

# Pride Day Moves to Montpelier

by Gene F. Barfield

Talks about Vermont's sixth annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Day celebration reached a surprising conclusion at the recent meeting of the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men. Prior to the meeting word quietly went around the network of lesbian and gay activists in the state that if no new interest was evident in organizing this year's lesbian and gay life celebration, there might not be a Pride Day in Vermont this year.

Each year for the past five, Lesbian and Gay Pride events have been centered almost exclusively in Burlington, because that city is Vermont's largest and common thought seemed to be that the lesbian and gay community felt somehow safer in the streets of Burlington than in any other municipality in the state. Burlington has an anti-discrimination ordinance in place and has welcomed the events, in varying degrees, over the years.

Discussions at the Coalition meeting quickly resolved the issue of whether or not there will be a Lesbian and Gay Pride celebration in 1988. Consensus appeared

unanimous that with all the work on S.278 (and its forerunner H.247) in the legislature, we need to make a strong showing this year, maybe more so than ever before. And the community of activists in Burlington, many of whom have taken the lead in statewide organizing in recent years, are justly claiming they can't divert their priorities this time to wade through the mass of details going into bringing off a successful Pride Day. Fairly speaking, the Coalition acknowledged that it might be time to infuse new ideas and new faces into the labor behind staging the event.

Even though the talks about Pride Day were held initially in the separate men's and womyn's group meetings, when the whole Coalition reconvened to summarize and set plans the same idea emerged from both groups: in a bold move the people of the Coalition decided this might just be the year to take our demonstration and celebration to the State Capitol in Montpelier.

The big reason for the eventual decision of the Coalition members to select Montpelier is three-fold: we have as much right to be in Montpelier as any other place and as any other group; Montpelier is more centrally located and groups coming from distances around the state have expressed a greater willingness to travel to Montpelier than to Burlington; and the strong political statement in taking our events to the seat of government shouldn't be overlooked. As

talks worked around the group at the meeting, more and more people repeated the feeling that celebrating our lives and demonstrating our presence in the precincts of the capital city could be a source of great strength for the community.

The issue of public disclosure remains before us wherever we decide to hold our events. It has always been noticed by those who felt enabled to march and demonstrate their pride publicly that even in Burlington there were always lots of on-lookers who indicated they wished they could join the parade as it passed but felt too great a threat to themselves in doing so. That won't change for some people in Montpelier, but the feeling is that the net positive gain in standing proudly at the seat of government will make an important statement. It was also recognized that since Burlington mayor Bernie Sanders has done little, if anything, to contribute to passage of the civil rights bill this year, the community wasn't willing to lend its presence in any way he might be able to make political capital of.

While the actual program of events is still in its infancy and much work remains to be done for the community to pull the event together successfully, the decision to shift the focus of Lesbian and Gay Pride to the State Capitol is seen as a new step forward, taken in confidence and strength by the gay and lesbian community around the Green Mountain State.

## Vermont Gay Volleyball News

Vermont Gay Volleyball would like to thank the players from Middletown, NY, who came to Burlington for a weekend invitational. We would also like to thank all of the Burlington people who hosted the players in their homes. A special thanks to Michael who carried out the necessary arrangement and to Tim who supplied his home for the potluck dinner. VGV meets

on Sunday nights from 5:30 to 8:00p.m. There is also a Friday night group who meet in more of a competitive atmosphere, who are interested in team playing. This group is designed to pay closer attention to the rules and strategies of competition volleyball. Anyone interested in either group should write to the following for more information: PO Box 248 Hinesburg, VT 05461.

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