

Purpose

The purpose of Out in the Mountains is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation for lesbians and gay men. We also see it as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian and gay community.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot, and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians and gay men.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed so we can contact the author should we need to consider editorial revisions. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed. No revisions or rejections of materials will occur without dialogue with the author.

We welcome and encourage all readers to submit materials for publication and to share your comments, criticisms, and positive feelings with us. This paper is here for you. The deadline for submitting material for each issue is the 7th of the month prior to publication.

Materials should be sent to:
Out in the Mountains
PO Box 177
Burlington, VT 05402

To Submit Articles

We encourage our readers to participate in bringing this publication to Gay and Lesbian Vermonters. Please assist us by submitting articles no longer than two double-spaced typed pages. Your submission should be received by OITM no later than the 7th of the previous month.

Thank you!

Editorial

Who is Family ?

Looking at the holiday season in retrospect, it becomes obvious how difficult this time can be for many lesbians and gay men. For us, the traditional vision of a loving and accepting family to share this time with does not always exist. Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Hanukkah symbolize a kind of sharing, giving, care and appreciation for those we love. This vision, however is often shattered by the reality of our lifestyles and experiences in this society.

For many lesbians and gay men, the holiday season symbolizes pain and separation. It is a time when the frustration of secrecy and denial of self, and the fear of discovery of our lifestyles is often heightened. It is also a time when a great deal of emotional strain is placed on the individual as well as on lesbian/gay relationships.

At this time of year the question often becomes a matter of choosing the lesser of two evils. Do we separate from lesbian/gay friends or lovers to journey back home to relatives who may not understand or accept who we are? Or do we deny our history in order to be with those we feel most comfortable with and loved by? Although some of us have adequately, through work and tears, been able to incorporate all the important people in our lives, for many the decision is still painful.

But regardless of what our different experiences or situations may be, there comes a point where we have to redefine what the holidays and the concept of family really means to us. Loosely defined, the term family may refer to a group of people with something in common, or a common

feature. The ties that bind may not always be blood or marriage, but the commonality of lifestyle, experience or perspective. It is this type of commonality that prompts many lesbians and gay men to spend holidays in the company of lovers and friends where their own uniqueness may flourish and be celebrated.

For others, the observance of traditional holidays is not even an option. Many lesbians and gay men, while opting out of their family religious practices, have also chosen not to observe religious holidays such as Christmas or Hanukkah. Some choose not to observe Thanksgiving as a way of showing solidarity with the American Indians whose lives and culture have been destroyed with the arrival of White people to this country. Because of such controversy surrounding traditional holidays some lesbians and gay men have chosen to confine their holiday celebrations to New Years or to more non-traditional holidays such as the Winter Solstice.

The holiday season should be a time of sharing and celebrating who we are and our connections with others. If this can not happen in traditional ways, then it is definitely time to redefine and prioritize what is important to us. As lesbians and gay men we must often be creative in developing relationships and situations that work for us, and meet our needs. The holiday season often poses the greatest challenge to the creativity. But hopefully, with each year, we'll be closer to celebrating the holiday season in a way that validates and expresses who we are.

Letters from OITM Readers

Dear Editors:

Congratulations December's issue! It was the best I've seen yet. I enjoyed all the diverse, intelligently written articles, reviews and letters. I would particularly like to respond to the editorial commentary regarding the printing of sexually explicit material.

Censorship leaves a bad taste in my mouth. It makes me think of our community's virtual invisibility in the mainstream media; it reminds me of VPR's initial response to Hugh Russell when he attempted to sponsor a day of programming in the name of the station's lesbian and gay friends. But somehow censorship doesn't seem like the right word to describe OITM's decision.

This paper's strength is that it has a

cohesive theme. It reports our news- national, local and statewide- to us and to Our Public. Our news is everyone's business because it is about our interactions with the society in which we live. Our sexuality is our own business to discuss and celebrate amongst ourselves. I'll admit that I would cringe to know that my mother and my lawmakers were reading the material that OITM decided to cut- but I won't stand for being labeled prude, homophobic or censorer because of that.

Other papers focus on gay art, poetry and writings. Still others focus on our sexual selves. I fear that OITM would be weakening itself if it attempted, in 12 pages once a month, to be a forum for all these diverse aspects of our community. The

(Continued on page 9)