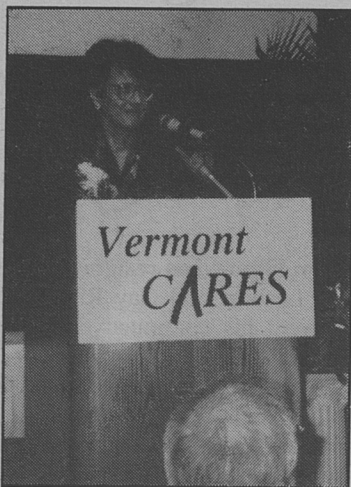


Vermont CARES Annual Dinner: "A Celebration of Life"

Chris Tebbetts

BURLINGTON -- Over 300 friends and supporters of Vermont CARES turned out for "A Celebration of Life," the agency's 1995 annual dinner on March 25 at the Radisson Hotel. Board and staff members were joined by a vast representation of the community for an evening which included a cocktail reception, dinner, dancing, award presentations, and an address by National AIDS Policy Coordinator Patsy Fleming.

The slate of dinner speakers also included Vermont CARES' outgoing Chairman of the Board David Curtis. Curtis, who will remain on the board in 1995, introduced incoming members and newly appointed officers. New member Bennett Law will now serve as board Secretary, Mark Dowling will continue as Treasurer and Nancy Cathcart will take over for Curtis as the



(Photo: Bennett Law)
National AIDS Policy
Coordinator Patsy Fleming

board's chairperson. Other new board members are Christopher Curtis, Ed Flanagan, Haskell Garrett, Christopher Grace, Jeff Martin, and Susan Salmon.

In a surprise move, Cathcart

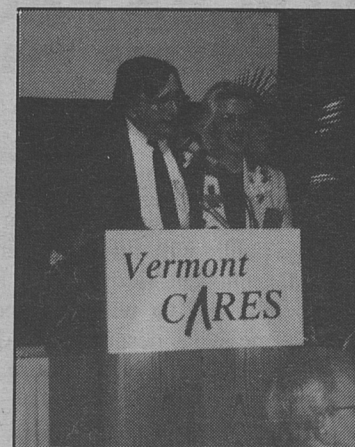
presented to the unsuspecting Curtis the first of what will be an annual award, the David W. Curtis Award for service and dedication to the HIV/AIDS community. Curtis, a Burlington attorney who recently came out publicly as a gay man living with AIDS, received a standing ovation and appeared genuinely touched in an emotional speech, thanking the board and staff of CARES, his co-workers and his family.

Kate Hill, Executive Director of Vermont CARES, thanked the year's outstanding volunteers with a presentation of awards. Sarah Woodard, Teresa Pete, Liz Neudecker and Don Duell were recognized.

In a brief but succinct speech, the soft spoken Ms. Fleming brought a message of support from President Clinton, emphasizing his dedication to the fight against AIDS. HIV disease is now the number one killer of Americans between the ages of 25 and 44, she noted, and grim though this statistic may be, Fleming admitted to the very real leverage it carries in research funding on a national level.

Fleming also spoke of the need to recognize the threat of HIV infection which plays against the seemingly exempt, rural backdrop of a place like Vermont. Citing the Vermont rate of infection at 1 in 500 (though some place it as low as 1 in 800) against the national rate of 1 in 250, nonetheless, she spoke, even here, "too many people have spent too much time going to too many funerals." The fight is not over, she cautioned, adding optimistically that "we will succeed because we must."

Noted for her interest in youth issues, Ms. Fleming on this occasion chose to make special mention of HOPWA, Housing Opportunities



(Photo: Bennett Law)

David Curtis, outgoing VT CARES Board Chairperson, and Nancy Cathcart, incoming Chair

for People With AIDS, a federally funded program which is currently under threat of rescission. She referred to a man she had met at a Montpelier luncheon for PWA's that afternoon. He told her of his "couch surfing," going from friend to friend, trying to stay sheltered amidst the challenges - physical, emotional, and financial - of dealing with HIV. This is a typical story, said Fleming, and one that will become even more common if funding for HOPWA is taken away. Referring to an oft-used phrase by HOPWA opponents, Fleming made her stance clear: "We need to tell them that a roof over one's head is not a 'special right.'"

Coming in the June issue of *Out in the Mountains*, an in depth interview with National AIDS Policy Coordinator, Patsy Fleming. ▼

Don't forget your rubbers.

You don't get it from toilet seats. You don't get it from coffee cups. You don't get it from desk tops in a school room. It doesn't fly through the air or swim around in hot tubs. You don't catch it from shaking hands, kissing, sneezing, wrestling or dancing.

According to the Surgeon General, your best protection against AIDS, barring abstinence, is use of a condom. For the facts about AIDS, call the Vermont AIDS Hotline.

VERMONT AIDS HOTLINE: 1-800-882-AIDS

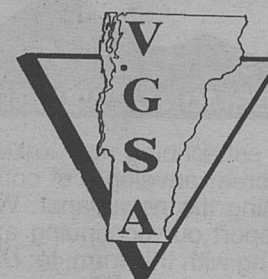
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