

COMMUNITY

Kathy Bouton Marks 15 Years at Peace and Justice Store

BY JESSI BURG

BURLINGTON - During her fifteen years as co-manager of the Peace and Justice Store, Kathy Bouton has come to see that all things are related. For her, sexuality is not a defining part of her personality; it is simply another aspect of herself. The struggle for gay rights is important, but also intertwines with women's rights, human rights and ideas of peace and justice. The store adjoins the Peace and Justice Center at the top of Burlington's Church Street. Kathy's idea of the interrelatedness of issues fits in perfectly with the Center's current focus on campaigns ranging from living wages to human rights to the struggle between Israel and Palestine.

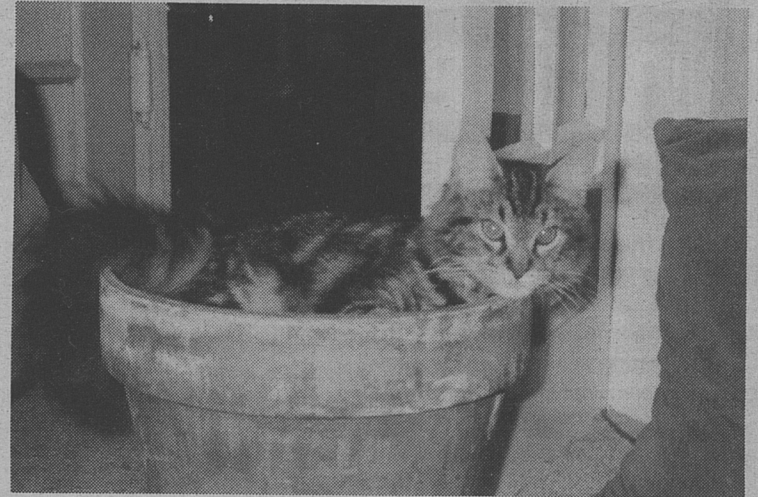
The Center's mission statement reads that it is committed to "creating a just and peaceful

world. To this end we work on the interconnected issues of economic and racial justice, peace and human rights through education, training, advocacy, non-violent activism, and community organizing." With such a broad goal, Kathy has found her place to fight for her ideals. The hard part for the Center, however, is deciding where exactly to put its time and money. Right now, the focus is on livable wages, racial justice and peace and human rights, specifically conscientious objection and counter military recruitment. Though the center does not focus directly on gay rights, Kathy, a lesbian, feels her presence has kept the issue of gay rights alive.

"We don't focus on civil unions and the marriage issue because other groups are specifically devoted to that. But that doesn't mean gay rights aren't important,

and I think my presence helps remind everyone of the issues. Everyone supports me, and so in turn I support their causes."

Even when the center is not focusing on a given cause, it is nearly always represented in the store. The Peace and Justice Store sells a variety of goods related to struggles around the globe, from fair trade products to Pride merchandise, and is constantly evolving to keep on top of the issues. There are guidebooks on gay parenting along with anti-Bush everything. In five years, the shelves will be completely different, but the messages will remain. Kathy remembers her arrival, "when (they) were one of the only places selling Pride stuff, and all (they) had were pink triangles. Now, there are rainbows in all shapes and sizes, along with several other displays of Pride." This evolu-



Kathy Bouton was the creator of the Cat Moon Calendar sold in past years at the Peace & Justice Store. Pictured here is one of Kathy's own cats, Hank Williams IV.

tion is important in maintaining the goals of the center.

Over her fifteen years at the center and fifty-odd years of living, Kathy has remained a social activist committed to ensuring that everyone has a right to live according to their beliefs and principles. She has found her home at the Center for Peace and Justice, which encourages her to support not just one cause, but as many as she is able. Her strong

belief that all things are connected has found a home here, where struggling for peace in the Middle East and hoping for local alternative sources of power are equally important.▼

➔ Jessi Burg is a student at St. Lawrence University in New York. She spent the summer in Burlington, where she volunteered at OITM.

THREE VIE FOR VERMONT'S LONE U.S. HOUSE SEAT

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Domestic Partner Health Benefits Equity Act eliminates taxation of domestic partner health insurance benefits.

"Here in Vermont we passed the civil unions law and partners are treated the same," Welch told *Out in the Mountains*. "The federal government should recognize what states do and not have discriminatory practices. My approach would be to strike down those barriers as the result of federal legislation."

Welch also said he supports repeal of the military's antigay "don't ask, don't tell" policy. "I favor legislation that provides equal treatment under the law for all people," he said. "I disagree with 'don't ask, don't tell.' My view is that there should be no discrimination."

Republican Martha Rainville is the former Adjutant General of Vermont's National Guard. This is her first bid for elective office. As a self-described moderate, Rainville's positions on gay and lesbian equality are, well, somewhere in the middle. She supports civil unions and opposes the Federal Marriage Amendment because she doesn't think "it is appropriate for the federal government to be involved in that issue." She "supports the concept" of ENDA

but needs to review the bill before committing to voting for it.

"To me what's important is what a person brings to the job," Rainville said in an interview with *OITM*. "Their sexual orientation is not important. It's their performance, their character, and their contributions."

Rainville favors a review of "don't ask, don't tell."

"We need to look at repealing 'don't ask, don't tell' and look at what policy we need to put in place," she said. "As a commander with 27 years in the military, what I look for in a soldier or airman is someone who is dedicated to serving and who brings their focus and attention to the job and that's it. That's what we ought to base our military policy on and how we ought to assess people. The 'don't ask, don't tell' policy is problematic. It puts military members in a situation of being in a profession where they demand integrity, honor and trustworthiness, yet with the policy we are asking them to not be honest and act with honor. I think it is a policy that is unfair to the military and unfair to the profession."

Welch and Rainville differ on their view of Governor Jim Douglas' (R) recent veto of legislation



PHOTO: MARTHA RAINVILLE FOR CONGRESS

prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression in Vermont. Welch voted for the bill and says Douglas was wrong. Rainville defended Douglas. "I don't think he was wrong because from what I understand there were legal wording issues contributing to vetoing it," she said.

As a conservative Republican who does not support GLBT equality, state Sen. Mark Shepard (R-Bennington County) is on the right side of the political spec-

trum. Although Shepard's website says he's committed to "making a better world for ourselves, our

be civil rights, there's four criteria: one is you have to be economically deprived; politically deprived; educationally deprived

Their sexual orientation is not important. It's their performance, their character, and their contributions.

MARTHA RAINVILLE, REPUBLICAN FOR CONGRESS

children and our grandchildren," his commitment to families does not include gay and lesbian families. In fact, Shepard introduced an amendment to the Vermont Constitution that says "marriage in this State shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman." His amendment failed.

In an interview with the blog Vermont Daily Briefing, Shepard dismissed the fight for marriage equality.

"This is not a civil rights issue," Shepard said. "The courts have said that. The Supreme Court did. I think it was a case in Georgia, many years ago. In order to

- and all three of those, this particular group (homosexuals) is well ahead of the norm. Okay? The last criteria was something - you had to have a characteristic that was physically unchangeable. Well, you have thousands of people who were gay that are no longer, by their own testimony. What do you do with that? So clearly the issue doesn't meet any of the four criteria. It is not a civil rights issue."

Vermonters will decide where they fall on the political spectrum on election day.▼

➔ Paul Olsen is the Vermont correspondent for Boston's *in newsworthy*.