

COMMUNITY

Kate Jerman Says "Good Bye" to Outright

Longtime Leader Heads for Graduate School

BY JESSI BURG

BURLINGTON - After four years, two locations and countless meetings, events, and grant proposals, Co-Executive Director Kate Jerman is leaving Outright Vermont. Hired as a program specialist, Kate started out developing program ideas for Outright. Now, as co-executive director with Lluvia Mulvaney-Stanak, the only other paid staff at Outright, she does a little bit of everything, from writing grants to giving presentations to schools to helping organize different support groups.

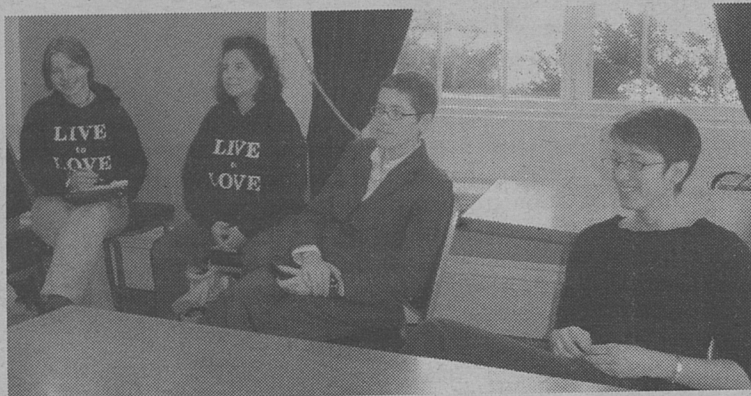
Upon Jerman's arrival at Outright, the organization was mostly crisis-oriented, and her position was the beginning of youth leading the youth. The last four years at Outright have diversified the space into a real community center, a place for queer youth to gather and find their voice.

Though dealing with crisis situations is still an important part of Outright, Kate also talked of the emphasis on activism, giving back to the community, and supporting members of the community. Schools can request programs from Outright such as Queer 101

to help increase awareness and tolerance or in response to a bias incident. Lately, Outright's recent move to a space on North Winooski has Kate raving about the possibilities. Now, with three times the space, Outright is becoming a proper community center. The old space was in an office building; the new space boasts couches, games, books and room to breathe.

Over the course of our interview, Kate reflected on the strengths of Outright. She praised the volunteers who make Outright possible, and talked about how "no one is here for the money." To hear Kate tell it, Outright is a living example of what Margaret Mead was talking about when she said it takes a small group of dedicated individuals to change the world. She spoke of the support that Outright has provided; smiling, she adds that it's a "big obnoxious family, but a family." There are so many things happening at Outright, such as the new space and the receipt of another grant, that it's hard to leave.

Though her decision to leave Outright has been a tough one, Kate feels that now is the right



Kate Jerman (far right) at Visibility Day

PHOTO: LYNN MCNICOL

time to go. She states that "a change in leadership is good for any organization," and is hoping for new ideas and great things to come out of Outright in the future. Kate spoke of her job being hard work, but rewarding, and though it's the right time to move out, she doesn't feel she has to leave. Though she "could have stayed longer," she and Lluvia will both leave eventually and it could not be at the same time.

Now, Kate is heading off to the Columbia School of Public Health to attend the new program in sexuality and public health. After she completes her master's de-

gree, she wants to continue working within the queer community on a broad scale. She feels that "getting my master's will give me more power to enact change on a bigger scale." Her undergraduate degree in social work from NYU landed her the job at Outright, but she's always known she wanted to work with the queer community. When she discovered the job at Outright, her initial reaction was that she "had no idea I could do this kind of work and get paid for it!" With interests in several different areas, from international HIV/AIDS work to the trans community - something that has

recently attracted her attention - Kate wonders what the future will hold and is excited to find out.

Her reflections on the trans community, which she feels is underrepresented, ranged from the lack of knowledge to the lack of support both within and without the queer community. We talked of the lack of information the average person has about the trans community, and Kate is hoping to help mend that gap. She spoke of a program she used to run called Gay 101, it has since changed its name to Queer 101 and deals with many more trans-related issues.

"Burlington has a really active trans community, which is amazing, but I know I'm not going to find that everywhere," she said. When asked if she was planning on working with trans issues after her degree, Kate was unsure, but wouldn't be surprised. According to Kate, "my mom always told me that whoever the underdog was, that's who I'd be fighting for." ▼

Jessi Burg is in Burlington for the summer before returning to finish her own degree at St. Lawrence University.

One very large church.
Two gay teens.
And a bus.

The Bus

A new drama coming to FlynnSpace September 12.
www.thebustheplay.com