

## Bridging the Gap *(from preceding page)*

through it too." While his words were spoken in a moment of anger and frustration, they illustrate how deeply the division is felt at times.

To resent the AIDS epidemic for taking away resources that we need to work on other issues is not an entirely inappropriate reaction, but it is easy to slip from that point to resenting people with HIV. Yet for a person with HIV, all too often the rest of the gay community is viewed as surprisingly complacent and unresponsive.

Sometimes HIV negative men are made to feel that they have nothing to contribute to the fight against AIDS other than their money. When a well-meaning volunteer is told that "You just can't understand," the sentiment is based in a certain reality, but the feeling of rejection for trying to get involved is palpable.

Yet equally often, seronegative men are just plain insensitive to the realities of life with HIV. Those who live day to day with the virus have developed an expertise that needs to be respected and used, yet all too often their real life experience is pushed aside in favor of experts with titles and degrees. Everyone in the field needs to struggle with the question of how people with AIDS and HIV can be involved in a meaningful decision-making and policy capacity.

I could go on about the other ways in gay men are being separated by HIV status: how both positive and negative men can pressure those who haven't been tested with missionary zeal, how surviving partners are denied much of the support they need, how fears of our own mortality have driven us apart when we need to be together...but

you get the picture.

The question is not whether these fissures exist, but rather how we will deal with them. The first step must be to acknowledge them, and to begin dialogue about them. Here in Vermont we are fortunate – the epidemic is not at the point it is in many large cities where such issues are being forced, at times violently and unpleasantly, to the surface. We need to begin to talk about it – formally and informally, in groups and among friends, in AIDS organizations and gay organizations. Those discussions need to be honest, open, and thoughtful. After all, as the slogan says, "We are all living with AIDS." As long as gay men have HIV and AIDS, our entire community must deal with it – together.

## Health Resource Organizations

### AIDS HOTLINES:

Vermont	1-800-882-2437
New Hampshire	1-800-752-2437
New York State	1-800-541-2437
Massachusetts	1-617-522-4090
Maine	1-800-851-2437
National	1-800-342-2437
Canadian	1-613-563-2437

### ACT-UP Vermont

PO Box 1607  
Burlington VT 05402

### AIDS Community Action Project (ACAP)

c/o Caledonia Home Health Agency  
PO Box 383  
St. Johnsbury VT 05819  
(802) 758-8116

### AIDS Community Resource Network (ACoRN)

PO Box 2057  
Lebanon NH 03766  
(603) 448-4400

### Bennington Area AIDS Project

PO Box 1066  
Bennington VT 05201  
(802) 442-4481 or  
1-800-845-2437

### Brattleboro AIDS Project

PO Box 2403  
4 High Street, Suite 2-3  
Brattleboro VT 05301  
(802) 254-4444 (Helpline)  
(802) 254-8263 (Office)

### Franklin-Grand Isle AIDS Task Force

8 Ferris Street  
St. Albans VT 05478  
(802) 524-6554

### H.E.A.L. Vermont

(Holistic Education and AIDS Alternatives Liaison)

PO Box 795  
Montpelier VT 05602  
(802) 229-4325

### Northeast Kingdom AIDS Coalition

PO Box 40  
Newport VT 05855  
(802) 334-2437

### North Star (Holistic Health Care)

RR2 Box 3255  
Morrisville VT 05661  
(802) 888-2858

### Vermont AIDS Council

PO Box 275  
Montpelier VT 05601  
(802) 229-2557

### Vermont C.A.R.E.S.

(Committee for AIDS Resources, Education, and Services)

PO Box 5248  
30 Elmwood Avenue  
Burlington VT 05401  
(802) 863-2437 (Burlington)  
1-800-649-2437 (Rutland and Washington County support groups)

### Vermont Department of Health

1-800-882-2437 (AIDS Hotline) or  
(802) 863-7245 (AIDS Program office)

### Vermont Friends of the Quilt

PO Box 1422  
Burlington VT 05402

### Vermont Women's Health Center

336 North Avenue  
Burlington VT 05401  
(802) 863-1386