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Photos: pp. 1, 2, 3 Euan Bear; p. 6, top, Courtesy of Viking Adult; bottom, Courtesy of Eliza Haselton; p. 8 Courtesy of Photos.com; p. 14 Courtesy of Merle Exit; P. 15, Courtesy of Scott Sherman; p. 16, Courtesy Sacha Sacket.

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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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OUT in the Mountains (ISSN 1081-6562)

is published on the last Wednesday of each month by Mountain Pride Media, Inc. It is printed by BD Press of Fairfax, VT. The paper maintains offices at 34 Elmwood Ave in Burlington, Vermont. The bulk mail subscription rate is \$29 per year within the USA.

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www.mountainpridemedial.org is updated to include the current issue of OITM, generally by the 10th of each month, in our online archive. OITM is available in alternative formats upon request. OITM is printed on recycled newsprint containing 30% post-consumer and using 100% soy-based inks.

editorial

Counting Our Blessings

Mid-fall can be a hard time to count blessings, perhaps especially this fall: the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse seem to be riding through the world, bringing war, famine, pestilence and death. I have begun wondering whether the "hundredth monkey" of fundamentalism is bringing about Armageddon just by believing it to be so.

But all of the societies that celebrate at this time of year and thank whatever powers they worship have it right. In the evening of the year is the best time to count blessings, before night settles in. Realizing and appreciating what we've worked for and the gifts we've been given lights a candle through the dark time of winter, and makes our rejoicing in the dawn of spring more joyful.

It's an even better exercise for me: as a journalist, I'm usually much more attuned to what's wrong with the world than what's right. **Blessing:** We live in Vermont, which must legally treat lesbians and gay men as citizens with rights equal to those of any other state citizen.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where we have a vibrant, caring community of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender folk who continue to nurture our culture, honor our history, and work for a better future, often at cost to themselves in time, energy and money.

Blessing: We live in Vermont where allies care about our lives and put their concerns into action by supporting positive candidates, contacting legislators, writing letters, donating funds, and volunteering time.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where hurricanes are a relatively rare occurrence and when they do arrive, they are weaker than when they hit the South. Now *there's* a compensation for enduring the cold!

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where being gay or lesbian is becoming less of a badge of courage and more of a sim-

ple piece of data, like when we were born and what's our ethnic background.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, from where we watch the marriage equality struggles gain momentum, despite the mean spiritedness of right-wing politicians and mini-DOMAs.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where many people of faith apply their principles toward supporting equality and justice for us (as among all people), and where someone preaching on gay rights is more likely to be preaching in our favor than against us.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where our children of birth and choice are truly ours and cannot be taken away simply because of the gender of our partners.

Blessing, We live in Vermont, where the state university has led the way by legally recognizing a same-gender marriage performed in Canada.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, where autumn comes dressed in rainbow colors.

Blessing: We live in Vermont, and George W. Bush has only three more years in office and cannot be re-elected. Which is not to say we have no challenges.

We live in Vermont where a laggard legislature still has not passed a gender identity and expression law, despite repeated prodding, a gay House Judiciary Committee chairman, and a legislature with majorities in both houses who understand fairness and equality.

We live in Vermont where anti-gay, anti-lesbian, and anti-trans violence from within our families of origin and our neighborhoods mars our lives, and where the violence we grew up with too often shapes our relationships.

We live in Vermont, where it takes two jobs for one person to survive, the jobs are far from affordable housing, the cost of gasoline is rising, and the governor does not believe in mass transit. Where too many people this winter will

be choosing between keeping their water pipes from freezing and buying groceries, and where some of those facing that choice will be members of our communities.

We live in Vermont, where several of our community organizations are looking at deep deficit holes carpeted in rainbow red ink. Where some of the staff are sharing high-level skills working for poverty wages. Where folks with more than they need could dig a little deeper and give a little more.

Then again, it's a blessing that we live in Vermont, where they likely will, when asked.

Take a few minutes this month to just sit and appreciate whatever blessings you might have. Then go share with someone else who might have fewer blessings to count.

Among the blessings I count are home, family (including the four-footed members), friends, meaningful work, and collegial relationships of great mutual respect and even sometimes warmth within the community.

And, I must admit that sometimes even the challenges can be a blessing. ▼

A special THANK YOU goes to Assistant Editor Susan McMillan for stepping in solo on proofreading day for the October issue, allowing me to be in Chicago at a GLBT journalists' convention. Usually there are two of us; for October she proofread and took care of all the last-minute jobs alone. It's an awesome responsibility. Thanks, Susan!

We live in Vermont, where people of faith support equality and justice, and someone preaching on gay rights is more likely to be preaching in our favor than against us.