

VCLGR-TV: Statewide community meets via Interactive Television

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Fundamentalist churches in Brattleboro and Orleans County, St. Johnsbury Baptist Church, and a number of Rutland area churches, including Calvary Bible Church, Assemblies of God, Wellspring, and Roadside Chapel, which lesbians and gay men in the area have identified as promoting anti-gay sentiments.

Among the newest concerns to those opposing the Religious Right are the growing Militia Movement, which includes the United States Taxpayer Party and virtually any organization that includes references to firearms in its title, and the advent of "stealth" leadership within the Religious Right. Luhrs pointedly singled out the mainstream media as a potential font of stealth leadership, and derided the *Burlington Free Press* for its inconsistent coverage of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community. She also noted that Burlington's Adelphia Cable system, as part of its "Cable Select" packaging, insists that subscribers must accept three Christian cable stations. In so doing, subscribers are underwriting this programming. Luhrs called on our community to write to Adelphia Cable to insist that this stealth support of the Religious Right be discontinued. (Conversely, she noted that we should be proactive in supporting Vermont ETV's broadcasting of *In the Life*, the gay and lesbian magazine show, and should express our support of the media when affirming pieces are well presented.)

Joseph Watson of East Middlebury, speaking from the Rutland site, noted that the great majority of Americans are neither members of the Religious Right, nor do they identify as gay or lesbian. Watson suggested that the group that ultimately wins the support of that majority is likely to be the one that is considered the least irritating. Luhrs noted that in surveys in which participants were asked who they would least like to have as neighbors, Religious Fundamentalists were identified as the least favored neighbor (less favored than homosexuals). The Religious Right as an entity is not well perceived by "The Average American," a notion lent additional credence by a noted generalized intolerance of discrimination in the workplace.

In light of the unpopularity of aspects of the Religious Right movement nationally, questions were posed to Luhrs from the Waterbury site regarding the likelihood of any serious curtailment of gay rights in Vermont. In response, Luhrs noted that gay bashing is up 700% in Colorado, and pointed to the current firestorm surrounding abortion issues in America. Abortion rights have more mainstream support than gay rights, and many Americans already struggling with the abortion rights issue may find it even harder to support the "Homosexual Movement" or the "Homosexual Agenda," as the issue is framed by the Religious Right.



The second portion of the program was led by Susan Aranoff of Randolph, VCLGR Liaison to the Governor's Office. Speaking from the Randolph Center site, she described how the Religious Right has framed "gay rights" as "special rights." The Coalition is trying to reposition the debate over gay rights as part of the effort to ensure "human rights" for all people.

Aranoff cautioned the participants that all is not well in Vermont, as evidenced by the arson fire at Vermont CARES last June and the recent bomb threat against the Onion River Arts Council and Christ's Church in Montpelier in retaliation for their support and promotion of the recent performance of the gay singing group The Flirtations.

The Coalition is working to expand upon the strong framework established in the state for the protection of the rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgenders:

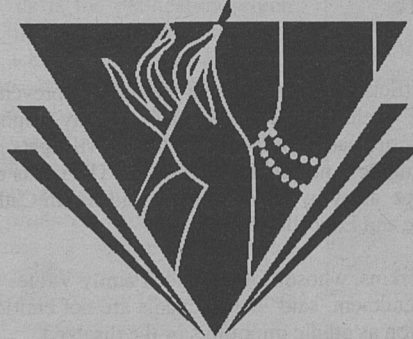
**Vermont's basic civil rights laws provide specific protection against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in seven areas, including housing and public accommodation.

**Our Hates Crime Bill protects those attacked on the basis of their sexual orientation.

**The state offers Domestic Partnership Benefits to its employees.

VCLGR will be wrapping up its current "Fourth Friday" series on Friday, April 28, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm at Vermont Interactive Television sites in Bennington, Brattleboro, Randolph Center, Rutland, St. Johnsbury, South Burlington, and Waterbury. ▼

WRITE YOUR AUNTIE PEARL



Dear Auntie Pearl: Last month, my lover Jon and I had our first overnight visit at my parents' house. This was the first time I'd ever brought a lover home, because this is the only real, long-term relationship I've been in.

Everything was great until bedtime, when my mother showed Jon to the guest room! It wasn't like we were planning a wild night under my parents' roof, but we never expected this! We ended up sneaking around like a couple of kids. We slept in the guest room together, and made my bed look slept-in the next morning.

I know that was ridiculous, but it was late, and we thought it wouldn't do any harm. Well, when my mother called to invite us for another visit next month, I said we had to talk. My mother says that she and my father feel the same way about this as about my brother and his girlfriend sharing a bed at the house. They don't approve, but they won't tell us we can't.

So now the arrangements for next month are up to me, and I don't know what to do. If we sleep together, I'll upset my parents. But if we sleep apart, it will feel wrong. One of my friends said we should get a hotel room, but that would just hurt my folks.

We won't die if we sleep apart, and I know this isn't an earth-shattering problem, but I hope you'll help us decide what the right thing is. Thanks.

Craig in New England

Dear Craig: The day that sharing a bed is not earth-shattering, Auntie will retire her pen and forward all letters to Ann Landers.

Now, Craig. There's a difference between disrespecting and disappointing one's loved ones. Reserve that hotel room. Auntie Pearl's Bill of Queer Rights expressly spells out a couple's right to private comfort after a day of family dynamics.

You may create a stir. But consider this: your brother and his girlfriend may marry someday.

How will you and Jon feel when they go off to bed together and you two part for the night? There will be no such legally sanctioned watershed in your relationship which will make your parents comfortable with your sleeping preferences.

When your parents realize that their attitude means losing your presence in the house at night, they might just come around.

Dear Auntie Pearl: I've watched my 3 sisters get married in the last 5 years. My parents spent thousands on each wedding. My parents know I'm a dyke, and that I'm never getting married.

I know I'm not the only dyke in the world to wonder if I have a right to the money that my parents would have spent on my wedding. I need it more than my sisters do - they have a male salary in their lives now. I'll support myself for the rest of my life.

I don't want to rip-off my folks, but the money exists. Do I have a right to it?

Pissed in the Midwest

Dear Midwest: You don't. This falls under "Life Isn't Fair". You can ask your parents for a handout. You can ask them for a loan. But whatever you ask for is all theirs. How they use it is their business. Auntie wishes she had better news for you.

Dear Auntie Pearl: You can settle a bet for us. Which do most American guys prefer: cut or uncut? There's a great prize at stake, so please don't delay! We love you, Auntie Pearl!

Five Devoted Nephews

Dear Nephews: Either way, diamonds are a boy's best friend. You all win. ▼

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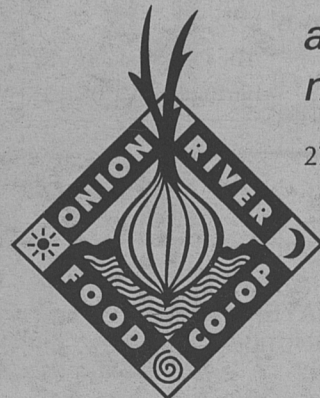
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