

# vermont news

## COMMUNITY

### Faerie Construction Moves Ahead

BY JAY SCHUSTER

CHESTER — In the years since their 1997 purchase of 150 heavily wooded Grafton hillside acres, the members of Faerie Camp Destiny have been slowly progressing toward their goal of creating, according to their bylaws, a "Faerie sanctuary which would operate as a cultural learning center and spiritual oasis for those who call themselves Radical Faeries."

That original purchase grew to 166 acres with the 2002 purchase of an adjacent parcel in Chester, Vermont, containing a popular, secluded swimming hole.

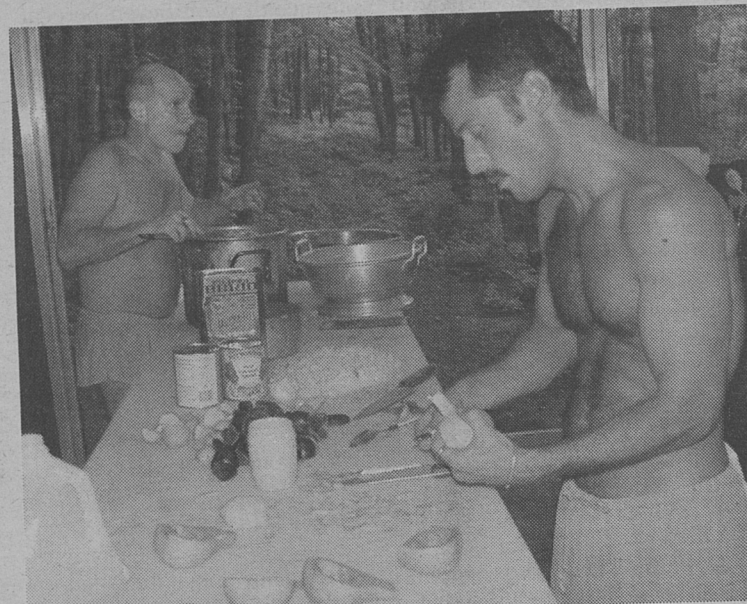
Faerie Cypress says, "In the eight years since we bought the land, we've improved roads and hiking trails, installed fires pits for various community functions and brought all kinds of educational and theatrical programming into the woods with us."

Gatherings at the camp are held regularly throughout the summer. "We usually have thirty-five people camping, and another thirty people, of all ages, shapes, and shades, drop by for dinner or a ritual."

Gatherings on the land involve communal meals and activities. The highlight of the annual Lammas gathering, in the first weekend of August, is often a theater production. Past performances have included *Gilgamesh*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *The Little Prince*, each with its own perspective on faeries and faerie culture. Think camp — plus. All of this was done in a very primitive campground setting with no running water, and no permanent buildings. It takes a special kind of person, or the attraction of a special group of people, to keep people coming back year after year in such primitive conditions.

"Folks have left our community because the building has taken too long. I feel really comfortable that the community-building we've been doing these nine years is much more important than physical structures," says Daisy Shaver.

Last year, however, these physical structures started to become reality as Destiny broke ground, beginning their plans of building a permanent, physical, faerie sanctuary in southern Vermont. Trees were felled to create a meadow for circling and gathering, land was excavated for a lodge and



Faeries prepare dinner in Destiny's soon-to-be-rebuilt outdoor kitchen during the Lammas gathering.

septic system, and a well was drilled.

Much design work was done to finalize the plans for the lodge, which will have a kitchen, dining hall, and a rest room with a shower. Also included in the plans are a bathhouse, three small cabins, and tent platforms. Spearheading the design is Matt Bucy, of White River Junction, Vermont. "Lately I've been reading a lot of design books in anticipation of the final leg of design for Destiny. I've been most interested in the question of 'what makes a place lovable?' What makes places that people adore and take care of and what makes places people disregard, disrespect and ignore? We want to avoid the latter!"

Bambi Gauthier, who has been in the group since being a teenager, says, "In the year ahead, we'll be finalizing our building plans and submitting our changes to the state. Once we have approval from Act 250, we'll begin work on building a timber-frame lodge with straw bale walls. Work will also begin on putting in a low-impact septic system."

In true Faerie fashion, the design process has been very collaborative. Matt spearheads a blog ([fcddesign.blogspot.com](http://fcddesign.blogspot.com)), where you will find details on timber-frame and straw-bale construction, low-impact septic systems, and other sustainable, ecologically sensitive building techniques.

Since part of their mission is to "care for and nurture elder Faeries and those incapacitated by illness or grief," they have taken

accessibility issues very seriously, no small feat on an undeveloped hillside with almost no level ground. Bambi explains, "I've had to face challenges physically, and time and again folks at Destiny have made attempts to include me in events, tasks and fun activities taking into account my own personal ability. Although my disability is often not a problem, I find that Destiny as a community made attempts to accommodate my needs. More often than not, it's been a friendly face keeping an eye out for me or the group's efforts to make our primitive camp as accessible as possible."

Bambi adds, "Destiny has worked hard to maintain a vision that respects the land and to include people who share our values regardless of gender, sexual identity, or physical ability."

In addition to accessibility, development plans have been made with an eye towards sustainability. Daisy Shaver, who hails from New York City, says, "I feel strongly about developing gardens, orchards, and berry patches so faeries who one day live in Sanctuary will be able to grow food for themselves."

You can learn more about Faerie Camp Destiny, their plans and activities at their web site: [faeriecampdestiny.org](http://faeriecampdestiny.org). ▼

## the rest of our world

### OKLAHOMA CITY Sex Sting Nabs Pastor

An executive committee member of the Southern Baptist Convention was arrested on a lewdness charge for propositioning a plainclothes policeman outside a hotel, police said.

Lonnie Latham, senior pastor at South Tulsa Baptist Church, was booked into Oklahoma County Jail Tuesday night on a misdemeanor charge of offering to engage in an act of lewdness, police Capt. Jeffrey Becker said. Latham was released on \$500 bail.

Latham, who has spoken out against homosexuality, asked the officer to join him in his hotel room for oral sex. Latham was arrested and his 2005 Mercedes automobile was impounded, Becker said. He has reportedly resigned his position.

### BEIJING

### Chinese Shutter Gay Festival

In shutting down Beijing's first-ever gay and lesbian cultural festival, the Chinese government violated basic freedoms and persecuted activists who are addressing the country's burgeoning AIDS crisis, Human Rights Watch and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network said in letters to the Chinese authorities.

"China continues to talk about political reform, but closing down a cultural event is a crude reminder of the limits on openness," said Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. "This police raid was an effort to drive China's gay and lesbian communities underground and to silence open discussions about sexuality throughout the country."

Organizers planning the Beijing Gay and Lesbian Culture Festival anticipated a first-ever weekend of films, plays, exhibitions and seminars about homosexuality, a subject that has long been taboo in China. Participants were to include noted academic researchers, actors, filmmakers and artists, as well as activists for sexual rights and health, specifically HIV/AIDS.

### INDIANAPOLIS

### Heartland City Protects Rights

The Indianapolis City Council in December passed protections that expand the city's Human Rights Ordinance to include protections against discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

"This victory shows what can

come from a united community," said Kathy Sarris, president of Indiana Equality. A similar measure failed by an 18-11 vote in April.

### NEPAL

### 'Sexual Cleansing' in Nepal

A string of police attacks on transgender people reflects the vulnerability of Nepalis in a climate of violence where civil liberties remain restricted, Human Rights Watch said last month in a letter to Nepalese authorities.

"Police in Kathmandu are violently attacking and even sexually abusing transgender people to clear the streets of people they deem immoral," said Scott Long, director of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Rights Program at Human Rights Watch. "Nepali human rights groups are calling this crackdown 'sexual cleansing.' This amoral campaign has to stop."

In the latest reported incident, on January 3, three metis were walking in the Thamel district of Kathmandu. A local slang term for transgender people, a meti is a man by birth who identifies as a woman. Four uniformed police from Durbar Marg police station reportedly saw them and shouted, "Metis! Kill them!"

One meti was beaten with a baton on her back; one policeman pulled his gun and pointed it at her, threatening, "These hijras pollute the society and must be cleaned out" (hijra is a common term for a transgender person). The two other metis were also beaten severely.

### LOS ANGELES

### LA Cops Play Games

When the competition commences at the Seventh Gay Games in Chicago this summer, officers of the Los Angeles Police Department in uniform will be marching with the assembled athletes opening the Gay Games VII Sports and Cultural Festival from July 15 to 22. The sponsorship of the games by the LAPD marks a first for any major metropolitan police force and will help the LAPD continue and increase its commitment to diversity within its ranks.

While in Chicago for the games, members of the LAPD Recruitment Unit will meet with participants and visitors to discuss the more than 250 career opportunities open to members of the LAPD.

"The LAPD is a great career with opportunities galore right out of the Academy," said Phyllis Lynes, Assistant General Manager for Public Safety for the City Personnel Department. Salaries start at \$52,000. ▼

Jay Schuster is a Radical Faerie and vice president of Physician's Computer Company in Winooski. He lives in Richmond with his partner Dan Berns.