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VERMONT'S VOICE FOR THE LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY

# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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## Stepping Up, Stepping Out

### Samara's New President Meets the Community

BY EUAN BEAR

NORWICH/BURLINGTON – After a four-month search, the Samara Foundation has found its new chief executive. Suzanne Stofflet became the president of the foundation as of January 1, 2006, although she spent much of December meeting nonprofit organization directors and working with former Executive Director Bill Lippert. With the new title “Founder and Senior Foundation Officer,” Lippert is staying with the foundation as his legislative duties representing Hinesburg and chairing the House Judiciary Committee allow.

The Samara Foundation is Vermont's only charitable foundation directed toward lgbt nonprofit organizations and community groups, and the only one among 17 such groups nationwide to cover an entire state.

The 59-year-old Stofflet met with *OITM* last month for a get-acquainted interview. The first thing I noticed about her even before we met was her email address moniker: Paladin.

“Perhaps you know what a ‘paladin’ is. He’s an independent person who rides in, fixes a problem, and then rides on. As a

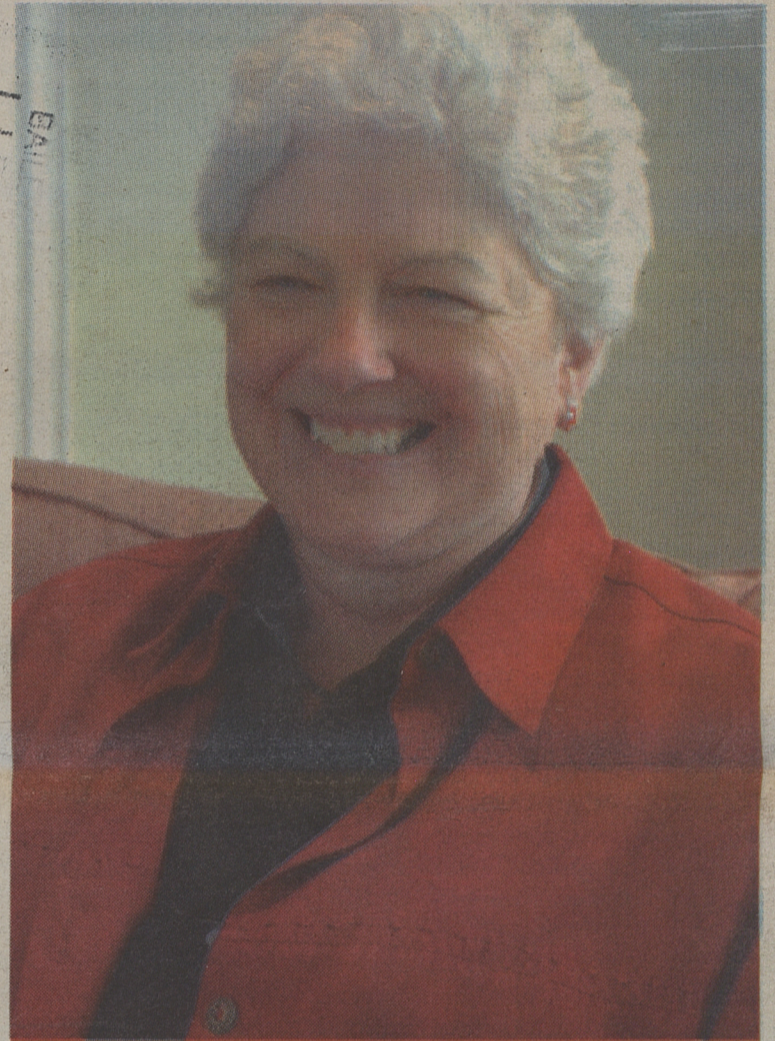
consultant, that’s what I did – ride in, identify and fix a problem or capitalize on an opportunity, then leave – for 25 years, with a few interruptions for staff work. Being an outsider gets lonely.” Then there was that TV western (*Have Gun Will Travel*) that ran from 1957 to 1963, starring Richard Boone as Paladin.

She’s got a very deep background in nonprofit development, dating from 1977, she said, even earlier if you count a job she had with Fairleigh Dickinson University. What she doesn’t have is a deep background of activism in lgbt communities. “This will be a steep learning curve,” she granted. “I’ve been on the periphery of the gay community. On the other hand, I offer a perspective that’s

board, specifically John [Crane, chairman of the Samara board of directors], but also the whole board. I’ve worked with boards for 30 years, and when you find one with as many assets as Samara’s board has ... they are hardworking, wise, and risk-takers, too. They’re funny, they have a great sense of humor. That impressed me.

“This is really an opportunity for me to make a big difference,” she concluded.

Stofflet and her partner Mimi Emerson, a continuing care manager at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, were joined in civil union in 2001 after 12 years together. Stofflet has a 28-year-old daughter, Kate Rappaport, who lives in Brooklyn, NY, and she and Mimi together adopted



**Samara's Paladin, Suzanne Stofflet, steps up to direct the LGBT foundation, bringing deep experience in fundraising.** between the safer option of staying small and “taking a risk and going bigger.” “Thinking big which to engage in fundraising untapped resources who want to support organizations addressing

**“We should be infrastructure-light. Every dollar I don’t spend on infrastructure is one I can give away!”**

– SUZANN STOFFLER, PRESIDENT OF SAMARA FOUNDATION OF VERMONT

outside the box, more of an external voice. But it’s too soon to make sweeping observations.”

Asked why she was stepping into this central role in the community now, she said, “The first thing that drew me was the

their 11-year-old daughter Sukie Emerson.

Stofflet and Samara Board Chairman John Crane (who participated in the interview via speakerphone) agreed that the foundation’s main choice was

aligned with my priorities,” Stofflet said. Crane characterized the foundation as having reached a plateau they wanted to get off. “The Unity Project showed us the depth of unmet needs in our communities and new areas in

those needs,” Crane added.

Stofflet said she is excited to be working with Lippert, who has deep contacts within our communities.

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p. 2. With ex-MassEquality pro Marty Rouse on board, HRC shifts focus to the states for marriage battles and more.

▼ **No Nerd** p. 6. There's a queer geek running PCC, but you'd never guess if you met him on the street. Jay Schuster, who was once an Explorer Scout, is our January Community Profile.

▼ **More Hope** p.16. Gus Nasmith reminds us of what's helping in Africa: beads instead of breaking rocks earns more money to support AIDS moms and their families so kids can go to school.

▼ **OYZ!** p.17. Check out the *OITM* Youth Zone premiere by high school junior Will Holden. It's a great beginning to our showcase for young queers with talents in verbiage, arts, design and more.

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