

# 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 [lynn@mountainpridemedia.org](mailto:lynn@mountainpridemedia.org).

## Students and Faculty Raise Awareness at Coming Out Day in Bennington

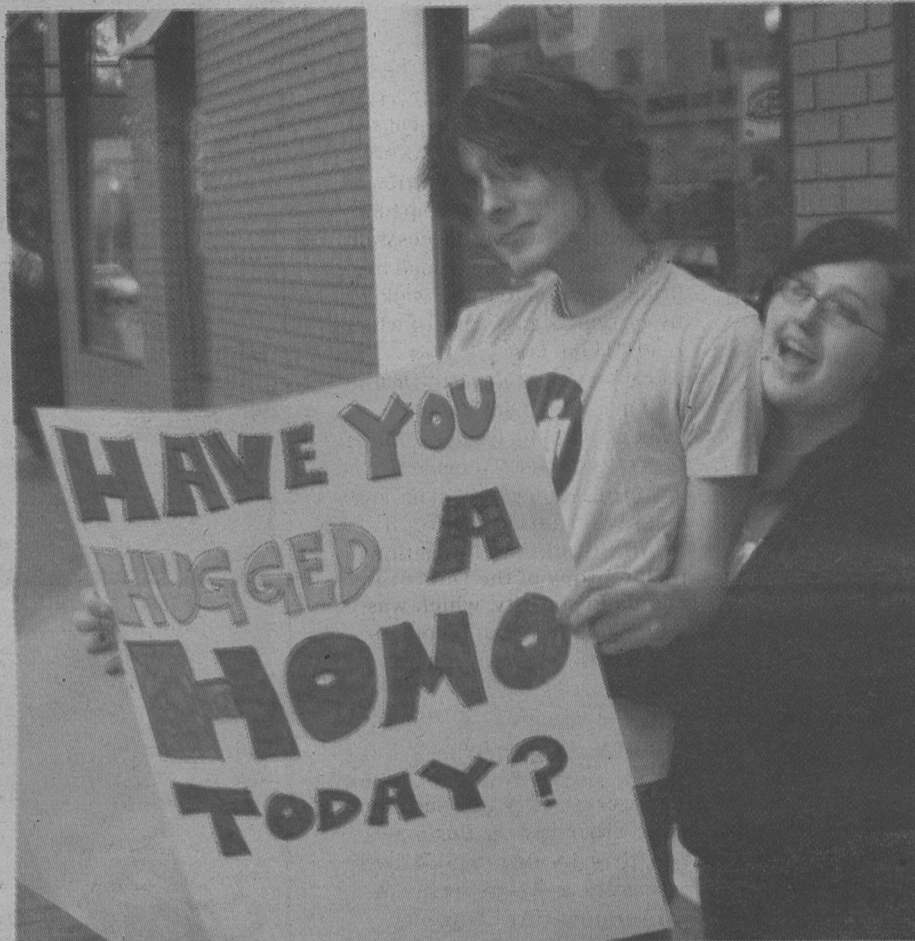
BY NICK REED

Students and faculty from Mount Anthony Union High School, and many other members of the Bennington-area community, gathered at the four corners on October 11 in celebration of National Coming Out Day. Many of the students were members of GLOW-UP (Gay, Lesbian, Or Whatever - United People), the school's gay-straight alliance. Among the adults were those who had heard of the event and decided to join, most of whom were members of the Bennington Pride Coalition, which meets at the South Street Café every Tuesday night at 6:30.

National Coming Out Day is a day that has been celebrated over the years in which many members of the LGBT community decide to face their fears and come out with their sexual identity to family, friends, and co-workers.

National Coming Out Day is not specifically a holiday in Bennington, but one that is celebrated all across the country. This is Bennington's second year of celebration. The gatherings on the four corners first began a year ago when GLOW-UP planned out the event. This year's event was, however, organized primarily by the Bennington Pride Coalition.

The main focus of these celebrations is to defeat worldwide ignorance that continually oppresses the LGBT community. It is a day that, for Bennington, joins together people of all ages and helps us to forget our differences and work together to create a stronger, more tolerant community. ▼



Nick Reed (pictured with Ashley Bump) is a 16-year-old from Bennington. He is an active member of both GLOW-UP and the Bennington Pride Coalition. Nick can be reached at [nicoli80@yahoo.com](mailto:nicoli80@yahoo.com).

PHOTO: MICHEL YAEGER

## reaching out

BY WILL HOLDEN

Dear William,  
I'm an out gay man in with a new boyfriend. We met a few months ago, and really hit it off. He's been great to me, and I couldn't have been happier, but there is one problem. He's not only still in the closet, but refuses to come out, to anybody but me. We met through an online dating site, which is the only place he's ever stated (without picture or actual identification) that he is gay. Even though he was timid on the subject, I was still able to manage.

That is, until recently. Not only will he not acknowledge our relationship, but now he's taking another step back as well. He has told his family that he has a girlfriend. I asked him about this, and his only reaction was to kiss me and apologize. We haven't spoken much since. This was about a week ago. What should I do? I think that our relationship could be excellent, if only we could get past this.

— 23/M/Montpelier

In Response:

The first thing that you need to do is sit down and talk with your boyfriend. It sounds like there may have been some avoiding in the past few days. Tell him how hurt you were when he lied to his family. Maybe you should ask why he is so afraid to come out. Don't pressure him to. You may be out yourself, but it is a difficult task to handle. Be gentle with him. If he's not ready, then give him time, but tell him how hurt you were when he tried to cover with an imaginary girlfriend.

Tell him that if he is willing to come out, he won't have to do it alone. Have him do it slowly, starting with people he trusts the most. Also, accompany him and back him in this. I hope that this helps you, and please update us later on.

Questions for Will Holden can be sent to [will@mountainpridemedia.org](mailto:will@mountainpridemedia.org).

## Ally Week Highlights Value of Allies in Safe Schools

NEW YORK - The Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) sponsored the second annual Ally Week in October, a celebration of the important role allies play in creating safe schools for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender expression or identity.

GLSEN's student leaders created Ally Week last year as a national youth-led effort empowering students to be allies against anti-LGBT bullying, harassment and name-calling in K-12 schools.

"Allies have been integral in the effort to make schools safe for all students," said GLSEN founder and executive director Kevin Jennings. "When I helped

establish the first Gay-Straight Alliance almost 20 years ago, one of my straight students came up with the idea. It's only fitting that LGBT students likewise came up with the idea to recognize allies.

"As a teacher, I saw firsthand the positive and powerful impact associated when one student tells another something is not cool."

An ally is any non-LGBT student who supports ending anti-LGBT bullying and harassment in schools.

During Ally Week, students held events appropriate to their school community across the country. The most common activity was students

handing out stickers to allies who sign a pledge card to not use anti-LGBT language and slurs and to intervene when others do use such language.

Three out of four LGBT students report hearing "faggot" or "dyke" frequently in schools, and nearly nine out of 10 report hearing "that's so gay" referring to something stupid, according to the 2005 National School Climate Survey.

More than a third of LGBT students experienced physical harassment at school on the basis of sexual orientation, and more than a quarter on the basis of their gender expression. Nearly one-fifth of students had been

physically assaulted because of their sexual orientation, and over a ninth because of their gender expression.

"I'm an ally because I know what a difference it makes to have just one person stand up for you," said Hannah Brown, a 15-year-old straight student from Doherty Memorial High School in Worcester, Mass., who is hosting a summit with four area gay-straight alliances at her public library. "The presence of allies shows that there are legitimate problems with teasing and harassment that need to be addressed." ▼

Press release from U.S. Newswire