

# Is Ignorance Bliss

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of C.A.R.E.S. and Outright, a School Board meeting was held to decide the fate of Awareness Week.

Over 100 people attended the heated meeting on May 17. Of the 18 Winooski

residents who spoke, 12 supported Vermont C.A.R.E.S. and Outright Vermont. Supporters expressed a need for students to understand the issues surrounding living with HIV and lesbian and gay stereotypes. References to the "homosexual agenda", Christian values, and a return to education fundamentals were cited by those opposed to C.A.R.E.S. and Outright. Rev. Richard Callahan's claim that "the Harwood School is still trying to recover from their Vermont C.A.R.E.S. presentation" was greeted with laughter by many attending the meeting.

The charge against C.A.R.E.S. and Outright was led by Winooski School Board members Gloria Brosseau and Darrell Desautels who along with Board Chair Don Brunelle, succeeded in moving Awareness Week activities to the evening. Both Gloria Brosseau and Don Brunelle declined comment for this article. Responding to the decision to allow C.A.R.E.S. and Outright to appear at Awareness Week at night Winooski High School's principal Sandi Tanguay replied "Half a loaf is better than none". Tanguay added "Young people are busy with work and sports and I fear having it after school may kill the program".

Based on the behavior of some school board members, many Winooski residents are left questioning whether that was their intention all along.

*Postscript:* According to Vermont C.A.R.E.S. HIV/AIDS Education Coordinator John Olson the C.A.R.E.S. Awareness Week presentation was held on May 24 and was attended by 2 students and 6 adults. Outright's presentation was attended by 7 students and 10 adults. Karin Eade, Outright's Executive Director, indicated that many of the adults attending the presentation were opposed to Outright's presence. Eade noted that during the presentation many students stood up to those opposed to Outright's participation in Awareness Week. Both Olson and Eade feel that the students have learned more about homophobia and intolerance from the Awareness Week debate than from the presentations themselves. Ironically, the School Board members and parents who led the fight against C.A.R.E.S. and Outright contributed to these important lessons. ▼

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