

NATIONAL / NEWS / MARRIAGE

Vermont Equal Marriage Advocates Hail Advance In New Jersey

BURLINGTON - Vermont advocates for the freedom to marry hailed the New Jersey Supreme Court's unanimous ruling affirming the constitutional rights of gay and lesbian couples, and expressed confidence that New Jersey's legislature would open the door for same-sex couples to marry.

In the case of *Lewis and Winslow v. Gwendolyn Harris*, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples are constitutionally entitled to

"the full rights and benefits enjoyed by heterosexual married couples." Echoing the Vermont Supreme Court's approach in *Baker v. Vermont*, the New Jersey court gave that state's legislature 180 days to amend New Jersey's laws to meet the court's concerns, and left open the possibility that a Vermont-style civil union law would pass that test.

Opining that the New Jersey legislature would opt to allow same-sex couples to marry, Vermont Freedom to Marry Task

Force Chair Beth Robinson explained, "It's been over six years since Vermont experimented with the 'civil union' idea; we've seen how that law helps, but also how it falls short. New Jersey can learn from that and pass a law that's genuinely fair and inclusive of all its citizens, allowing two committed adults to marry without regard to gender or sexual orientation."

In an opinion authored by

CONTINUED ON P.4 →

BUILDING COMMUNITY

R.U.1.2? and SafeSpace Hold Open House

BY LYNN MCNICOL

BURLINGTON - The merger of a queer community center and a resource organization for LGBT victims of violence is stepping up a notch. With the combining of the two, new staff has been added, and services are expanding and changing to better meet the needs of the community.

SafeSpace, which works to end violence affecting the LGBT community, moved into the R.U.1.2? Community Center at 34 Elmwood Avenue in late summer. The organizations held their first joint open house in October.

In coming months, the newly combined board will meet for further strategic planning, which may involve moving to a larger space, said R.U.1.2? Executive Director Kara DeLeonardis. The organization plans to hire a development director to help with the planning process, she said.

At the crowded open house, SafeSpace Program Director Ann Atkins told visitors that SafeSpace is becoming more visible and people continue to come in for help. The Burlington police department is also referring people to SafeSpace, she said.

Also at SafeSpace, intern Brenda Pitmon is helping to organize the Trans Day of Remembrance to be held on Saturday, Nov. 18. Pitmon is a graduate student in social work at UVM. Resource Coordinator Eliza Heppner is working on volunteer recruitment and training.



(L to R) Jane Keir of Huntington, Eliza Heppner, Clark Sheldon and R.U.1.2? Co-Chair Christina Fulton PHOTO BY LYNN MCNICOL

R.U.1.2?'s Health and Wellness Program Director Shawn Lipenski introduced the Wall of Awareness, a section of wall space just inside the front door reserved for people to share their stories of unfair treatment or harassment.

Bob Bolyard talked about the What's Up calendar he sends out regularly that contains a comprehensive schedule of events. He also acts as a Peer Outreach Worker at R.U.1.2?, as does Clark Sheldon. Sheldon discussed his health outreach with men who have sex with men, and queer and transgender people, which includes online chats and telephone contacts about safer sex. He also provides HIV testing.

Several other organizations use space at the Center, including Vermont Pride, Mountain Pride Media and the Vermont

Freedom to Marry Task Force.

Also, Equality Vermont, an organization that works for LGBT rights, is being reorganized, DeLeonardis said. R.U.1.2? is changing the status of Equality Vermont, currently a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, to a 501(c)(4) nonprofit political advocacy and lobbying organization.

The change will "allow both organizations to focus more directly on legislation that affects our community, something that neither organization was fully able to do before," R.U.1.2? said. ▼



To help pay for the \$500 application for 501(c)(4) status, requested donations should be sent to Equality VT c/o R.U.1.2? Community Center, PO Box 5883, Burlington, VT 05402.

1st ANNUAL UNIFORM PARTY at HIGHER GROUND

Deejays PRECIOUS and ALAN PERRY



Saturday, December 9th
9:00 pm to closing.

In Higher Ground's longstanding tradition of reaching out to the queer community, we would like to invite all the Leather Buffs, Nurses, Ball Players, Delivery Drivers, Candy Strippers, the list is endless. So drag that gear out of the closet, and get ready for a great night at Higher Ground.

Tickets: \$5.00 advance / \$8.00 at door. Available at highergroundmusic.com or call 1-802-652-0777 for more information.

If Shakespeare and Groucho Marx had a baby while visiting South Park, they might name him Ubu.

SWEET RACKET PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS
A PLAY WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY SETH JARVIS:

the once and future ubu

{A SECOND COMING}

DECEMBER 6-9, 8PM
Champlain Auditorium
Champlain College

TICKETS \$12/\$15 AVAILABLE AT:
WATERFRONT VIDEO: 660-5545
THE CLOTHING LINE: 651-8877

thenewubu.com