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Statement of Purpose
The purpose of Out In The Mountains [OITM] is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

Editorial Policy
We will consider for publication any material that broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of Out In The Mountains. This paper, as a non-profit organization, cannot and will not endorse any political candidates. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

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editorial

Get on the Bus

It has been a long time now since AIDS was the tragedy holding us together and tearing us apart. Since the pandemic has reached across the globe mostly in heterosexual interactions, there has been a concerted effort to divorce the gay community from the image of the disease.

Okay, there were good reasons for that, then. It was the second phase, after the beautiful boys died, the young men at too early an age, their needs neglected by a government and corporations too willing to look the other way because, after all, it was just queers and druggies and they "deserved" their fate.

Now AIDS is a "manageable" disease, like diabetes they say. Well, not exactly. Few diabetics are fired for their condition. Few are taunted or denied housing because of having a disease. But despite continuing discrimination, HIV/AIDS now seems to get merely a more – or less – sympathetic shrug of the shoulders, even within our communities.

But there's no reason now to let our communities' health needs, or our risk to contract HIV/AIDS, be ignored and made invisible once again. Yet it's happening everywhere from Burlington to Brattleboro to San Francisco to Kansas City to Houston and Miami to Washington, DC. Everywhere programs are being turned away from the proven safer sex, condoms, and harm reduction strategies that

have lowered the numbers of new infections over the past decade, and toward ideologically driven "abstinence only until marriage" messages, gay men's needs for information and assistance are being made invisible once again.

Everywhere that programs are being cut because the Ryan White Care Act has not been fully funded, gay men's needs are being ignored once again. Soon, there will almost certainly be no funds for case management, to pay the salary of the person who helps clients actually get the services and medical attention they need. Soon the pool of ADAP funds – providing access to expensive drug treatments that are keeping alive people living with HIV/AIDS and helping them be engaged in their communities – are likely to shrink again. These cuts leave more of our neighbors, friends, and lovers to fend for themselves in an often unfriendly healthcare system (that has become a nearly wholly-owned

subsidiary of the pharmaceutical industry), to become ill again, to teeter on the brink of health crisis after health crisis.

Unless ...

Unless we all get on the Bus.

The Bus is just the most visible and concrete effort of the Campaign to End AIDS. Nine Buses will be wending their way toward Washington DC to make

clear, practical, and do-able demands of legislators and pharmaceutical CEOs. One of those nine Buses is leaving from St. Mike's College on Friday, September 30 (it's actually an RV, but it might as well be a bus), carrying Vermonters who have HIV/AIDS, Vermonters who work in agencies that serve PWAs and try to prevent the spread of the disease, and Vermonters who work on state and national policies that affect the agencies, their employees, and the people they serve.

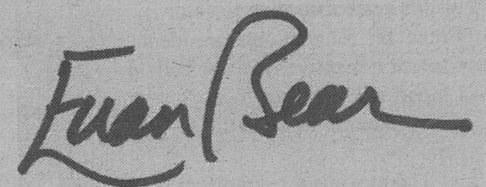
The Bus is actually a caravan. And we can all join it: by supporting Vermont CARES, ACoRN, the AIDS Project of Southern Vermont, the Vermont People With AIDS Coalition, and other non-profit organizations with our dollars and our volunteer time and energy.

We can join it by writing letters to the mainstream press and our legislators protesting the underfunding of the Ryan White Care Act and the subversion of prevention funds from proven strategies into impotent compulsory marriage programs.

We can join it by paying attention when a friend tosses off a remark about his lost weekend on meth.

We can join it by spending a day – or even part of a day – with the actual caravan at its stops in Johnson, Hardwick, Montpelier, and White River on September 30.

Get on the Bus: our lives are still at stake. ▼



Euan Bear

Information on the Vermont Campaign to End AIDS (C2EA) is available via email to vtc2ea@yahoo.com. Check out the national campaign at www.C2EA.org.