

## "It's Training Men" Draws Large Turnout



Co-Presenters Craig Hickman (center) and Jeff Perrott (right) pose for the camera with Carey Johnson of the Brattleboro AIDS Project

**WHITE RIVER JUNCTION** – Over eighty men (and several women) attended the Vermont Department of Health's day-long conference "It's Training Men" on Saturday, January 20, at the Hotel Coolidge in White River Junction.

Billed as "a day of unity to help us help ourselves in the fight against HIV/AIDS," the event focused on the prevention needs of men who have sex with men (or MSM for short) in rural areas. While most participants came from the New England states, several attendants came from as far away as Pennsylvania and Colorado.

Craig Hickman, an award-winning transgendered performance artist, poet, and activist from the Boston area, served as facilitator for the morning presentations and entertained the crowd during lunch with a reading from his recently-published book of poems. Acknowledging his own discomfort with current safe sex terminology, Hickman promised to translate phrases like "engaging in receptive anal intercourse in a public sex environment" into more understandable language such as "getting banged in the bushes." He challenged the group to look at the HIV/AIDS crisis not only from a statistical perspective, but from a personal, more human angle as well.

Tom Aloisi of the Vermont Department of Health and Neil Twitchell of the New Hampshire Department of Health offered informational presentations focusing on the current attitudes and behavior of MSM in their respective states. While both agreed that the safe sex message had reached and influenced various communities, figures suggested that certain populations (such as youth) demanded stronger attention.

Terje Anderson, also of the Vermont Department of Health and a member of President Clinton's National Task Force on AIDS, discussed national perspectives on HIV prevention and education, noting that in October of 1995, the total number of AIDS cases in the United States had crossed the half million mark. Concerned that the public had lost interest in the epidemic even as the numbers continued to rise, Anderson challenged the group, stating "we can't let an epidemic of this size, at this rate, be acceptable."

Anderson noted that previous HIV/AIDS education programs, "basically a bowl of condoms and a brochure," should now be considered "frightfully unsophisticated." He outlined new approaches based on behavioral science theories, noting that educators "need to deliver prevention messages that meet people where they really live" and to "stop having this absolutist belief that we know what's best for people."

Jeff Perrott, coordinator of the SafeKeeping Project with the AIDS Action Committee of Massachusetts, then led a group activity intended to increase sensitivity to the already highly charged feelings about AIDS and HIV in the MSM population.

In the afternoon, attendants separated into a number of workshops designed to address related concerns, from substance use and abuse to effective peer counseling skills. Various HIV/AIDS prevention workers from the New England area facilitated the sessions.

During the wrap-up session, many agreed that though the conference had been informative and helpful, it had been too short to address fully a number of issues. Plans to make the conference an annual, extended event are already under consideration.

For more information about the conference, contact Tom Aloisi at the Vermont Department of Health, (802) 863-7244. ▼

(518) 561-9071

**BLAIR'S  
LOUNGE**

30 Marion St.  
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Prop: Jill M. Cerone

## Surveys Look at Youth and HIV

A recent survey of gay and bisexual men in their teens and early twenties indicated an HIV infection rate of seven percent. The results were presented by Dr. Linda Valleroy of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at a recent meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Meanwhile, another study based in New York showed signs that HIV infection might be on the decline among young people, though the survey was not limited to men who have had sex with men.

Chris Tebbetts, Coordinator of the Men's Health Project in Burlington, expressed moderate concern over the figures, noting that reports from urban areas tended to skew the data somewhat. Even so, he said, "The scary thing is that rural areas tend to follow urban areas."

Researchers have yet to determine why gay and bisexual youth continue to practice unsafe sex despite awareness of HIV/AIDS. Valleroy noted in her report that more than a third of the young people surveyed had engaged in unprotected anal sex within the past six months.

Tebbetts worried that such casual attitudes toward safer sex might exist here in Vermont as well. "If young people in general are feeling immune these days," he noted, "then young rural people are possibly feeling even more so." ▼

## Suicide Prevention Task Force

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Karin Eade, Executive Director of Outright Vermont.

## "Breaking the Code" Explores Life of Gay World War II Hero

Alan Turing (1912-1954) was one of the twentieth century's most brilliant mathematicians and one of its greatest benefactors. His genius helped unravel the secret German military code known as "The Enigma" during World War II.

Turing's feat of detection offered British and Allied forces' advance and detailed knowledge of German land and sea maneuvers, thereby ensuring the Allied victory. Turing would later use his mastery of mathematics, logic, and electronics to conceive, plan, and build the first digital computer.

But another side existed to Turing's life. He was open and unapologetically gay at a time in Britain when homosexuality was still a criminal offense. (This was to remain the case until 1967 when it was decriminalized; yet even then, the age of consent was set at 21 as opposed to 16 for heterosexuals.) When Turing's affair with a male prostitute became known to the police, he was charged with "gross indecency," publicly humiliated, and convicted as a criminal.

Turing was obliged to undergo psychoanalysis and demeaning hormone treatments designed to "cure" his homosexuality as a result. Though he had been hailed as one of World War II's genuine heroes, he became a pariah in his country. The same government that had backed him enthusiastically in his code-breaking and computer-developing capacities now withdrew its support for his work, ostracized him, and spied on him.

## Addison County Youth Initiative Underway

**MIDDLEBURY** – Fifteen concerned members of the Addison County community gathered on Tuesday evening, February 27, to develop initiatives toward helping gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and questioning youth in the area. Karin Eade, Executive Director of Outright Vermont, facilitated the meeting, which had been postponed once previously due to inclement weather.

Eade stressed throughout the meeting that although Outright could provide resources and support, she hoped that the group would develop its own strategies toward addressing local problems and concerns. Several people in attendance knew of gay youth in the county's two major high schools who had endured harassment after coming out to their classmates.

After listing local resources and community leaders, the group brainstormed possible plans of action for the near and distant future. Smaller sub-groups agreed to take on a variety of tasks, including a county-wide effort to have businesses display "Safe Space" placards bearing the pink triangle emblem.

A number of college students representing the Middlebury Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Alliance (MGLBA) expressed eagerness to help facilitate groups and to present panels at local schools. They also addressed the possibility of opening their weekly meetings to youth throughout the county.

A follow-up meeting has been scheduled for 7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 2, in the public meeting room of the Iisley Library in Middlebury (see Calendar listing for more information). All interested groups and individuals (particularly youth) are encouraged to attend. ▼

"determine what we can do to help communities deal with this problem."

"We need to train communities to identify and help at-risk youth" Copeland said. In addition to reducing the rate of teen suicide, Eade hopes the Task Force will establish a subcommittee to come up with separate recommendations for g/l/b youth.

Governor Dean's establishment of a Youth Suicide Prevention Task Force marks an important step in addressing a public health problem with tragic consequences. National statistics and the opinions of Task Force members indicate that gay, lesbian, bisexual and sexually questioning youth in Vermont represent a sadly disproportionate number of the young people that the Task Force will be discussing as they continue their work. ▼

Ultimately, his despondency from the public exposure, and the hormonal imbalances resulting from the drug treatments led Turing to kill himself in June of 1954 by ingesting a poisoned apple, a bizarre allusion to Turing's own admiration for Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*.

The story of this brilliant, uncompromising, and courageous gay man is related with complete honesty in Hugh Whitmore's play "Breaking the Code." The drama explores the two great passions of Turing's life: mathematics and homosexuality. Covering the years from 1928 to his death in 1954, it examines the complex spectrum of Turing's life, including his refusal to compromise his own nature, even in the face of persecution by a postwar security state. As British historian Noel Annan describes him, Turing was "the purest type of Cambridge intellectual — a homosexual who, by his mathematical genius, did as much as any man to save his country in war."

The Champlain College Players will present "Breaking the Code" as their Spring 1996 mainstage production. Under the direction of Don Rowe, the play will be performed Wednesday through Saturday, April 10-13, at 8 p.m. in the Champlain College Alumni Auditorium.

Tickets are \$6 for adults and \$4 for students and senior adults. Reservations are strongly suggested. For information or reservations, call (802) 860-2707. This production of "Breaking the Code" is recommended for mature audiences only. ▼