

## HIV Prevention Grants

As the leaders of an organization whose leading principles include the fight to end injustice we would like to point out that there are many more issues with the recent Vermont Department of Health (DoH) funding decisions than were outlined in Ric Kadour's article "Vermont Health Dept. Announces HIV Prevention Grants."

First, it is incorrect that Outright Vermont receives funding under the "Heterosexuals at Increased Risk" category due to federal restrictions. There are no federal restrictions, rather the DoH claims that the Vermont HIV Prevention Community Planning Group defined heterosexuals as including queer youth, and the DoH must act accordingly.

Beyond the obvious problem in considering queer youth heterosexual, during the recent review process an External Grant Reviewer criticized, and likely penalized, Outright for applying in this category. Not only was Outright hurt by the perception that we were culturally incompetent, but by being in the heterosexual category Outright was forced to compete with a greater number of programs and for a smaller amount of funds – and were actually prohibited from competing against more appropriate organizations.

Focusing only on gay and bi men, the article omits many other questionable decisions the DoH made in allocating this funding and unfairly targets other organizations who received funding. Attacking the Vermont Harm Reduction Coalition's application by citing numerous negative reviewer remarks and not providing the same treatment to others is misleading. A similar reading of R.U.1.2?'s review reveals comments such as "are we giving them special treatment?", "[their program is] a real stretch from POL model," "Several concerns about this piece [chatroom organizing]," and "Budget? Very concerning."

We do not intend to single any one application out, only to point out that concerns were raised by multiple applications. A fair hand would have been appreciated in [Kadour's] rendering of which programs deserved funding. In addition, the Harm Reduction Coalition applied under a different category of funds, hardly making fair the comparison that gay men are losing HIV prevention money to IDUs.

Criticism of the DoH's application process would have also been warranted. Further exploration of ACoRN's review makes known that the agency appears to not have received funding because they couldn't present their program well on paper. The DoH made it clear that this would be a competitive process, but given the size of our state and the agency's history providing prevention services, it seems illogical that their writing skills or lack thereof would justify such a drastic cut in funding.

Other glaring issues that have not yet been brought to light include the nearly complete absence of funds to support people of color and a gross discrepancy in funding versus population and HIV incidence (programs in Brattleboro received only slightly less than Burlington). In spite of the Department's claims that this was an objective process, funding decisions appear to be based less on the application's scores and more on personal conjecture.

The queer community should certainly be concerned about our treatment by the DoH and we should do so in solidarity with other communities who were similarly affected. Although it is presented as a "done deal" we encourage everyone with concerns about the process to raise them with the DoH HIV/AIDS Division and the Commissioner of Health. Comments from both the internal and external review process as well as each application's scores are public information available from the DoH HIV/AIDS Bureau by request.

Editor Euan Bear hit the nail on the head in her editorial stating, "The state Department of Health needs to recognize and serve the gay community in proportion to its health needs and not in lockstep with the ideology of an anti-gay federal Administration." The DoH's allocation of public funds seems to have done just that.

**Kate Jerman & Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak**  
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*Writer Ric Kadour responds: Thank you for contributing to what could easily be an exhausting, nauseating list of complaints against VDH's allocation of HIV prevention funds.*

*While all grant applications received some negative comments, only the Vermont Harm*

*Reduction Coalition was faulted for glaring ethical violations such as violating the confidentiality of their clients. VHRC was also the only organization to receive more funds to do less work.*

*Furthermore, solidarity is a two-way street. Just as gay men ceded a portion of the HIV prevention pie eight years ago to other communities, perhaps it's time for injection drug users to recognize that it is they who are now benefiting from the unjust antics of the Vermont Department of Health.*

## Vulture Fan

I really enjoyed the 'manifestations' presented by Anne Moore in her recent Culture Vulture column. I enjoyed her humor so much that I passed the article on to a number of non-regular OITM readers, all of whom enjoyed it as much as I.

I would just like to say that, while the movie [she imagined] may fall under the "romantic comedy" title, one of her predictions has come true, albeit in a small way. I'm referring to James Gandolfini's role in the Hollywood blockbuster *The Mexican*, where he plays a gay hit man.

While it is not a leading role, and while not an essential story in the plot, the *Sopranos'* leading man does an amazing job of breaking through typecasting.

**Cindy Marcelle**  
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## John Paul & George

"Pope John Paul II put lobbying against gay marriage at the top of the Vatican's agenda for 2005." He put this over peace on Earth between Christians, Muslims and Jews. He put this over doing more for the millions of hungry people around the Globe. Is it just me or is something wrong with this picture?

President Bush at the peak of his reelection campaign at a White House Press conference stated a need for an amendment to the US Constitution to federalize marriage laws as a means to insure an end to gay marriages. Mr. Bush put his reelection in the hands of radical fundamentalist Christian beliefs, with his "Family Values" campaign. "Family Values" appears to mean "opposed to gay marriages and woman's rights to have birth control." These two issues carried him into being re-elected. The war in Iraq, the economy were not all that important! Is it me or is something wrong here?

So the spiritual leader of the Catholic Church, and the President of the United States agree, that preventing gay marriages is the top of the agenda of needs for 2005. [While] the Pope and the President can never stop two men or two women from falling in love, they do have the power though to make their lives difficult by promoting hate and discriminating laws. On a personal note, I am a trans-woman. We are a

minority of people born with intersex conditions, or with gender dysphoria. We have surgeries as children, and as adults, some wanted surgeries, some not wanted. Can the pope and the president tell me whom I can fall in love with and marry?

**Janice Josephine Carney**  
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## At Witt's End Leah Wittenberg

