Out in the Mountains established in 1986

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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 Burlington, VT 05402

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) 864-1922 Steven West at (802) 864-6399 or Bruce at BMH graphic design at (802) 658-1556.

Read OITM Monthly

From the Editor: Anatomy of Our G/L/B Press

Fred Kuhr

WINOOSKI -- "Are we publishing ... to keep g/l/b/t's in the state of Vermont (and surrounding rural areas) in touch with each other and the relevant happenings in Vermont, or is its purpose to 'cleanse' our real lives of enough detail in order to make them palatable to those we hope to 'educate'?"

The above was written by a New Hampshire reader concerning last year's *Dykes To Watch Out For* controversy. After *OITM* printed a Letter to the Editor from a Rutland reader who claimed the comic strip was in "poor taste" and "not appropriate" for this newspaper, we received many more letters in support of Alison Bechdel's work. Most of those letters echoed the same sentiment -- asked simply, "What is the purpose of *Out In The Mountains*?"

This question, however, reaches far beyond whether or not to publish a particular cartoon. Take an extreme case as an example. Let's say that in our very safe state, a slew of murders were committed up and down the Green Mountains, from Derby to Dummerston. Of course, any Green Mountain Serial Killer would be considered news by the likes of the Caledonia Record and the Brattleboro Reformer. But would the story make *OITM*? Probably not, unless the victims were mostly gays, lesbians, and bisexuals. Well, what if the GMSK, once caught, turned out to be gay? How would our community react? What would our community do? And how would *OITM*, our community newspaper, cover the story? Would it become a page one headline, a small feature story inside, or a noticeable omission?

Recently, *Out In The Mountains* has come up against criticism for covering, or just merely mentioning, certain aspects of Vermont's g/l/b community because they reflect negatively upon the community. The most obvious example is (yes, dare I mention it again) Babsgate. When *OITM* ran the story back in June of last year detailing the Pride Committee's decision to invite and subsequently 'disinvite' Lieutenant Governor Barbara Snelling to speak at the Pride Rally, *OITM* received criticism not only for the positions taken on the editorial pages, but also for the decision to run the story. Readers told me that the story made our community seem unorganized and politically naive — just the kind of ammunition for which our enemies in the Religious Right are looking. In one Letter to the Editor, *OITM* was labelled "sadly out of touch."

More recently, *OITM* has caught flack for other mentions of community dark spots, including scuffles at Vermont CARES, the state's largest AIDS service organization, and the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR).

Frankly, I am confused by some people's anger with *OITM* when we cover or make references to our community's conflicts and failures. Is our community really that perfect and blemish-free? As gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, are we so special that we are above questioning and scrutiny — even from each other?

On this topic, three aspects make for a successful g/l/b newspaper, or any newspaper for that matter. 1) Responsibility — As reporters and editors, we are ultimately responsible to our readers. You depend on us for accurate and complete information, even more important in our most rural and isolating state in the nation. 2) Accountability — Not only are we accountable to you, our readers (for the work we do is always "in the news"), but we help keep our community's leaders accountable to those they lead. 3) Truth — If we neglect to report the truth, or if we choose not to report the truth for the sake of eliminating the negative and whitewashing our image, then we perform a grand disservice to the community. If this were the case, then why even bother publishing?

Jeff Yarbrough, Editor in Chief of *The Advocate*, once wrote, "In presenting a scrubbed version of gay and lesbian life to the world — and especially to ourselves — we're only damaging our movement in the long run." We will only win our struggle for basic human rights once society at large accepts us for who and what we are — both the good and the bad. We cannot expect others to accept us, however, until we first learn to accept ourselves. ▼

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Letters to the Editor

Life's a Party

In ... past ... issues of this paper references were made concerning the lack of political activity of VGSA (Vermont Gay Social Alternatives). First in the whimsical "Vermont Trash TV" (Political VGSA Members) and then in the fantasian, "A Queer Holiday List" (VGSA: Political Activity). Thank you, Paul Olsen, for the affirmation.

As a member of the Steering Committee of VGSA, I'm writing to concur, "Yes, we are non-political." As our Article of Agreement proclaims, "The purpose of our group is to provide occasions for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to meet in comfortable, non-threatening surroundings." No mention of a mission to change the world nor push an agenda, just an opportunity for individuals in our community to get together — to meet, to exchange ideas, and to share like experiences.

Many of our members, including Mr. Olsen, are politically active. They don't need VGSA to speak for them (or to them) concerning things that don't involve our organization's purpose "to provide occasions for gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals to meet, etc." But if Paul or any other member would like to organize a monthly political discussion group for members of VGSA, I'd be one of the first to sign up.

VGSA connects people with like interests, skills and hobbies. Over the past five years hundreds of people have met through VGSA establishing friendships, discovering new interests and widening their network of acquaintances ...

While I do believe we need political activity within the g/l/b community, I also know that we need bowling nights, brunches, discussion groups, hikes, dining out and movie nights, New Year's Eve-nts and cruises. The word "party" needn't be reserved for political affiliation.

Bob Bolyard Burlington

Life's a Drag

It was with great surprise and pride that I discovered that one of the Sisters LeMay was selected "Best Drag Queen" in your paper's annual "Best and Worst Of Gay Vermont." Having long been an admirer of Mr. Olsen's tastes and sensibilities, it was even more flattering that he singled out one of our outfits in the acknowledgment. Credit for our marvelous wardrobe must go to my dear sister, Marguerite. As our fashion designer, she continues to allow us to look our best. Being the larger boned female-impaired variety of drag queens, it's difficult for us to look as good as we sing -- but she pulls it off. As a matter of fact, Marguerite's fashions have become so popular that there's a special "LeMay Way" line of clothing being featured at Peggy's Plump and Proud located in the Ethan Allen Green Mountain Champlain Valley Maple Apple Tree Farm Commons strip mall on Route 7 just outside of Milton ...

Amber LeMay
Burlington

OUTSPOKEN:

OITM's Quote of the Month

"It takes a man, dressed as a woman, to do a man's job."

Vaunessa Vale, performer at CabarAIDS, an event that raised over \$4000 for the Brattleboro Area AIDS Project

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