

## Men convene

Twenty-five gay men from around the state gathered in Montpelier on February 16th and discussed issues which had been brought up at the December 15th statewide meeting of lesbians and gay men. Ideas were exchanged on a variety of issues ranging from choosing a gay man as liaison to the Governor's office to brainstorming on the needs of the gay community in Vermont.

Considerable time was spent discussing the history, current status and projected role of the liaison positions. Terje Anderson, a Burlington activist who had been serving in the position on an interim basis, was unanimously chosen to continue in the post. The appointment will be reconsidered annually by a statewide meeting of gay men.

Discussion also focussed on the publication of "Out in the Mountains" and the potential uses of the paper as a statewide organizing tool.

Participants outlined what they felt to be the major needs of the community. Among the areas which drew considerable attention were

*continued, page 7*

## Campaign launched

National lesbian/gay and AIDS organizations are organizing a grassroots effort to lobby Congress for restoration of a \$51 million cut in AIDS program funding proposed by the Reagan administration for the 1986 fiscal year budget.

Reagan's proposed cuts include \$14 million from research at the National Institutes of Health, \$15 million from health care development projects, \$10 million from alternative HTLV-3 test site funds, \$2 million from the Public Health Service AIDS Hotline, and \$10 million of other across the board cuts.

"We can prevent the Administration from making these cuts if we reach our representatives," said Victor Basile, Executive Director of the Human Rights Campaign Fund. "People in Washington must hear from thousands and thousands of people across the nation that this is a matter of life and death for us."

Tom Chorlton, Executive Director of the National Association of Gay and Lesbian Democratic Clubs said that "the proposed cuts are just one more demonstration of the Reagan administration's shocking, callous and continuing unwillingness to deal effectively with the AIDS crisis." He urged lesbian and gay organizations and individuals to "organize and get involved in efforts to restore the funding cuts."

Senator Patrick Leahy and Robert Stafford can be written at the United States Senate, Washington, DC 20510, and Representative James Jeffords can be reached at the House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

## BODYWORKS

# Hepatitis B epidemic

For the majority of gay men, AIDS has completely overshadowed many other health issues. A number of these issues should be of major concern to gay men, yet have been given little attention in light of the medical and psychological impact of AIDS. This month BODYWORKS turns its attention to an infectious disease which is at epidemic levels in the gay male community - hepatitis B.

The hepatitis B virus is transmitted via body fluids (blood, semen or saliva) which enter through broken skin or mucous membranes such as in the mouth. There are many ways to catch hepatitis B: needles used for such things as acupuncture or drug use, toothbrushes or razors, and sex. For many gay men infected with this virus, symptoms will be either minimal or non-existent. And a large number of those infected will not be active carriers of the virus. But 5% to 10% will become chronic carriers of the disease and remain at high risk for development of liver complications. Unfortunately, many of those who are carriers are not aware of their status.

For more than two years, a vaccine has been available to protect one against this virus-caused disease which can lead to permanent liver damage and in some instances, death. Yet the gay male populations has been slow in using the vaccine. Health experts report that hepatitis B has risen 68% since 1978. After healthcare workers, gay men represent the second largest populations at risk for contracting this disease. Studies report that up to 80% of the gay men tested for hepatitis B

show signs of having been infected.

Given the serious nature of this disease, why haven't gay men taken advantage of the vaccine? Part of the answer related to the demands AIDS has made on the attention of gay men. What once may have been considered a serious disease by many, now pales next to AIDS. Also tied in with the AIDS issue is the fact that the vaccine is manufactured from the plasma of hepatitis B carriers, many being gay men. Thus some candidates for the vaccination are concerned that they may contract AIDS via the vaccine. Health experts stress that the vaccine manufacturing process inactivates the virus believed to cause AIDS.

Another reason for lack of response to the vaccine appears to be the cost. The current price of the vaccine is approximately \$100.00, which includes the three recommended doses. The doses are given over a six month period.

We urge our gay male readers to give the above information some thought. One hundred dollars may seem a hefty amount, but like health insurance, it can pay off in the long run. One word of advice - have a screening done to determine if you have already come into contact with hepatitis B. If so, taking the vaccine will have no effect. You may want to talk with several medical providers to check on costs for screening and administration of the vaccine.

As promised, but a month late, our next column will discuss how to choose and evaluate a counselor or psychologist using a new publication, "The Lavender Couch".

## Discrimination/violence discussed

by Jim Morgan

On Tuesday, January 14, five members of the Burlington area Lesbian and Gay community met with Brian Burgess, Vermont's Assistant Attorney General. Representatives were present from the Burlington Council on Women, Vermont Gay Democratic Caucus, National Association of Social Workers Lesbian and Gay Issues Committee, and area helping professionals. Issues discussed included: patterns of violence/discrimination related to patterns of oppression; the role of the Attorney General's office in soliciting, recording and investigating complaints of discrimination/violence directed at Lesbians and Gays. The tone of the meeting was positive with honest exchange among all.

Brian Burgess agreed to review an information form being developed by VLGR (Vermonters for Lesbian and Gay Rights), for use by his office when documenting calls of Lesbian and Gay violence/discrimination. Mr. Burgess also agreed to contact Scott

Skinner of the Vermont ACLU, to discuss networking possibilities. Burgess also stated that there is the possibility that the Attorney General's office may be able to investigate one or two complaints per year.

In a February 20, 1986 letter to this writer, Burgess states that: "Because of logistical problems and shortage of clerical staff, we are not able to run a 'hotline', so called, for such issues out of this office...our Civil Rights Division will not in, and keep a record of, complaints pertaining to discrimination on account of sexual preference."

Mr. Burgess reports that there already exists some information regarding sexual orientation discrimination in Vermont. An effort is presently being made to review these documents.

Anyone who has experienced homophobic discrimination/violence is encouraged to call the Civil Rights Division of the Attorney General's Office or the Vermont ACLU.