

Gay and Lesbian Families Create Community

Giita Clark

Vermont Lesbian & Gay Parents meets monthly on Sunday mornings for a potluck brunch. To find out the date and time of the next meeting check the Calendar section of *OITM*. For more locations and more information call (802) 893-6146 or write Vermont Lesbian & Gay Parents c/o *OITM*, PO Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402. ▼

Vermont Lesbian & Gay Parents was organized to give gay and lesbian families a way to meet one another and socialize. Monthly informal gatherings meet in different homes so that gay and lesbian parents can share ideas, form friendships and provide a healthy, supportive environment for their children to play with other children of gay and lesbian families. Although the group is less than a year old, a number of the parents have already found support, inspiration, and a sense of community with each other.

As parents, many of us are forced to increase our involvement with the heterosexual world through schools, day care, pediatricians, parents of our children's friends, etc. With the added demands of family life, it often becomes difficult for us to create or maintain our social lives, or to generate much needed support for our families. At a time when we most need support as parents and as lesbians and gays, it becomes even more difficult for us to create it for ourselves.

I remember the sense of validation and empowerment I experienced when I first became involved in the gay community years ago as a single lesbian. Now, I am again experiencing a whole new level of personal support and affirmation as I participate in the lesbian and gay parent community. It feels like "coming home."

Parenting with a healthy sense of pride in our gay lifestyle can be challenging. Meeting with other parents who are creating innovative ways to meet successfully the special demands of being lesbian and gay and of being parents is tremendously encouraging. Our children also benefit from our social contact. Through meeting with other alternative families, they experience a normalization and validation of their family's lifestyle. As our children play and grow together, they can become invaluable resources for each other in discovering ways to relate positively to both the gay and straight worlds.

Parents continue to contact us and join our group. We exchange everything from recipies and parenting stories to toilet training strategies and discipline ideas. Although we are not a formal or structured "support group", we are a growing community and a supportive social network for gay and lesbian families. ▼

Dartmouth GALA

Fred Pond

Late in Spring 1991, Michael Choukas, Director of Alumni Affairs at Dartmouth College, announced the official recognition of D-GALA, Dartmouth's Gay and Lesbian Alum group by the college alumni office. This means D-GALA will receive cooperation from Dartmouth in organizing events, such as parties, home coming weekends, and the like. Originally, the request to be recognized by the college was turned down, citing escalating work loads on the alumni office to do mailing lists, newsletters, and other alumni-related activities for specialized alumni groups. Among others, there are alumni organizations for Dartmouth Lawyers (there is no law school), Black Alumni, and Native American Alumni. The two latter groups were mandated by the school trustees.

D-GALA chair, Charles Edwards credited the change to widespread attention following campus demonstrations, support from student government, and media attention. When D-GALA agreed not to require the alumni office to do a newsletter or maintain mailing lists, Mr. Choukas announced the school's recognition of the group, saying it was a "bona fide organization of alumni working in the best interest of the College." D-GALA's newsletter, *Dartmouth GALA News*, is already in its fifth volume. Over five hundred alumni are associated with D-GALA. To contact D-GALA, write Dartmouth Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual Alumni, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH or call (603) 646-3636. ▼

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