

Out in the Mountains Youth Zone

If you're between the ages of 15-25 and have something to say, this page is for YOUR stories, commentary, toons, art and pix. Contact editor@mountainpridemedial.org.

Being in the In-Between

BY MARYANNE BOLALEK

I don't remember how the topic came about, but while in conversation with a friend, I mentioned that I'm the only kid who is out at my school. My friend's partner says, almost incredulously, "You're a lesbian?" ...So what do I tell them? To say yes would not be quite true. To say, "No, I'm bisexual," would also be kind of a lie. At the time, to save myself an explanation, I stammered out, "Uh...yeah." But the truth is that I'm not really a lesbian. I'm not really bi either. I find myself in this really weird in-between sort of place. Sexuality limbo, if you will.

I mean, yes, I did come out as a bisexual girl, with absolutely no bias towards one gender or the other. If you believe that sliding a little on the sexual identity scale is possible — well, I suppose that's what I've done. If not, then I guess you might call it realization. But I'm finding, recently, that I just don't know what to call myself anymore.

The dictionary defines "lesbian" as "of or relating to homosexuality between females." Yeah. I kind of

fit into that definition. Certainly, I find girls attractive, and can picture myself spending my life living with/married to a girl much more easily than I could see myself with a guy.

On the other hand, "bisexual" is defined as "sexually oriented toward both sexes." Once again: yes, I fit, and no, I don't. It's true, I admit it. Guys can be pretty attractive too, but not in the same way. I just don't see myself ever being with one. Um... ever.

Of course, I'm only a teenager, and this could change. For goodness' sake, I've already shifted around a bit to find my comfortable place since my coming out, which- even though it seems AGES since- was only just over a year ago. But it's kind of a pain, not to fit in a box. I feel as though I'm not telling the truth unless I give this lengthy explanation. The lengthy explanation is more trouble than it's worth, too. Last time I tried to explain it to someone, they said, "Well, if you're not a lesbian, aren't you still bi, then?" ...Well, no, I'm not, since I just said I wasn't. Sheesh.

There are also those who might say I have absolutely no

idea what I'm talking about. Both "homosexual" and "bisexual" have the word "sexual" in them, which pertains to sex, which I've happily abstained from. Thus, I might not know anything of my own sexuality (gasp, there it is again) at all, as of yet. ...Then again, I certainly hope that you don't need to have sex to know your own orientation. That would be risky, for one thing, and for another, I'm starting to tread on treacherous ground, so I'll move onward in this rambling little essay of mine.

So what am I, exactly? Am I a lesbian, or am I bisexual? Could I really be a silly teenager who knows nothing yet, or am I simply traveling from one point to the next? Or am I really somewhere in an undefined in-between? What do I tell people, when they ask? I can't give a simple answer without either A: Not really telling the truth, by saying "Lesbian!" or "Bi!" or B: Sounding kind of dumb by saying, "Oh yeah, somewhere in between lesbian and bisexual." Alternatives are C: Worming my way out of the question by saying, "How should I know?" and D: Giving a long-winded explanation of how I came out as bi, and have slowly been edging closer and closer to the lesbian end of things, like some ominous bit of driftwood.

Or a hungry dog. ...Actually, not the hungry dog. Driftwood is safer. And doesn't drool. Usually.

So I suppose that besides being a think-out-loud session for me, this article means to ask, are there more of you out there who don't fit in a box? Or maybe you've been in the same spot, and have eventually wiggled out of it?

As it is, I suppose I'm going to have to make peace with this weird little square of identity ground I find myself standing on. It's somewhere between bisexuality and homosexuality, and maybe some of the grass growing in it is the confused-teenager variety. I'll sit down here and figure it out. Or leave it be and let it figure itself out. Or maybe just sit here. And finish this bit of writing. Now. ▼

Meet Llu and Kate, Co-Directors of Outright

Outright is getting busier these days. In addition to the regular Friday night and Saturday night groups, there's another group meeting on Thursday nights to get ready for Youth Pride 2006. That's the biggest event of the year organized by the folks at Outright, and will happen this year on Saturday, May 6th.

Outright is still looking for a new parttime development director, someone who will write grants and be in charge of the newsletter. Meanwhile, Kate carries on her outreach work in schools while Llu takes care of much of the fundraising to keep the center going.

Outright is there for young people age 22 and under and always welcomes new participants and volunteers.

So, give them a call! You'll be glad you did. ▼



PHOTO: KATE VAN WAGNER

When you call Outright at 1-800-GLB-CHAT (1-800-452-2428), that's either Kate or Llu who picks up the phone. Llu is the masked person and Kate has the hair.

➔ Maryanne Bolalek is a sophomore at Black River High School in Ludlow, Vermont.

Youth Newz

PULLING FIRE TRUCKS

Outright Vermont wants you to form a team for our first ever and Burlington's 3rd Annual Fire Truck Pull! Teams of 12 are needed to raise money to support Outright Vermont's work and to compete in a contest to see who can pull a Fire Truck up Church St. the fastest! (really!) Put a team together today and help make sure queer youth in Vermont are supported through Outright's work in schools and our peer social and support groups. Be sure to catch the fun on Saturday, April 29th at noon on the Church St. Marketplace! Details and team sign up information are on our website at: www.outrightvt.org

YOUTH PRIDE VT: MAY 6

Don't miss the 7th Annual YOUTH PRIDE celebration in Burlington on Saturday, May 6th. Gathering over a hundred of Vermont queer youth and their supporters, Youth Pride features a speakout, rally, workshops, film festival, and our fabulous queer youth prom. Planning takes place throughout April and everyone is invited - especially GSAs (high school & college) from around the state. Mark it on your calendar and check out our website for further details: www.outrightvt.org.

GLBT NATIONAL YOUTH TALKLINE 1-800-246-PRIDE (1-800-246-7743)

This San Francisco-based hotline serves GLBT youth nationwide by providing telephone and email peer counseling, plus offering information and resources about cities and towns across the country. Telephone volunteers are in their teens and early 20's and speak to teens and young adults up to age 25 about LGBT-related problems and much more. The hotline provides information about support groups and LGBT-friendly religious, sports, and student groups.

EX-GAY MOVEMENT TARGETS YOUTH

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute has brought to light the ex-gay movement's new tactics in a report called "Youth in the Crosshairs: The Third Wave of Ex-Gay Activism." The movement has switched from a "cure" approach to also advocating "preventive" measures, including one case of a five-year-old boy being subjected to conversion therapy to address "prehomosexuality."

"The case involves a psychologist who claims that his theories and treatments are scientific. To the contrary, conversion therapy is opposed by nearly every medical and mental health professional association, including the American Academy of Pediatrics," said Jason Cianciotto, research director for the Policy Institute.

NGLTF Executive Director Matt Foreman said the programs are "often established in states that are fertile ground for right-wing organizing efforts," especially in states that have or are considering bans on same-sex marriage.

YES TO SUMMER CAMP!

NEW YORK - YES Summer Camp for LGBT youth will be happening at a YMCA camp in Stillwater, New Jersey in August. It's sponsored by Youth & Family Services of New York's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. The week-long camp provides support to help empower young people with the knowledge and skills they need to take charge of their own lives in healthy ways. During the year, the center's Youth Enrichment Services (YES) also provides free services supporting youth from age 13 to 21, including leadership training, 12-step meetings, a safe schools campaign and other special events. - information from www.gaycenter.org.

YOUR EVENTS LISTED HERE: Is your Gay-Straight Alliance or other group holding an event? Send a schedule to editor@mountainpridemedial.org by April 14 for the May issue of OITM. We'll be seeing you in the next Youth Zone!