

Task Force Forms to Address Same Sex Battering

Carla Straight

With the coming of the new year, energy is coalescing to organize the Network Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Lesbian Task Force. In December, two presentations were given on same sex battering, one at the Last Elm Cafe in Burlington, and one at the statewide conference put on by the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men. What stood out at both presentations was the desire to network, educate and organize around the problem of same sex battering.

Previous interest in addressing lesbian battering in Vermont has ranged from non-existent to active provision of services and outreach to the lesbian community. Individuals and programs have provided forums, support groups, local task forces, formerly-battered lesbian networking, and representation at NCADV national meetings. What seems to have been difficult is connecting with others doing this work for support and information. This is one of the things that the new task force plans to facilitate.

The mission of the Lesbian Task Force is to work toward creating safer space for battered lesbians in Vermont. Goals toward this end include identifying and coordinating efforts, generating collective energy and support, and heightening awareness of and knowledge about same sex battering. I'd like to note that, while at this point we're using the term lesbian task force, the potential exists for addressing gay male battering as well, either directly or through assisting those who wish to organize separately.

As we approach the problem of domestic violence in the lesbian/gay/bisexual community, there are many questions to answer.

- How safe do we perceive current services to be for battered lesbians?
- What do we know about the extent of lesbian battering in Vermont?
- Do we need a separate network of safe homes for battered lesbians?
- What is the current level of awareness/denial of battering within our community?
- Can we also work to decrease the number of batterers who choose to use violence, and increase services for batterers seeking help?

A mailing list has begun for those wishing to join in this effort. Your input is important. Please send your ideas, concerns, questions, areas of expertise, visions, and available resources to me at the Network address on the Resources page of Out in the Mountains. If you do not feel safe being openly involved, but support our efforts, write or call anonymously. All input is valuable.

Vermont has shown its support for members of the lesbian/gay community through legislation intended to make this a safer state. Let's work together to make it a safer state for battered lesbians and gay men as well. ▼

NGLTF Opens New England Office

The National Gay & Lesbian Task Force has established a New England office of its nationwide Fight the Right Project. The office is located in the Old Cambridge Baptist Church in Cambridge.

The Fight the Right Project was begun in 1992 to assist and support the work of gay and lesbian activists around the United States in their local and statewide battles with religious right-wing organizations. In particular, expertise and resources from the Fight the Right Project were made available to activists in Colorado and Oregon in 1992, and in Cincinnati; Lewiston, Maine; and Portsmouth, New Hampshire in 1993.

New England director Sue Hyde provides grassroots organizing expertise and technical support and resources to gay and lesbian organizations and non-gay allies in the New England region. Hyde has worked as an organizer for the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force since 1986, both in Washington DC and in New England. Prior to that, she served as the news editor at Boston's Gay Community News and was a founder and spokesperson for the Boston-based Gay and Lesbian Defense Committee.

The New England Fight the Right Project will organize and sponsor a region wide conference on public school issues in Spring 1994.

National Fight the Right Project, New England Office, 1151 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138, (617) 492-6393, (617) 492-0175 fax, ngltfsh@aolcom ▼

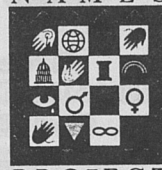
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