

# Out in the Mountains

UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

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VERMONT'S FORUM FOR LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER ISSUES

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## Thousands Celebrate "Pride Without Borders"

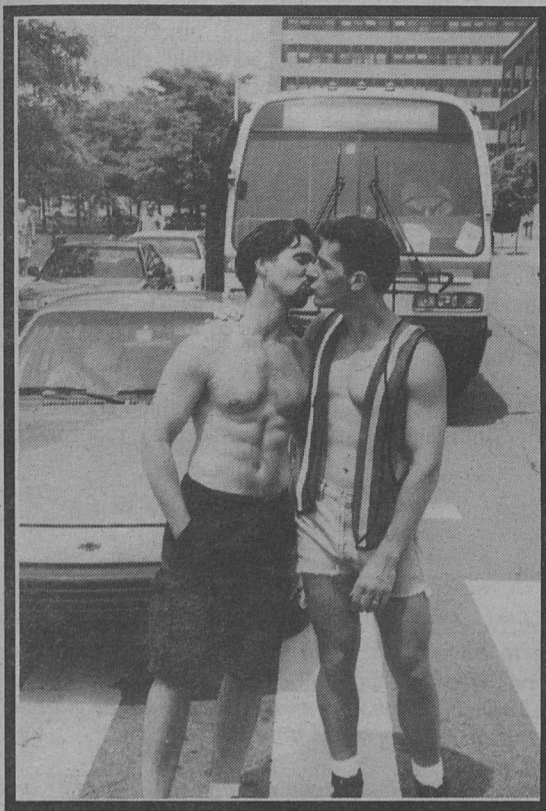


Photo by Hugh Coyle

Pride '96 co-organizer Craig Stevens takes a break from traffic control with his partner James LaPierre.

**BURLINGTON** -- Whether you stood on the sidelines and cheered on a friend or marched in the parade with a "Dyke" sign pointing right at you, Burlington was the place to be on the weekend of June 14-16 as Vermont celebrated "Pride Without Borders." Thousands of people attended the events, which culminated in an afternoon rally in Battery Park.

The weekend kicked off with a Women's Cabaret and men's barbecue at 135 Pearl Street. Singer/songwriter Reika hosted the cabaret, which featured performers from around the state. Meanwhile, outside under the tent, the Mansfield Bucks cooked on the grills while the music played.

The next morning, nearly 150 people gathered for the First Annual Interfaith Pride Worship Service at the Unitarian Universalist Church. A number of speakers addressed issues of faith and spirituality in the context of Pride, including local religious leaders who expressed both amazement at the overall humanity of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered movements and concern at the inhumanity of those so-called "religious" groups working against equal rights for all. A twenty-five member "Freedom Choir" provided music in addition to the scheduled hymns. The service was coordinated by Interweave, a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered group affiliated with the Unitarian Universalist Church, as well as representatives from a number of other congregations throughout the area.

Vendors and other exhibitors had been setting up throughout the morning in Battery Park, along

with a number of gigantic puppets and parade constructions courtesy of the Bread and Puppet Theater of Glover. Floats and decorated cars lined up behind the puppets, representing a number of groups and businesses from Vermont and upstate New York.

A Burlington police officer estimated that well over a thousand people passed by him as the march made its way through the city. A reporter for the *Burlington Free Press* had estimated the number at 500, an embarrassing miscalculation obvious to anyone who took part in or watched the parade. Supporters filled the sidewalks waving banners and flags; motorists honked as the parade passed by; and couples danced together in the street as a percussion band played.

Following the march, performers appeared on the Battery Park stage to entertain the crowd. Representatives from various groups spoke about their current plans and strategies, with many sounding a challenge to the radical right in this election year. At a booth nearby, the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights registered a number of people to vote as part of their new political initiative.

Controversy over the freedom to marry and the recent slayings of two lesbian women along the Appalachian Trail proved to be prominent themes throughout the day's events. Decals proclaiming "Take Back the Trail" appeared on a number of signs, with many marchers wearing them on their shirts and pants. Likewise, those upset over President Clinton's opposition to same-sex marriage wore campaign stickers, but wrote the word "Shame" inside the pink triangle printed on them.

Evening festivities included a dance and drag show at 135 Pearl, and a benefit concert by musician Carole Eaglehart at the Unitarian Universalist Church, with proceeds going to VCLGR.

A carnival atmosphere prevailed at 135 Pearl the next afternoon as Vermont CARES presented a benefit "Dance for AIDS." Game booths and feature performers kept a small yet spirited crowd entertained outside under the tent and raised over \$2,000 for various Vermont HIV/AIDS organizations and the Vermont Pride group.

Follow-up and planning meetings have already begun in anticipation of Pride '97. Bob Bolyard, Craig Stevens, and Robert Toms, the major organizers of Pride '96, have begun gathering notes on this year's proceedings in order to make next year's production run more smoothly. The trio also reported that there would be some start-up funds available for next year's organizers, which was not the case this past spring.

For more information about the upcoming meetings, call Bob at 802-865-3734 or Craig at 802-658-1602, or write to Vermont Pride at PO Box 5113, Burlington VT 05402-5113. ▼

## Two Lesbians Murdered in Virginia

**LURAY, VA** -- Burlington resident Julie Williams, 24, and her friend Lollie Winans, 26, were found murdered just off the Appalachian Trail in Virginia on June 1 after having been last seen on the 24th of May. Their bodies were discovered near Skyland Lodge in the Shenandoah National Park.

Authorities have confirmed that both women had their throats slit, and that neither one appeared to have been robbed. No response has yet been offered when police were asked about evidence of sexual assault or other motives.

Williams and Winans had plans to live together in Huntington, Vermont, shortly after their hiking trip. The two had met and developed a relationship while working in the summer of 1995 for the outdoor recreational group WoodsWomen, which is based in Minneapolis.

A number of national and local organizations were quick to press officials to consider the possible classification of the murders as a hate crime. John Donahue, a spokesperson for the FBI team investigating the case, said, "There has been no indication that this is a hate crime of any particular type." Even so, many findings of the investigation remain undisclosed, including a piece of evidence which led investigators to describe the murders as an "isolated" incident.

A community-wide speak-out at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Burlington on Tuesday, June 11, further addressed the issue of crimes against lesbians and against women. "Regardless of whether or not these women were killed because they were lesbians, the effect of this crime on the community is the same as if it were a blatant hate crime," said Rachel Lurie of Monkton, who helped

organize the event in association with the Vermont Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights (VCLGR), the Burlington Women's Council, and the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

"We are shaken, horrified, and afraid," Lurie said. "The feeling is that no place is safe — not even the wilderness — and that this could happen to any one of us. Any lesbian. Any woman. Any time. Any place."

Other speakers at the gathering included Wanda Hines, a local anti-violence activist whose sister Beverly Hines-Smith was murdered in Burlington, Susan Aranoff of VCLGR, Amy Beth of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, and Becky Strader, co-pastor at Christ Church Presbyterian, which Williams attended.

Strader also participated in a memorial service for Williams held at the Presbyterian church on Sunday, June 9. In subsequent interviews, she expressed hesitation about addressing Williams' lesbianism, yet felt a need for honesty. "It's important to celebrate who she was," she told a reporter for the *Washington Blade*. Neither Williams nor Winans was fully "out" to all of their friends and family members.

In response to the killings, many of those in attendance at Vermont's "Pride Without Borders" celebration on June 15 wore stickers or carried placards bearing the words "Take Back the Trail."

A number of wilderness murders involving gays and lesbians have occurred throughout recent years. Three of four such crimes in the Shenandoah Wilderness area since 1986 have occurred in areas popular with gays and lesbians. ▼

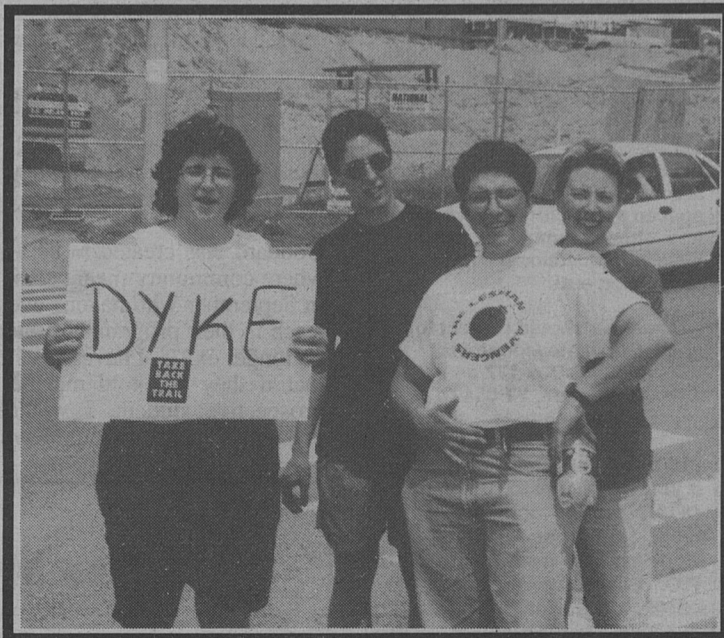


Photo by Hugh Coyle

A number of marchers in the Pride '96 parade made use of the "Take Back the Trail" decals protesting the murder of two lesbians in Virginia.