

## Letters to the Editor

To the Editor,

In the past few weeks, everybody has been talking about Magic Johnson's public disclosure of his HIV status. It was truly a sad day for Mr. Johnson, his family and the NBA, but it was also a sad day, like so many before and more to come for every other individual infected or affected by this epidemic. It is currently estimated that between 500 and 800 Vermonters are infected with HIV. Many of these people have either not had the HIV antibody test or have not sought the services of the Vermont Persons with AIDS (PWA) coalition or their local AIDS service organization.

The VT PWA Coalition is a statewide organization which advocates for the needs of HIV-infected citizens. The VT PWA Coalition strongly emphasizes the message of self-empowerment vs. the "victim" role and dogma. We work with state and local government, public health officials, health care providers, and community based service organizations calling for excellence in support services. We also provide HIV+ speakers and function as a resource and referral base, as well as providing a safe and confidential way for HIV+ persons to meet and socialize. Remember, you are NOT alone.

To contact the VT PWA Coalition call 1-800-69VTPWA, (802) 257-9277 or write PO Box 1055, Brattleboro, VT 05302.

Rick Aitchison  
Co-Vice-Chair  
VT PWA Coalition

John Loughlin  
Member, Board of Directors  
VT PWA Coalition ▼

Dear Editor,

I want to take this opportunity to thank *OITM* for including an article about the National Coming Out Day events up at UVM in the December issue. Two people I had personally invited to speak, whose names were not mentioned in the article, were Lynn Vera and Renne Proulx, who came and livened the place up with her drums.

I also want to thank Deb Lashman for agreeing to speak at the Kickoff Celebration that took place on Thursday, October 10. As a member of the committee that worked on planning the events, I volunteered to invite some people who have enriched the local glb culture to speak at this informal, open-mike, speak-around. I was very excited that such an event was taking place, since so often the only way glb people get to share their experience is through educational panel discussions or in an angry demonstration. This celebration of ourselves, our culture and our lives was a refreshing change.

As I was calling people I ran into several difficulties. One is that glb people seem to be terminally busy. The other that came out during the event is the difficulty that even the most "out" members of our community can experience when they take yet another risk. I look forward to the day when all of us can relax and enjoy such an event as the necessary cultural exchange that we deserve and that it should be. I envision a future where Octoberfest might have to vie with a multicultural festival of crafts, music, writing and art that would, of course include the rich and lively culture of glb peoples.

Sincerely,

Dot Brauer ▼

## Vermont News

Keith Goslant and Holly Perdue, Co-Liaisons to the Governor from the Vermont Coalition of Lesbians and Gay Men, were formally recognized in a letter from Governor Dean on November 25th. In recognizing the Co-Liaisons, Governor Dean appointed Kathleen Hoyt, Chief of Staff, to serve as his liaison, and encouraged Holly and Keith to meet with her to bring her up to date on their concerns and develop a working relationship with her.

The Vermont Girl Scout Council at its November Board meeting made a number of changes to its policies to reflect the changing American family.

- Added age, gender, veteran status and sexual orientation to its Affirmative Action statement.

- Amended its leave policy to add time off for sickness, critical illness or death of a family or *household* member. (Italics added)

- Added new-parent leave for all new parents excluding birth mother (already covered under maternity leave) to allow two weeks for any new parent. The policy covers new parents regardless of sex or family makeup. ▼

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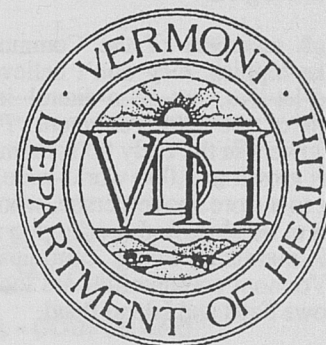
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