

Out in the Mountains
established in 1986

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Out In The Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562) is published monthly except for a combined July/August issue. The newspaper maintains offices at 109 South Winooski Avenue in Burlington. Our mailing address is PO Box 177, Burlington VT 05402. Our e-mail address is OutVermont@aol.com. Bulk rate postage for the mailing of the newspaper is paid in Burlington. The subscription rate is \$20 per year within the United States.

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Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, support and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, and bisexual communities.

Editorial Policy

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of the staff. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates and actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals.

We will not publish any material which is overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, or homophobic.

All materials submitted must be signed. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously, upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

To Submit Articles & Letters

We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper both for and by gay, lesbian, and bisexual Vermonters. Please assist us by typing your articles and letters double-spaced and including your name and phone number in case we have any questions. *Thank you for helping out!*

Materials should be sent to:
Out in the Mountains
PO Box 177
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How to Advertise

If you would like to run an ad in *OITM*, please contact us for rates, sizes, and information. Copy can be mailed to: *OITM*, P.O. Box 177, Burlington, VT 05402, or call Ellen at (802) 860-1922 Steven West at (802) 864-6399 or Bruce at BMH graphic design at (802) 658-1556.

Read *OITM*
Monthly

**From the Editor:
The G/L/B Community -
An 'Engendered' Species?**

Fred Kuhr

WINOOSKI -- Putting together the monthly "*OITM* History" feature in celebration of the newspaper's tenth year of publication has forced me to stumble upon stories that I had either forgotten, heard mention of only in passing, or did not know of at all. I have skimmed through articles such as the arson attack on Vermont CARES, Howdy Russell's election campaigns, and the hate crime attacks outside Burlington's gay bar, Pearls. In the October 1989 issue, however, I came across a most eye-opening quote. Under the headline "Attention: Volunteers Needed for *OITM*," the editing collective stated the following:

"We are also making a special appeal to all the men in the community. For the past two years or so women have greatly outnumbered the men in *OITM*. We want to ensure that our paper doesn't take on a women oriented slant to the exclusion of gay men."

This took me by surprise in light of the recent criticism this newspaper has received because the men currently outnumber the women on staff. A colleague of mine, who has worked on the newspaper longer than I have, mentioned that this goes in waves -- male-dominated to female-dominated and back again. A flood of questions immediately washed through my head: When can the newspaper be neither male-dominated nor female-dominated? Should gender equality be mandatory? Is gender equality necessary? Can men cover women's stories? Can women cover men's stories? Do stories in and of themselves have gender? Can a newspaper be both male and female? Or is *OITM* an 'engendered' species, forever swishing back and forth between the sexes?

Unfortunately, *OITM* is not the only Vermont g/l/b organization dealing with such questions. The Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), for example, is currently working from the other end of the gender divide. At last year's Conference and Queer Town Meeting in Middlebury, 65% of the attendees were female to the men's 35%. (Statistics from this year's Conference in Montpelier were not available at press time.) Of the 15 people elected last year to serve on the VCLGR Board of Directors, seven were men and eight were women. That sounds equitable. The problem is that the majority of the men did not run for re-election, and the group had a difficult time finding male representation. According to Tom Aloisi, one of those male Board members who did not run for re-election, "VCLGR is political, and most men don't want to be political. Men have interests other than politics."

So now the next question: Does such a great cultural divide exist between gay men and lesbians that it impacts how we view (and participate in) our community organizations? In *OITM*'s July/August issue of this year, when tempers were still flaring from the "disinvitation" of Barbara Snelling from the Pride Day Rally, an incident dubbed "Babsgate," a female reader wrote, "With the exception of Alison Bechdel's work (the lesbian oriented comic strip 'Dykes To Watch Out For'), *OITM* is sadly out of touch." In the same issue, Peggy Luhrs, Executive Director of the Burlington Women's Council, called actions taken by this newspaper "irresponsible and dangerous." However, every letter *OITM* received from men concerning these issues was positive. One male reader even called the coverage "highly responsible" and deserving of a "standing ovation."

So can gay men and lesbians work together? Or better yet, do they even want to. A friend of mine is convinced that they cannot and will not. His belief is that even though gay men and lesbians are all 'homosexual,' the two cultures are separate and distinct -- with different wants and needs. He was even shocked by the presence of a bare-chested woman at the usually all-male, clothing optional beach at Shelburne Point in Shelburne. He said that the Point has been claimed as a male-only area and women should have their own space.

Just how many gays, lesbians, and (yes) bisexuals feel the same way? Hard to tell. As far as *OITM* is concerned, it is the newspaper of the state's greater g/l/b community and should remain that way. In fact, I strongly encourage women from all around the state to get involved as writers, account representatives, or even monthly envelope stuffers. The wider the representation of community members on staff, the better the newspaper will be at reflecting the entire community.

So where does this leave us? My fear is that the more we divide our own community, the more we quibble from within, the less power we will have and the less effective we will be in obtaining our rights as human beings. In this light, being 'engendered' can only lead to extinction. ▼

**VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAINS:
An Open Letter to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
and Transgendered Vermonters**

Submitted by the 1994-95 Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR) Board of Directors

MONTPELIER -- We are writing in response to Mary Hurlie's September "Voices From The Mountains," entitled "An open letter to the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights." We are addressing the community at large to clarify what VCLGR is, how we function as an organization and how we deal with conflict.

What is VCLGR? VCLGR is an entirely volunteer organization whose stated mission is to promote the civil rights, personal empowerment and social acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Vermonters. Since 1985, VCLGR has worked to advocate for the equal rights of all Vermonters and to strengthen the l/g/b/t community statewide. In December 1993, at its first annual statewide conference, VCLGR revised its organizational structure and elected its first ever Board of Directors.

How does VCLGR work? VCLGR members elect eight representatives to its Board of Directors, two co-chairs and two co-liaisons. The Board meets one full Sunday per month. VCLGR has several standing committees which consist of Board members and other volunteers. These committees meet regularly throughout the year and work on such things as the annual conference, the interactive television series, public policy issues, fundraising, by-laws and elections.

VCLGR adopted its first set of by-laws in October 1994. Prior to adopting by-laws, VCLGR embraced a set of operating principles which included directives for resolving conflict. All VCLGR meetings are open to members and supportive allies. Contact numbers of VCLGR Board members are listed on VCLGR letterhead. VCLGR maintains a post office box and an email address. We publish a column in *Out In The Mountains*, and we send fliers about events, legislative alerts and periodic reports to our mailing list.

How does VCLGR work to resolve conflict? VCLGR strives to be accessible to all lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Vermonters. When a member of our community contacts us, we respond.

We encourage discussion of complicated and often emotionally charged issues, and we work to create solutions to the issues raised. For example, we hold an annual Queer Town Meeting at which we invite the community to speak their hearts and minds and identify areas of concern. At the 1994 Queer Town Meeting, people spoke of wanting to attend VCLGR-sponsored events closer to home. In response, we created a series of events over interactive television in which people were able to participate at seven sites around the state. People wanted the conference to do more to meet the needs and acknowledge the presence and contribution of bisexuals. In response, we offered more workshops relating to bisexuality and more workshops on other topics presented by openly bisexual men and women. VCLGR was also challenged to do more to increase the diversity and accessibility of its Board, committees and programs. In response, we adopted an expanded statement regarding interlocking oppression, created the position of Board Diversity Chair and added a Diversity Committee to our slate of standing committees in order to help us achieve our goal of increasing diversity.

We do not shy away from the thorny or complicated issues of our day. Nor do we shy away from conflict. We encourage anyone with any concerns regarding VCLGR to call a Board member, write us a letter, send an email, come to a meeting, call a co-chair or co-liaison. We welcome constructive criticism of VCLGR actions and policies. Destructive criticism, however, of individual Board members or other volunteers carrying out the work of VCLGR undermines our ability to achieve our mission. The VCLGR Board fully supports the work of its Co-Liaisons Susan Aranoff and Keith Goslant.

As lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Vermonters, we have true enemies who work daily to make it so uncomfortable for us to be out, that many of us continue to live in the closet or, particularly our youth, feel compelled to take our own lives. Let's not do our enemies' work. We need every volunteer we have and we need to support each other as we struggle for equality. There are many stripes in our rainbow flag, and VCLGR is committed to honoring and including each and every one. Please join the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in our effort to strengthen and unify Vermont's many l/g/b/t communities. ▼

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