

letters

Open Letter

Dear Community Members and friends at the Vermont Unity Project,

We are writing to offer our deep and sincere thanks for the many hours of hard work put in by the staff and volunteers of the Vermont Unity Project and its host institutions, the Vermont Community Foundation and the Samara Foundation. \$200,000 has now been granted to support LGBTQ organizing across the State of Vermont benefiting groups both large and small. Facilitating this tremendous outpouring of community support is no small task and we are honored to have been among the beneficiaries of such generosity.

Our four organizations, Mountain Pride Media, Outright Vermont, R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center and SafeSpace, used Vermont Unity Project funding as a great catalyst for building a strategic, collaborative partnership. During the first year of grantmaking, we were awarded a \$12,000.00 grant to study the feasibility of bringing our four organizations together in a closer relationship.

Each organization approached over 25 diverse stakeholders seeking feedback advice, reflection and wisdom on the history of glbtq organizing in Vermont, the culture of our four organizations, and their own vision of our future work. Our boards of directors and staff actively participated in discussions ranging from improving the effectiveness of programmatic collaboration, to joint fundraising opportunities, to shared cooperative space to (at its most radical) full merger of some or all of our organizations. In this way a feasibility study was invaluable, allowing us to hear from distinct voices, explore long-held assumptions, and gather insights that no one group could have alone. The feasibility study process was rich and full of life with a passionate commitment to our institutions from virtually everyone we spoke with.

We know that the leaders of

our four organizations have come away from this process with a much deeper understanding of the needs of our constituents and the ways in which our joint collaborations can improve our success at meeting our missions and reaching our goals. All of us came away from the feasibility study process with a deep commitment to continued work together to improve our individual effectiveness as organizations and our joint work in partnership for lgbtq equality and liberation.

While we are certainly disappointed that our strategic partnership grant proposal was not funded for a second year by the Vermont Unity Project, by no means does this end our work together. All four of our organizations were awarded individual Unity Project program grants and there are additional foundations that we may approach in the future to continue the work we began with last year's feasibility study. In the meantime we will continue to meet, strategize and act to ensure that we are providing

the best possible organizing, education, advocacy, information, social and direct services to lgbtq Vermonters.

A link to the finished feasibility study, written by BHC Consulting, an independent firm, can be found on the website of R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center at www.ru12.org. We encourage all of our friends and neighbors to read the report and call us with any questions, feedback or suggestions for next steps. Thank you again to the staff and volunteers of the Vermont Unity Project. Your work has borne much fruit and we appreciate all that you have done for lgbtq Vermonters.

Brian Cote,
Mountain Pride Media

Kate Jerman,
Outright Vermont

Christopher Kaufman,
R.U.1.2? Queer Community Center

Kara DeLeonardis,
SafeSpace

Katrina Benefit

100% of the proceeds of my CD 3 Wishes will go to the American Red Cross. Along with many other artists, we have set up a page: www.cdbaby.com. So ya'll please buy lots of CDs cause 100% will go to American Red Cross to help the good people of New Orleans. Go to cdbaby.com, then click on the charity link.

I have friends there and do not know how they are doing. There is no communication. The people of New Orleans are some of the finest I have ever met. New Orleans was my home fer awhile. When I lived there I worked as a deck hand on the famous delta queen. So ya see I got a soft spot, wish I could donate a million bucks but fer now if ya'll could buy music off the charity list of musicians at cdbaby.com ... or stephpappas.com and hit my "disc" page, then that would be totally awesome!

Peace & love,
Cowboy Pappas
Burlington

Lesbian America the Beautiful

I am at this moment listening to Rev. George W. Bush lead the singing of "America the Beautiful" following his speech to the assembled in the National Cathedral in DC.

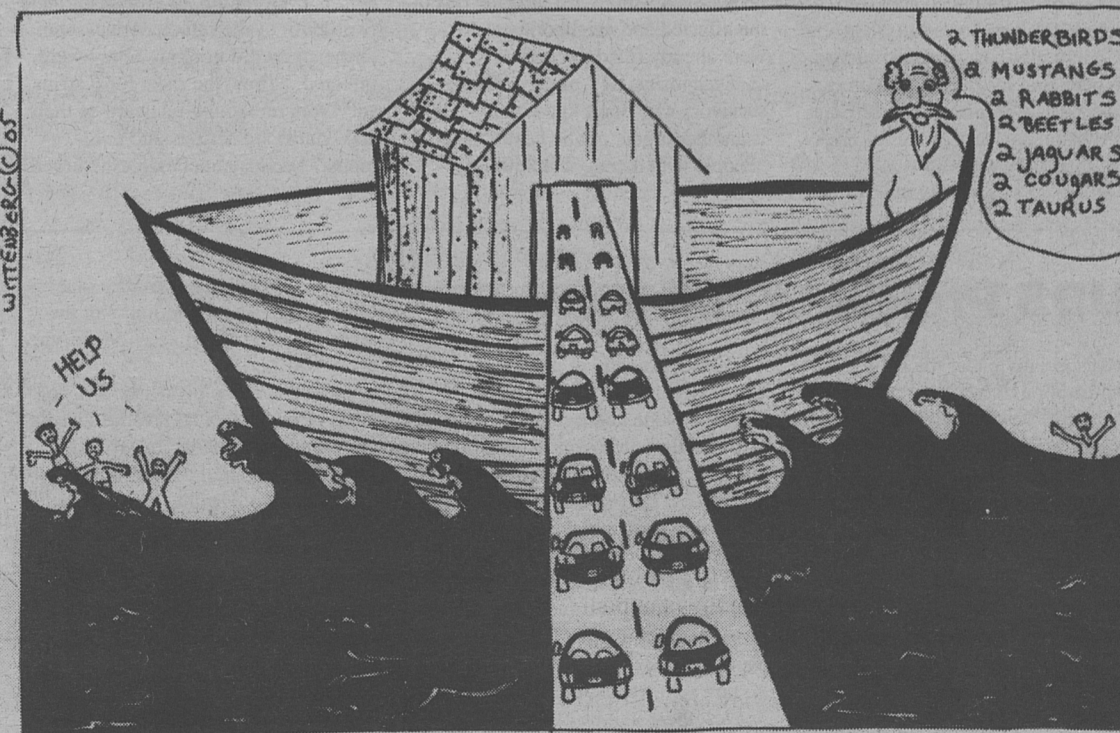
I found it very fascinating that this song — perhaps the most beloved of all of America's patriotic songs, was written by Katharine Lee Bates, the lesbian who wrote the words in her room at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs, after returning from a climb to the top of Pike's Peak just west of that community — has become useful to someone like George W. Bush. And, I wish I had some power to keep him from using it!! Grrr!! It is too good for him!

How can the lgbtq community ensure that the incongruity of Bush singing Bates' song at his prayer service and also striving to ensure that American citizens like this gifted lesbian cannot marry whomever they love, is brought to the attention of the people of the USA?

Bob Wolff
Randolph

At Witt's End

Leah Wittenberg



Riding From The City of New Orleans

CORRECTION

In an item in last month's Rest of the World on Iran's executions of teenagers for homosexuality and an allegedly bogus charge of rape, we wrote that the NGLTF and HRC had posted items on the situation on their websites. A representative of the NGLTF called us to insist that the group had *never* posted any such item, although she offered no documentation. If the item was in error, then we apologize for the error.