grams that primarily focuses on HIV prevention, but is slated to include a greater emphasis on lesbian and bisexual women's health (as soon as funding becomes available), and working with the transgender community on educating health care providers.

"It's a brand new position, so it can mean a lot of different things," said Lipensky.
"The majority of the stuff is going to be HIV prevention, education, outreach."

Peggy Luhrs is an Americorps-VISTA volunteer who was hired as R.U.1.2?'s cyber-center coordinator. She is currently researching programming and funding opportunities for women's health initiatives at the center. Luhrs is the center's only paid lesbian staff member.

"I hope at R.U.1.2? we'll emulate, to some degree, what has already been done here, which is speaking to providers about being culturally competent; to do a lesbian online health digest; to set up support groups; and do education," said Luhrs. "I would like to focus on wellness, not just pathology."

Lipensky also plans to focus on wellness.

"I really want to be able to incorporate other issues of health and wellness," said Lipensky. "I have already been in contact with a yoga person to come into the center once or twice a month for free. I want to get that up and running. As the warm weather approaches, I want to see some more outdoor physical activities. It's going to be challenging. I don't know if there'll be a lot of interest, but I hope to generate interest. It can be used as physical activity and as a social event as well."

The focus beyond pathology and including wellness is a step in the right direction for R.U.1.2?. Health programming in Vermont has largely been limited to responding to particular issues such as HIV or domestic violence. The effect of issue-oriented programming is that queer people are treated as vectors for disease transmission or as potential victims.

Wellness programs, which promote the acquisition of healthy habits, go a little further in acknowledging whole people, but are often still about pathology. Physical exercise becomes heart disease awareness. Nutrition education becomes obesity prevention.

There is nothing wrong per se with this approach, but lacking is a deeper, more fundamental cultural change. The poor health indicators of queer people cannot be explained by the lack of gay-friendly doctors and rainbow-colored anti-smoking posters.

North American health educators and activists have been working for nearly ten years now to build a queer health movement that addresses not only the lack of public health infrastructure accessible to queer people – health departments that track queer health data and funding streams that address our needs – but also the individual and social dynamics of queer people that result in us having poorer health indicators than the general population.

The degree to which R.U.1.2? can embrace the whole health approach will be the degree to which they are successful building healthier communities in Vermont.

Recent developments are a step forward. ▼

Ric Kasini Kadour is a freelance writer and the moderator of the Gay Men's Health Summit eList, an online discussion of gay men's health issues. He lives in Montreal. if you've never been tested, or if you've had unprotected sex or shared a n

## It's better to know



## YOU CAN GET HEALTH CARE AND TREATMENT IF YOU TEST POSITIVE.

For information on HIV testing:

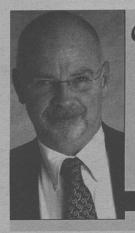
- call toll-free from in Vermont
   800-882-AIDS (800-882-2437)\*
- for hearing impaired TTY access 800-319-3141\*
- or visit us on-line at http://www.healthyvermonters.info
- \* The Vermont AIDS Hotline is open weekdays, 8:30–4:30. (For information 24/7,call the National AIDS Hotline 800-342-2437.)

## **Take the TEST. Take CONTROL.**





St test, now is the time to get an hiv test, if you've never been tested, or if  $_{\sim}$ 



## Conley Country

FROM THE CONNECTICUT RIVER
TO THE CANADIAN BORDER
REAL ESTATE AND INSURANCE

179 Main Street \* Derby Vermont 05829 phone (802) 766-2401 \* 800-243-2401 fax 766-4731 \* e-mail-mick@realestatevermont.com

Log onto
www.realestatevermont.com
to view our current listings.

**OUT in the MOUNTAINS**