

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@mountainpridemedia.org.

Rutland Group Welcomes New Members

BY WILL HOLDEN

RUTLAND - While I was finally out of the closet and doing fine (note not dandy), I soon realized something was missing. Whilst talking to a connection at Rutland Mental Health, she told me that a girl she saw was thinking of starting a GLBT group for teenagers in Rutland County. I agreed fully, and sought to find the "dandy" aspect of life within that group.

Our first meeting went well, though only four people showed. I was the only male there, a theme that would continue at times. Our numbers were small, and people couldn't (for one reason or another) meet for every group. We continued meeting with our group, despite the small numbers.

Eventually however, we did grow. We moved to a larger and more suitable room for our new numbers. Though our group never exceeded the tally of eight, it was enough to know that the group had helped at least a few young people. We mailed fliers to the

schools about our group, but that seemed not to be enough. Members left, and now we are back down to four members, two of whom are able to come for every session. So, it is up to us to spread the word again.

Lucky, I suppose, that the two of us left are somewhat artistic and clever. Mare (who wrote an article last issue about the "In-between") is an accomplished artist and writer. I, myself, am a writer, and find that to better spread news of our little group, then I'd have to shamelessly plug it in my latest article.

So, what are we doing about our horribly dwindling numbers? With new allies helping at OITM and Middlebury College us branch out, we may finally be able to reach the people who need this group the most.

As we had also considered that the idea of meeting in, and going through, Rutland Mental Health may be daunting, we have decided to break away from that establishment soon. We are

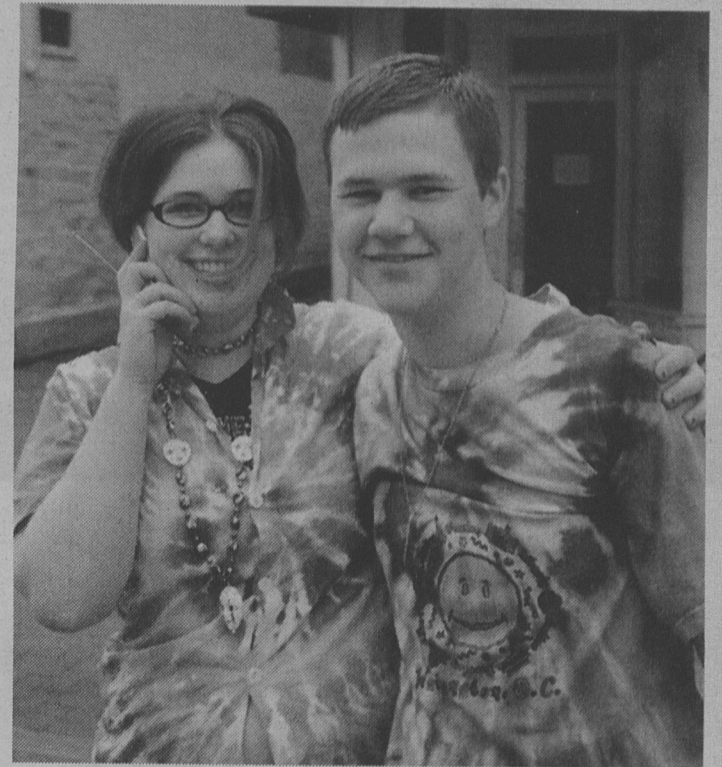
currently working on using the Rutland Free Library as a meeting home, but with warm weather here again, our possibilities are not as limited as they once were.

In addition to these projects, another mailing to the schools should happen in the near future. I have also taken the job of posting up our official flyers, and some smaller information bands around Fair Haven, Castleton, Rutland, and other neighboring towns.

As you have probably figured out by now, this group means more than just a pet project. For me, it is about helping people. I think a lot of people need that little "extra dandy" in their day, and with this group, I think they'll finally get that. ▼

➔ For more information about this group, or for any other questions or concerns: email me at wholden7@aol.com or call me at 1-802-683-6072.

➔ Will Holden is a junior at Fairhaven Union High School.



Be Proud!

Vermont Celebrates 7th Annual Youth Pride

BY CONNOR MCFADDEN

BURLINGTON - Chances are that if you are reading this, you are one of Vermont's amazing queer youth. If that is so, you also are probably pretty bored and/or could use a little dose of queer enthusiasm. Well, today isn't your lucky day ... but Saturday, May 6th is! Outright Vermont is putting together Vermont's 7th Annual Youth Pride Day. Starting nice and early on that Saturday, queer youths and adults, along with allies, will be pouring into Burlington and staying all day long to celebrate Youth Pride.

Every year, this event is heralded as the most monumental and fun one that Outright does! Never been to Outright before? This is a great chance to meet the staff and youth of Outright, because they will all be there. Don't want to make the trip to Burlington? We understand, Burlington is far from many places. But Youth Pride is the one day of the year that Outright needs the most support it can get. Everyone in the biggest city in the state will see the participants marching and speaking out. The more supporters we have, the more visibility we get.

And visibility is just what we need, because with more visibility comes more curiosity, which leads to questions, which leads to answers, which

leads to an education, which leads to tolerance. With the recent incident at Williston, Outright received a lot of press attention. Let's keep the ball rolling! And don't feel like you just have to come and be an advocate and scream some chants or speak out. There are tons of fun things too, geared specifically towards queer youth and allies. These include a film festival at Outright (lots of great queer movies), multiple workshops that are informative but also entertaining, a pizza party and the famous Outright Prom!

Youth are needed to help set up many of the days events, so if you are willing to lend a helping hand, you will be rewarded with an even better organized and smooth-sailing Youth Pride.

While the event is called Youth Pride, it is not exclusive. It is a time for everyone to show their pride in their youth, meaning you don't have to be youthful to participate. People of ALL AGES are welcome to the Youth Pride Speak Out and Rally because we want people to see that queer youths are not alone. ▼

➔ Connor McFadden is a student at Burlington High School. He wrote this on behalf of the Youth Pride Committee.

GLOW UP Creates Community

BY DARYLL MCKEIGHAN

BENNINGTON - High school is already a tough experience for most kids, but for some it can be simply unbearable. For many LGBT youth it can be an overwhelming experience to just go to school each morning, knowing they will face harassment and scorn from their peers, and worse, in some cases, their teachers. The safety they should feel at a public place is quickly stripped from them when they enter the building.

At our school I hear people in the halls talking about "that fag," or saying things about how "she's such a dyke." A lot of my friends have been pushed around in the halls and called names. They have been repeatedly harassed and emotionally battered. Some of them can't even tell their parents about this public harassment for fear their parents might find out they are gay. So where's the support? Who can they talk to? Who is going to start changing things? Fortunately there is a safe

place for us to go. A place where we can be ourselves and stay away from the prejudice that breeds in closed minds and roams our halls. Fortunately there is a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA). Some of the students in our school thought it would be a good idea to start a GSA, and they were right. Our group is called GLOW UP for Gay Lesbian or Whatever United People. But, more than just a safe haven for confused or scared teens, our GSA is a place for change.

We have been very active in our school; participating in, as well as hosting, several school functions. Our group held a school dance that had a huge turnout of students. I was on the GLOW UP dodge ball team along with several other members of our GSA. We had Robyn Maguire (field coordinator of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force) as a guest speaker to talk about some of the issues facing the same-sex marriage bill. And, outside of school, we visited the state house on Queer Visibility Day. GLOW UP, along with Safe

Space, Tobacco Free Vermont, and Outright, and several other groups showed up to support H.865, a bill that will ban the discrimination of transgendered people.

We also grabbed some seats at the extraordinary performances of "Queer 101" and "Doin' Time in the Homo Nomo Halfway House" by Peterson Tuscano.

Through the efforts of our determined members, courageous leaders, and the persistent administration at our school, we have gained the support of many of our peers and much of our community. Our GSA has helped us reach out to not only the LGBT community, but our local community as well. We have made a significant difference and I believe that every school should have a group where kids can feel safe, have fun, and make a positive difference. It's our future and our responsibility to make it equal for everyone. ▼

➔ Daryll McKeighan is a student at Mount Anthony Union High School in Bennington.