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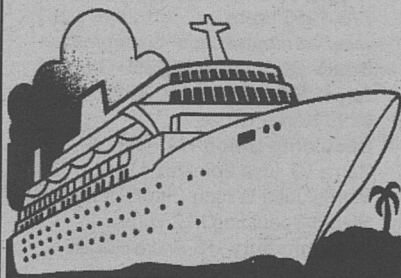
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## Buster and the L-Word

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couple of chances to really stand up and to try to make change and to show our children that there are things worth shouting about." Although initially the kids were devastated, they've since been saturated with support including e-mails, gifts, letters, phone calls, and even ice cream from Ben & Jerry's. A bear from a Pennsylvania family arrived with a note explaining that he was to hug in case the burden of all this was too much.

Pike wonders why we can't teach our youngsters not to fear or hate things that are different. "I wish people were willing to say to their children, 'I may not approve [of homosexuality], but there are many kinds of families.' Don't tell your children that I don't exist and that my daughter's life is invalid." That's why Buster was such a great fit with this Vermont family.

Buster has visited Orthodox Jewish kids in Manhattan, a Kurdish girl in Nashville, and a Mormon family in Salt Lake City. He chased a "swamp monster" in the Bayou, played with Pentecostal Christians in South Carolina and has visited Hmong children and kids who live with their grandparents. At each stop, he sees the world through the eyes of a child.

In addition to nationwide attention, Pike's family has received local support. The Vermont General Assembly sent letters signed by over 60 legislators to PBS and Vermont Public Television strongly objecting to the Secretary of Education's censorship. And among the most supportive was the response from VPT. As soon as the episode was available, Pike was assured that "Sugartime!" would be aired.

Ann Curran, the community relations director at VPT, remarked, "We've never backed down from anything and we're not likely to succumb to pressure." Although contrary to PBS's action, it was a "pretty quick decision" to

run the show. Asked about reports that VPT had previously been pressured not to film and air a program on civil unions, Curran said the station has never been pressured directly by the Bush Administration.

What will become of Buster? The U.S. House of Representatives just passed the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act of 2005. This measure will allow the FCC to levy fines of up to \$500,000 without warning if a broadcast is considered "indecent." If our gay and lesbian families are labeled indecent, as Secretary

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Ann Curran,  
Vermont Public Television**

Spellings implied, Buster might disappear – or be forced to limit his visits only to the Cleavers. ▼

Postcards From Buster's *Sugartime!* episode will air on March 23 and 3:30 pm on Vermont Public Television. Assistant Editor Susan McMillan lives in Mallett's Bay with her partner and two four-footed friends.