

Lyndon State College Hosts Young Women's Conference

by Nat Harrison

LYNDONVILLE—When Helen Reddy's song "We Are Women, Hear Us Roar" climbed the charts over twenty years ago, womyn were in everyone's faces: in the streets, in the boys' clubs, on Wall Street, and in Washington. While womyn have moved further ahead since then, there is still a long way to go.

On March 23rd, Lyndon State College hosted a day-long conference named after Reddy's ground-breaking song. Sponsored by the Youth Wellness Center and the Psychology Department of Lyndon State, "Young Women's Day" offered education and honest answers to questions that young womyn have about their bodies, their relationships, their self-esteem, and other concerns.

Jeri Martinez delivered the keynote address. Entitled "Hostages in the Home: Why Battered Womyn Just Don't Leave," her speech stood in stark contrast to the festive balloons in the room as she strode right into the difficult realities of domestic abuse.

Martinez described the devastating effects of control, isolation, and jealousy. She described the Stockholm Syndrome, wherein a hostage forms a bond with her captor in order to survive. She also offered a number of unsettling statistics: Only one percent of batterers serve time. Vermont now has five shelters for battered women. Nationwide, there are twice as many shelters for abused animals as there are for women.

An Outright Vermont panel led by two young womyn, Anya and Gwen, made for intimate discussions owing to their easygoing manner. They described knowing about their orientation at an early age, though even with supportive family environments, coming out wasn't easy for either of them. Anya related how she had missed out on early life experiences by not knowing there were any alternatives. The only dykes Gwen knew drank and played softball, and she felt out of place around them. Both womyn discussed being outed in school, and how harassment often resulted. Both felt fortunate to have the Outright GLB Chat line and other programs available in Vermont.

In her Eating Disorders Workshop, Kim Hayward explained that although equal numbers of men and womyn are overweight, womyn diet at a much higher rate: almost 95%. Incidences of anorexia and bulimia are also significantly higher for womyn. She pointed out that in the social order, a thin female body provides less of a threat to a man, who can easily overwhelm her. In this way, the dominant patriarchal order is maintained.

Mary Donnelly presented an update on Breast Cancer (and dedicated the class to her partner, Claudia). She quoted statistics showing that 20-30% of cancers have a genetic link, leaving 70-80% preventable. She also felt that Breast Cancer Awareness Month was a perverted PR campaign destined to benefit corporate polluters, pharmaceutical industries, and cancer agencies. Donnelly noted that October will see the beginning of a new campaign: National Cancer Industry Awareness Month.

Performances by several young womyn provided the finale for the day. One depicted a realistic scene between a mother and her daughters following their escape from an abusive situation. Another centered on one figure fighting off the demons of eating disorders, fear, loneliness, shame, rage, sadness, and sexual abuse to the Tori Amos song "Crucified." The woman wrestled and defeated all except sexual abuse.

For more information about the topics presented at this conference, call the following hotline numbers:

- Rape Crisis Hotline: 800.489.7273
- Domestic Abuse Hotline: 800.228.7395
- Eating Disorders: 708.831.3438 or 603.764.5704
- Outright Vermont: 802.865.9677 or 800.GLB.CHAT
- Breast Cancer: 202.462.1177 (Greenpeace) 800.696.7752 (Breast Health Project) 800.NBCC.838 (Breast Cancer Political Campaign)

Mountain Pride Media, Inc. Purchases *Out in the Mountains*

BURLINGTON -- Mountain Pride Media, Inc., a newly-formed g/l/b/t organization, has become the new publisher of *Out in the Mountains*, Vermont's only statewide newspaper addressing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender issues.

The new group developed in response to a desire on the part of *Out in the Mountains* to pursue additional publishing opportunities, including a statewide resource guide and a Web Site for Vermont's g/l/b/t organizations. Resources at the paper were already strained, and so the idea arose to develop a new organization with a broader sense of purpose.

Fifteen men and women were elected to the interim Board of Directors of Mountain Pride Media on March 30th. Former OITM Editor Deborah Lashman of Burlington was elected to serve as President, with Matt Spiro of Hinesburg elected to the office of Vice President.

As one of its first decisions, the Board voted to purchase OITM. Few changes are predicted for the newspaper other than those already planned by the current editorial staff.

"If anything, the paper's staff now has a clearer sense of direction and responsibility," said Hugh Coyle, the current Editor. "Before, there was always a perceived gray area between the Board of Directors and the volunteers who put together the paper. Being part of a larger organization will allow us to focus more on the paper itself while other MPM volunteers can work on projects like a Resource Guide or a Community TV program. We'll be able to share resources, but still maintain our own separate identities."

Mountain Pride Media, Inc., will hold elections for a more permanent Board later in the spring. In the meantime, the group is working toward establishing community contacts and a solid funding base.

Anyone interested in helping out with this new venture is encouraged to write to the Board c/o OITM, PO Box 177, Burlington, Vermont 05402. ▼

Teen Charges Lesbian Teacher With Harassment

BARTON -- A 14-year-old student at Lake Region High School in Orleans County accused one of her teachers of sexual assault and sought a restraining order to prevent further contact with the woman.

Lawyers working on behalf of the girl and her family claimed that the teacher, Cynthia Smith, was known by many at the school to be a lesbian, and that she pulled the young girl's gym shorts down in the school entryway late last year. According to reports, Smith is also alleged to have said "I just couldn't resist" as she touched the girl's backside.

Smith was suspended from her teaching duties following the incident, but has been permitted to return to school.

The girl, whose name has not been released, had sought counseling from a therapist, who believed she suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome. The girl claimed that her classmates had teased and harassed her about the incident, and that consequently her performance in school declined. ▼

OUT-Spoken

God: 7, Football: 0

"I was intrigued by Coach Bill McCartney at Colorado University, who quoted the thing from Leviticus — you know, that it is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord...for a man to lie with another man. And I read a little further in Leviticus, and it said it is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord to touch the skin of a dead pig. And I thought, 'Oh-oh! There goes football at CU!'"

-- Dr. Mel White, previously a speechwriter for Pat Robertson



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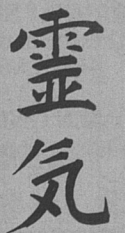
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