

Outright 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.

Outright Vermont Receives \$100,000

Liberty Grant Empowers Statewide Outreach

BURLINGTON — Outright Vermont, the state's pioneer for efforts to build safe, healthy, and supportive environments for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth, has been awarded \$100,000 by the Los Angeles, CA-based Liberty Hill Foundations Queer Youth Fund. This grant will fund Outright Vermont's statewide education and outreach work throughout Vermont over the next three years.

"This couldn't have come at a better time," said Co-Executive Director Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak. The grant, according to Mulvaney-Stanak, will fund a full-time Education and Outreach staff person who will work with youth service providers, schools, youth, and communities around the state.

This is the largest single grant ever received by a queer organization in Vermont and is the largest grant in Outright Vermont's 17-year history.

"It is incredibly rewarding to have our work recognized by a prestigious national foundation," noted Kate Jerman, Co-Executive Director. "Especially at present when safer schools and communities for queer youth remain unfunded by the state and continue to be under attack from opponents."

"We have had some incredible successes over the past year," remarked Jes Kraus, Outright Vermont Board Chair. "It is much to the credit of the incredible teamwork and dedication of our two Co-Directors, Kate Jerman and Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak."

The Queer Youth Fund is Liberty Hill's newest fund. It supports grassroots, local, state, national and international nonprofit organizations that improve the quality of life for gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (GLBTQQ) youth. The Queer Youth Fund assists innovative programs and organizing projects that empower GLBTQQ youth to become leaders in their communities. ▼



POLITICAL CARTOON SUBMITTED BY ANONYMOUS YOUTH

Press release from Outright Vermont.

reaching out

BY WILL HOLDEN

Dear William,

I've recently come out of the closet and everything is going just fine. My friends and family have all accepted me and no one is making much of a fuss about it anymore. My only problem with being out of the closet is... I'm the only one! I don't know any other lesbians, my age or other. All I do know is that I'm the only one out at my school or my town.

What I want to know is, how can I reach out to other people like me? It has gotten to a point where I don't even care if I get in contact with anyone around here, as long as I am in contact with someone I can talk with and who understands what I am going through. Do you know how I can do this?

— TASHA, Brandon, Vermont

Dear Tasha,

I know exactly how you feel. When I came out at my school, I soon realized that I was the only one out as well. I soon began reaching out, and found potential for a group over in Rutland (the one that I constantly, shamelessly, plug). If you want more information on that group, feel free to e-mail me via the information below. If that just isn't your thing, then I suggest the internet. As you said in your letter, you don't mind if they even live near you, as long as you are able to speak to someone. There are plenty of fun and lively chat rooms, and enough to keep anyone happy. If reaching out to many different people in many different places is what you're interested in, then I suggest going with that option.

Also, if anyone else out there is experiencing this same problem, then don't be shy to write in, and maybe there could be a formation of an e-mail or instant message group.

If anyone else has a question to ask me, e-mail me at wholden7@aol.com, or call me at 1-802-683-6072. ▼

Holding the Door

BY CEDRIC DAVIS

From an early age, my mother told me to love and respect my elders. As those that have come before me, and as the people who have the experience and intelligence, elders are the people that we look to for guidance. They are our parents, grandparents, mentors, and other people we have heeded, ignored, revered, forgotten, but hopefully always respected. In a

queer community with a rapidly growing aging community, it is also important that we dialogue with and support our older members as they move through all of their stages of life.

As a youth in the queer community, I have been supported by my community to an extent that I would not have believed before I came out. There are queer youth-specific services around the country, but in Washington, D.C. and Burlington, there are plenty of places where I would

feel safe, and even feel welcome to seek services. This is because of the people who, before me, decided to come out and face hostility from families and friends, church groups, schools and society. Those who preceded me held the closet door open so that I could come out dancing. My coming-out experience was so much easier, due to the struggle of people much older than my 20 years by now, and I owe them a great debt of gratitude.

So now it is time for the youth

to return the favor. Sure, it is nice to hold the door for someone when they are trying to get into a building, but I don't think that is enough. Our parents' and grandparents' generations deserve to have all of the things that they have given to the youth of the community: outlets for the arts, social networks, and some understanding among their generation. We also need to understand the economic and social, as well as intellectual needs of our predecessors, so that we can create the institutions that must exist to support them. We need to hold the more experienced members of the queer community up as VIPs.

As the youth of the queer community, we need to begin to study the people we have to thank for schools that are becoming safer, for the services in our community that support us, and for being the first to assert their rights to live and love in the ways that they feel called to do, regardless of outside forces. ▼

➔ Cedric Davis is a Burlington College student who will be studying at the Community College of Vermont in the fall. He is living in Vermont as a change from the fast pace of the larger D.C. metropolitan area.