive programmatic requirements normed on big-city populations and intrusive data-gathering attached as "strings" to the funding, as well as the substitution of abstinence materials for prevention education and undermining the message that condoms are effective. Vermont CARES' announcement was timed to immediately precede the agency's AIDS Walk annual fundraiser and to encourage wider participation and additional donations.

"The income from the AIDS Walk was not what we had hoped for," Farrell admitted. "But the turnout was incredible. The AIDS Walk has become more of an awareness-raising event than a fundraiser. We are prepared for a decline in funds from this activity."

Farrell added, "The Champ Ride has actually become our biggest fundraiser. A couple of riders raise a huge amount, which is incredibly helpful. But the average amount raised per rider is about \$200." The one-day June Champ Ride receives significant corporate support in the form of in-kind donations, Farrell indicated.

At the time of our interview, the Vermont CARES board of directors had not yet met to plan their recruitment search, but it is likely to be national in scope.

"It sounds pat, but I have mixed emotions about leaving," Farrell said. "I love Vermont CARES and the volunteers. I will remain involved." ▼



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