

Guess Who's Coming to the Mayor's Cup?

Westboro Baptist Church to Picket Plattsburgh Churches

BY CYNTHIA POTTS

Plattsburgh – The Mayor's Cup Festival is an annual week-long event featuring a sailboat regatta, live bands, carnival rides, and fireworks. People come from miles around to enjoy the family fun.

Little do they know that they're coming to "a sicko UnAmerican hotbed of antiChristic Sodomite Filth" – but Reverend Fred Phelps is on his way to tell everyone just that. He's announced that he and members of the Westboro Baptist Church are coming from Topeka, Kansas, to spew his rhetoric at Mayor Dan Stewart and the Plattsburgh community.

According to local human rights activist Harold Brohinsky, Phelps' visit was inspired by an off-the-cuff remark during a city council meeting. A local citizen had requested that the \$350 fee for booths at the Mayor's Cup be waived for political groups. Mayor Stewart, who is gay, stated that the Mayor's Cup was designed as a family affair, focused on good, clean fun, and not a political event. "He said 'You wouldn't want Fred Phelps up here' – which Fred Phelps found out almost instantly."

Phelps responded by sending what Brohinsky termed "a real ugly fax" to the Mayor's office, followed by an announcement of his intent to come to Plattsburgh for the

Mayor's Cup. Denied a permit to set up shop during the festival, Phelps plans to picket area churches. The churches have been targeted for what Phelps termed "their abysmal failure" to condemn homosexuality.

"Support for Mayor Stewart is almost absolute," Brohinsky said. "He's never made an issue out of being gay. He was elect-

have to be gay to join us, you don't have to be Christian, you don't have to have any particular viewpoint," explained MacLeod. The group has set up a pledge drive on their website (www.plattsburghforpeace.com) where people can pledge money for every minute Phelps and his cohorts are in Plattsburgh. Funds collected will be donated to the

Additionally, they're putting together "Art Attack" as a creative response to Phelps' visit. Artists in every medium are invited to donate works of art to be sold during the weeklong festival. Proceeds from the sale will be donated along with monies raised by the pledge drive. Additionally, a film festival is being planned, with a focus on diversity-themed films. At this time, the Art Attack and Film Festival are looking for a venue, as the North Country Cultural Center for the Arts has declined to host the event.

When asked why, Executive Director Susan Daul replied, "We support the Mayor wholeheartedly. However, our mission is to bring art to the community. To do that we must remain non-partisan. We will not support any side of this issue."

City administrators have taken the position that Phelps' group can come to the area to have their protest, but that they must abide by the law while doing so. "Let 'em come, make their noise, make fools of themselves, and go home," Brohinsky concluded. "There's no sense getting in a spite fight with a bunch of lunatics!" ▼

Cynthia Potts is a freelance writer who lives with her family and an increasing menagerie of companion animals in Ellenburg, NY

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ed – and re-elected – for one reason, and one reason only: he's a good mayor!"

Plattsburgh's Interfaith Council of Churches and local peace activists have met to plan their response to Phelps' presence. A group of activists, led by Amy MacLeod, Rebecca Leonard, and Andy MacDougall, have created Plattsburgh for Peace, an eclectic mix of citizens united in their desire to keep Phelps away from Plattsburgh.

"People should know that you don't

Southern Poverty Law Center, the Interfaith Food Shelf, and other charitable organizations. Details of other planned activities will be posted to the group's website as they become available.

"We want to deter people from getting into a screaming match with Phelps or staging counter-protests," said Amy MacLeod. "Instead, we want to be constructive and peaceful, and add to the Mayor's cup festivities."

CR Rates Condoms

Burlington – While the federal government is busy erasing condom information from its websites, trust *Consumer Reports* to step in with a rating of 23 brands and models. The February issue contained a report on their tests of 120 samples of each model for strength by inflating the condoms until they burst, at an average of 38 liters of air or more.

Notably, the worst two models were freebies Planned Parenthood gives away, 15 percent of which broke before reaching 25 liters of air. The two to avoid, says *CR* are the "Honeydew" and "Assorted Colors" models. The "Lollipop," packaged on a stick and also offered by Planned Parenthood, came in 14th in the ratings, still within the "excellent" range.

A few models ran larger than the standard size listed: two Durex models, larger sizes of TheyFit, and (surprise!) Trojan Magnum. Seven condoms, priced at 54 cents to a dollar apiece, received scores of 100, the top of the "excellent" range. They included two Durex models, a Lifestyles, a TheyFit, and three Trojan models. One Durex model, "High Sensation Lubricated," fell on the border between "good" and "very good." Vermont CARES offers

condoms from Durex and Lifestyles in its prevention services. "We get our condoms through the Vermont Department of Health," said Kelly Brigham, a program specialist in prevention at the AIDS prevention and service agency.

The Burlington office of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England did not respond to phone messages in time for publication.

The report noted the disappearance of condom info from

federal health websites and supplied the standard information: don't use lambskin because the pores are too large to prevent disease transmission; use only water-based lubricants; don't use expired condoms; be careful about long-term storage; if you're allergic to latex, use polyurethane or other synthetic condoms; don't re-use condoms. For other useful condom info, the article suggests checking out the American Social Health Association's website: www.ashastd.org. ▼

Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: R.U.1.2? Offers Hypnosis to Help Quit

Burlington – Peer Outreach Worker Sergio Corrales has smoked cigarettes off and on during his life, and now that he's responsible for the R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center's Smoking Cessation Program, he's even more serious about quitting, setting a good example.

For his second set of support group meetings for those who want help getting out from under their tobacco habits, Corrales has corralled help from certified hypnosis practitioner Betty Moore-Hafter. Moore-

Hafter is part of Rising Sun Healing, with offices on King Street.

Moore-Hafter spoke with traces of her North Carolina upbringing showing. "The first thing I usually do is teach people what hypnosis is and what it isn't," she said in a phone interview. Forget about those old stage shows – healing hypnotherapy has more in common with guided meditation. It makes use of what Moore-Hafter called "inner mind."

"Smoking is a psychological, mental, and emotional addiction

as well as a physical one," she explained. Hypnosis creates a deeply relaxed state – think warm beach, sound of waves – where the subconscious can receive different instructions that will counter the habitual and harmful behavior.

The group class is more of an introduction to tools people can use to change how their mind works, Moore-Hafter said, and more intensive work is possible in individual sessions. Typical stop-smoking work takes six sessions.

"Some people walk out of that session and never smoke again," Moore-Hafter said. For others, "seeds are planted, and they will quit when the time is right. There will be no pressure to quit that night during the class."

Space is limited, and registration is required. The two-session class is free, thanks to a grant from the Vermont Department of Health's Tobacco Control Program and Moore-Hafter's donation of her time and expertise. Moore-Hafter, whose

daughter is a lesbian, said she wanted to volunteer her services as a way of giving back to LGBT community organizations. ▼

The Stop Smoking Class will be held on April 21 (6-9 pm) and April 28 (6-8 pm) at the Center, 34 Elmwood Ave. Burlington. Call or email the Center for more information or to register: 802-860-7812, sergio@ru12.org. Or call or email Betty Moore-Hafter: 802-860-7286; betty@risingsunhealing.com.