

Confessions of a Candidate: Openly gay, HIV+, and running for State Senate

Chris Cozzy

BURLINGTON -- I'm just a regular guy with one exception, I'm a gay male and HIV+. OK, two exceptions.

In attempting to write about the Who, What, Where, When, and Why of running for state office, I realized that the "Why?" is really a two part question. Why now? and Why disclose? Being openly gay is considered to be bad enough, but also being HIV+ is a different story altogether. Even in my own world of gaydom, being HIV+ is quite a challenge. People are nice to your face but when it comes to being intimate or, I'll say it, "getting laid", it is a totally different animal. People act like it is no big thing until you ask for the second date or if they would enjoy company for the evening. I call it the "I like you but..." syndrome. I have never been one to hide who I am or what I

think, but being positive has gotten me to reexamine being so open.

My reasons for running for State Senate were simple--I felt we needed to get new blood in government and thought I could further the cause of being positive. It was time to get HIV out of the closet and into people's minds, time to prove that being positive is not a death sentence. For years, people have avoided those of us that are positive. They forget that being positive is not a bad thing but just another step in a friend or lover's life.

The decision to run for State Senate came about from a discussion with a good friend, and former Vermont Representative, Thomas Fleury. I had thought several times about running for office, but just never really got serious about it. Tom and I were talking at a party one evening; I mentioned that I was interested in running for office and asked for any ideas. His initial suggestion was to run for a seat in the Vermont House of Representatives. He later withdrew this idea because of the strength of the incumbents in my ward. I ran into Tom a couple of months later in Pearls, and the subject of me running came up again. He said that the perfect office to run for was in the State Senate. My immediate response was a bit tentative, but Tom explained that we did not have anyone in the Senate who was openly gay and we could use the votes. After some thought and discussion with friends and family, I decided that this was a job that needed to be done and started my bid for office. After all, the least I could do was lose.

I would later discover that running a political campaign is hard

Dr. Shoshanna S. Shelley

LICENSED PSYCHOLOGIST

INDIVIDUAL, COUPLE AND GROUP PSYCHOTHERAPY

INSURANCE ACCEPTED

RR1 BOX 176 • FULLER HILL ROAD
WARREN, VERMONT 05674
TELEPHONE (802) 496-4964

For confidential
AIDS
Information



Call
1-800-882-AIDS

BVH
graphic design & printing

32 N. Champlain St. Burlington VT. 05401

802/864 • 7198 • FAX 802/658 • 1556

PEARLS

(2 hot nightspots under one roof)

open sunday-friday: 7:30-2

&

saturday: 7:30-1

135 PEARL ST. BURLINGTON, VERMONT 05401
CALL (802) 863-2343 FOR OUR WEEKLY CALENDAR OF EVENTS