

Dingman defines role

Li-ai-son: A linking up or connecting of the parts of a whole in order to bring about proper coordination of activities.

Webster's definition comes close to home now that Beth Dingman and Terje Anderson serve as liaisons to Governor Kunin. The key to their selection as representatives is the wide vote of confidence they received by Vermont's gays and lesbians after election in February. Both bring extensive experience to their posts.

Dingman has been active on the local and occasionally on the state-wide level since her arrival in the upper valley of New Hampshire and Vermont in 1972. For the past 10 years she has

been a part of a women's press collective. Currently, she and another woman run a feminist publishing company, with an emphasis on books about lesbians.

"I see my role as liaison as keeping abreast of the legislative and administrative issues relevant to the gay and lesbian community in Vermont," Dingman says. "I'll relay some of our concerns to the Governor."

"It's important for the Governor and others in office to realize that a significant number of their constituency is gay and lesbian. It's time that those in office become responsive to our needs. The selection of liaisons is one step in that process," says Dingman with conviction.

Some of Dingman's goals are to create a gay and lesbian consciousness among the community. Pride and visibility seem essential to communicating the issues and attempting to break down negative stereotypes, she adds.

"The gay and lesbian community can help by communicating their concerns to the liaisons and by responding with political pressure when our issues come before the legislature and Governor."



Lesbians, gay men meet

Approximately 60 lesbians and gay men from across Vermont attended a statewide coalition meeting in South Royalton on March 2.

The group's discussion centered on the role of the newly named gubernatorial liaisons, legislative issues, the ERA campaign, and future plans for the coalition.

Heather Wishik, who chairs the Legislative Committee of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, and Terje Anderson, co-liaison to the Governor's Office, gave brief explanations of the Vermont Legislative process and the status of several bills of particular concern to lesbians and gay men.

Both Wishik and Anderson emphasized the impact constituent lobbying can have on members of the legislature. They also stressed that many important governmental decisions are made in state executive and regulatory agencies, without "the fanfare that usually accompanies legislative debate."

Those at the meeting expressed the view that following such executive and regulatory action was an important part of the co-liaison positions.

Both Beth Dingman, female co-liaison, and Anderson indicated a

willingness to meet with lesbian and gay groups around Vermont to hear local and individual concerns and to help build statewide communication. The group agreed to try to raise money to meet the travel, telephone and mailing expenses which the liaisons incur.

Many at the meeting expressed concern about the increasingly homophobic nature of the anti-ERA campaign. The strong sentiment of the group was that there is a real need to meet the homophobia head on, both by confronting those attacking us and urging our friends to stand by us without equivocation. "It is important" said one woman, "to call a bigot a bigot, to point out that their campaign of hate is contrary to the best traditions of Vermont."

The Coalition agreed to hold quarterly statewide meetings in the future, in addition to the continuing separate statewide women's and men's meetings. Future meetings will include workshops on various topics.

Working groups on specific issues and projects will meet and work between those quarterly meetings. Three groups, dealing with legislative action, AIDS education and services, and media relations, were formed at the March meeting.

Wishik testifies At hearing

On March 13, a joint Vermont House/Senate forum was held regarding House Bill 622, HTLV-III Antibody Test Discrimination Bill. A number of people testified, including Dr. Heather Wishik, Associate Professor of Law at Vermont Law School. The following is her testimony.

Good evening. My name is Heather Wishik. I am an Associate Professor of Law at Vermont Law School where I teach Constitutional Law, including discrimination law, family law, women and law, and criminal law. I am also the Chair of the Legislative Committee of the Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. I am here tonight both to represent the GCSW before you and to share with you my legal expertise regarding HTLV-III discrimination issues.

The legal controversy surrounding the HTLV-III antibody test (ELISA) began before the test was licensed by the Food and Drug Administration in March of 1985 and centered upon concern that the test was not very accurate in that it resulted in a high frequency of false positive results, and upon concern that persons whose blood tested positive would or could be discriminated against. As a result of litigation and discussions with the Food and Drug Administration, restrictive labelling language was required by the

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UVM to offer lesbian/gay Studies program in fall

The University of Vermont will have its first lesbian/gay studies program this fall. The program will study four major areas: past lesbian/gay personalities; the history of lesbian/gay people as a minority group; present personalities involved in gay/lesbian culture; and the present status of lesbian/gay society in America. The program plans to sponsor speakers and an AIDS Awareness program.

The student-designed program will be centered in the Living/Learning Dormitory. It was met with great "encouragement and enthusiasm from the program selection committee," according to program author, Steve Shear. The final hurdle for the "Lambda Academic" program is student recruitment.

For information, contact Steve Shear at 656-6274, or write to P.O. Box 440, L/LC, UVM, Burlington, VT 05405.