

OITM Roundup:

State, National and World News Briefs

compiled by Kip M. Roberson

VT-NEA discusses G/L/B issues

MONTPELIER -- "Promoting Equity for Gay/ Lesbian/ Bisexual Students and School Employees," a workshop and networking meeting, was held on Saturday, February 11 at the Vermont NEA (National Education Association) headquarters in Montpelier. A dozen educators attended the meeting; this being the fourth such meeting. Previous conferences addressed both the concerns of g/l/b students and teachers, as well as training in dealing with these issues.

At the February meeting, the agenda focused on direction. There was a unanimous sense that an identifiable group be formed and be open to all NEA members who are supportive of g/l/b concerns. Several possible names were discussed, but the group deciding on "VT-NEA Network of GLB and Allies." Along with a name, the intent to formalize a network or caucus in order to best support the specific concerns of this group was established.

The mood of the participants was upbeat and positive, and all left with follow-up plans. Several educators were to work on a draft of by-laws and a mission statement. Others were to prepare for the group's May 6 meeting as well as create an agenda for future group activities, which might include training for participants. (Moir, OITM staff writer)

BAAP learns & serves America

BRATTLEBORO -- The Brattleboro Area AIDS Project is proud to announce it is the recipient of a three-year Vermont Learn & Serve America Grant that will fund the creation of an HIV/AIDS Youth Network in

Windham County. Through preparation for, design of, and involvement in community service projects, young people will identify the risks for HIV and will educate their peers, families and communities about prevention.

This program is an expansion of the youth trainings BAAP has done in Brattleboro Union High School. The HIV/AIDS education done in the school and in the community by the youths participating far exceeded the group's greatest hopes.

The Program at Brattleboro Union High School will be expanded to include a Windham County Youth Network, which will work cooperatively with the State Peer Education Network. Students from Brattleboro are already on the State Committee. (Brattleboro Area AIDS Project Volunteer News)

Ann Reed to perform in support of Vermont CARES

BURLINGTON -- Minneapolis-based singer/songwriter Ann Reed knows the value of supporting essential organizations. Twenty five percent of Ann's entire international touring schedule is set aside to support organizations that address the issues of women and children's wellness and safety. She consistently raises money for Take Back the Night, Action Against Domestic Violence, AIDS research, the National Coalition for Breast Cancer Research, and UNICEF. Ann appeared in February of 1994 with Bonnie Raitt to benefit No Nuclear Dumping on the Mississippi. Because of Ann's commitment to volunteerism and the universal appeal of her music, Ann was named as the "musical ambassador for the 30th anniversary of VISTA" (Volunteers In Service to America).

Ann has ten commercial recordings to her credit. Woven between her adult contemporary music one will find some Reed "folk" songs that have spun off into television specials, like the song "Heroes", which led to an NBC-TV special called "Heroes," "Growing Up Female and Strong," which won a Silver Apple Award for television documentaries. The song "Heroes" also led to Ann's first appearance on ABC-TV's "Good Morning America." In November 1994, Ann wrote the music for the UNICEF exhibit called "Girls and the Perils of Girlhood" which landed Ann on "Good Morning America" again, as well as on National Public Radio's "Prairie Home Companion" and "All Things Considered." Ann recently performed for the NCAA Final Four Women's Basketball Championships on March 29 and 31, in Minneapolis.

Ann Reed will be performing at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Burlington on Saturday, June 3 (Pride Day), at 8:00 pm. All proceeds to support Vermont CARES.

Gays removed from anti-bias policy

ALBANY, NY -- New York's attorney general, criticized for the campaign he ran last year against a lesbian, has removed sexual orientation from a list of classes protected against discrimination in his office. Attorney General Dennis Vacco does not care whether his employees are homosexual but wants to make sure his office's employment practices are consistent with state law, spokesman Chris McKenna said. Assemblywoman Deborah Glick, the state legislature's only openly homosexual member, called the decision "despicable but not surprising."

Republican Vacco defeated Democrat Karen Burstein for the post that had been held by Democrat G. Oliver Koppell. During the campaign, Staten Island Borough President Guy Molinari, a Vacco supporter, said he did not believe a lesbian should be elected attorney general. Vacco was criticized by lesbian and gay groups for not denouncing Molinari

and for reminding conservative voters about Burstein's sexual orientation.

Vacco recently issued an order to his staff not to discriminate in hiring on the basis of age, race, creed, color, nationality, disability or marital status, McKenna said. But, while Vacco's Democratic predecessors, Koppell and Robert Abrams, had added sexual orientation to that list, Vacco took it out, McKenna said.

Vacco's order is identical to wording contained in the state human rights law, his spokesman said. "The human rights law doesn't specify sexual preference," McKenna said. "The attorney general doesn't believe that it's within his authority to add things to existing law, especially in an area as sensitive as that and one that can be litigated by this office."

But Glick, a Manhattan Democrat, said Vacco was hiding behind the bigotry of others. Glick said some gays and lesbians who work in the attorney general's office have told her there is an increased atmosphere of homophobia there. One gay man told her that he had overheard a colleague say he was "happy that Mr. Vacco was coming because he doesn't care about homosexuals." Glick said she advised the gay man to look for work elsewhere. (Lavender Voice/Syracuse Post-Standard/AP)

Gores entertain gay activists

WASHINGTON, DC -- Vice President Al Gore and his wife, Tipper, reached out to the gay community and entertained 150 of its political activists at a party in their home.

A pianist played show tunes and a pet Labrador begged at the buffet table as officers and members of the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF), a gay lobby, rubbed elbows with the Gores. "It's a wonderful thing to do what you're doing, and that's devoting your lives to others," Gore told the guests. "This dedication is an outgrowth of the way you live your entire lives." "We very deeply share your vision of a society that is fair and free of discrimination for gay and lesbian people, and we want you to know that," Mrs. Gore said.

The vice president took note of what he called "a tremendous victory" when the House Appropriations Committee voted to restore \$36 million that it previously had decided to cut from AIDS programs this year.

HRCF "was instrumental in this victory and we understand very well why it is so important to have an organization that fights for the rights of Americans to be free of discrimination and to have a self-government that responds to the challenges that we face," he said.

The reception was an effort by the administration to reach out politically to the gay community, which has been somewhat disappointed by President Clinton. Among their complaints have been the president's inability to overturn the ban on homosexuals in the military and the Justice Department's refusal to support legal challenges to anti-gay initiatives.

But there have been advances as well. Several of Clinton's openly gay appointees - including Bruce Lehman, head of the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, and Assistant Housing Secretary Roberta Achtenberg - were also at the party.

Elizabeth Birch, executive director of HRCF, acknowledged that the reception, while festive and pleasant, had political undertones. "Evenings like tonight and reaching out in significant ways between now and 1996 will be absolutely necessary gestures as part of an overall calculation for political victory," she said. "I think the president feels extremely unappreciated, and whether or not the administration has legitimate reasons for feeling that, the fact is that gay and lesbian people are somewhat disenchanted." (AP)

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