

to celebrate the life and vitality of Kurtz. Powers is a minister with the Metropolitan Community Church, a church whose members are mostly gays and lesbians. She said MCC was founded 23 years ago by a homosexual in Los Angeles, and now has 270 churches across the world.

Her parish is new to the Upper Valley and its congregation is meeting in a living room for now. Soon they'll move into the Norwich Grange.

As Powers read from the Bible, some of Kurtz's friends sat with heads bowed and eyes closed. She read from John's gospel account of The Last Supper, in which Jesus said, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another."

And then Kurtz's friends spoke of their love for him.

"He gave me love, friendship, wisdom. He gave me trust," said Seery, who spoke first. "I'm really thankful for him that this is all over. No more fight, nor more pain. He's all better."

Williams, Kurtz's ACoRN Buddy, offered his "Undying love to everyone on the ICU" at Hitchcock. He remembered Kurtz as a "picture-perfect dresser with never a hair out of place." But he was more than that Williams said, "He was warm, loving."

He also retained his sense of humor and remained in control of things even in his last days, when he couldn't speak. "He would hold his breath, and the red light would come on and the nurses would come running," Williams said to smiles and laughter.

In the end, said Williams, he and Seery were there to "give him up gladly and never let go."

Carol Hamel of Canaan spoke next. Her simple, eloquent words brought most of the gathering to tears.

"His fight with AIDS was very courageous," she said. "It was awful painful and always frustrating. He wanted it to be helpful to others down the road."

"Never once did I hear him cry, 'Why me?'" Hamel said.

She ended simply, "Goodbye dear friend." Then there was a long silence. Only the ticking of the parish hall clock and quiet crying could be heard.

The next remembrances brought more laughter than tears. A friend told how Kurtz agreed to let a second-year Dartmouth medical student practice his interviewing techniques on him. The student was very nervous. "Charlie said, 'Relax. My T-4 count is so low I have a name for every one of them.'"

T-4 cells are the cells that are killed by the AIDS virus. It's the deficiency of these leucocytes that leads to the cancer and pneumonia and other illnesses that kill people with AIDS.

The next friend who spoke told of how when Kurtz moved into the new hospital, a nurse asked him brightly: "What do you like to be called? Charles, Chuck, Charlie?"

"Call me Princess," Kurtz told her. Again the laughter ended and there was just the sound of the ticking clock.

Tommy Cawley, a friend from Greenfield, spoke next, saying that Kurtz used to introduce him as his only heterosexual friend. "But he had many of them. Many."

Cawley said Kurtz often "kept me and my girlfriend in stitches." And he also taught him about society's homophobia and about Cawley's own homophobia. "He taught me that it's OK to be different."

He said later: "I'm glad he's no longer suffering. But I miss him. We loved him — I loved him."

He will not be forgotten, said Cawley. "How can you forget somebody like that?" ▼

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

AIDS Community Awareness Project (ACAP)

PO Box 608
St. Johnsbury VT 05819
(802) 748-1149

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

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) 524-7742
1-800-638-7834

Gay/Lesbian Alcoholics Anonymous

GLAA, P.O. Box 5653
Burlington, VT 05402

H.E.A.L. Vermont (Holistic Education and AIDS Alternatives Liaison)

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

Lesbian Cancer Support Group

(802) 660-8386

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)

VT PWA Coalition

PO Box 1055
Brattleboro, VT 05502
1-800-69-VTPWA or (802) 257-9277

Vermont Women's Health Center

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