

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, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the goodness and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

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 or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons.

We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

Articles, letters, and artwork should be sent to us by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication (i.e. February 15th for the March issue). We encourage and implore our readers to do what they can to make *OITM* a paper which truly represents the many voices of our communities.

Materials should be sent to:
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Advertising

If you would like to place an ad in *Out in the Mountains*, please contact us for rates and guidelines. Ad copy should be mailed to the address above.

Editorial

So Much to Say, So Little Time in Which to Say It...

by Hugh Coyle

Owing to a number of factors beyond my control, this will be my final month serving as Editor of *Out in the Mountains*. It's been a wild ride, as I expected when I took on the position for a second stint last March, but it has had its benefits, most notably the opportunity to meet and work with an incredible group of people from all around the state. To all of them, and especially to the staff and board of Mountain Pride Media, I offer my strongest heartfelt thanks and appreciation.

As many of those people have found out over the past year, one of the more interesting side effects when you're an Editor is that you tend to walk around editorializing about everything. It's a major hazard of the job, actually, and probably explains why the position doesn't come with liability insurance — something has to keep you in check.

Over the past year, I've been gathering together a whole headful of editorials, and now here it is, my last issue. Rather than fill the entire paper with all the thoughts and musings yet unsaid, I offer instead this collection of "editorialettes" that have been rolling around like dust bunnies in my brain:

If I Love Xena, Am I A Lesbian?

Pity the poor religious right. They were dumb enough to fall for a classic tactic in activism when they got their diverted dander up over the recent "Ellen Comes Out" episode. Meanwhile, a couple of networks over, the real grrrl-to-grrrl action has been happening on the "Xena: Warrior Princess" show.

A few weeks ago, we devoted followers were doubly thrilled to witness a bedtime kiss and a steamy bathtub massage shared by the butch heroine (played by Lucy Lawless, who once starred as a dyke tow-truck driver in the Australian short film "Peach") and her femme sidekick Gabrielle. The show itself, a campy cross between "Clueless" and "Hercules," has drawn an increasingly large and loyal following in both the lesbian and gay men's world, thanks in no small part to the scant clothing often worn by the show's mythical protagonists (Hell-o, Cupid!). The fact that Xena herself looks upon men with disgust and contempt and groans in bored frustration whenever they fall in love with her only fuels the pro-gay/anti-het sentiments often seen on the show. And just who WAS that delightful gender-bender Xena fell for in a fashion show a few episodes ago?!

So, while right-wing America is fuming and fussing over Miss White Bread Degeneres, the rest of us are getting our rocks off to a real rebel. Forget Oprah and k.d. and Melissa and Laura Dern in an airport terminal. When Lucy Lawless comes riding her horse into Ellenville — that's when the real sparks will fly.

For Mature Readers Only

Speaking of television... Who the heck is responsible for assigning those new ratings to television shows, anyway? Kids can watch people getting hacked up to their heart's content on a "TV PG" show, but as soon as anything queer starts transpiring between characters, out comes the "TV M" rating — "For Mature Audiences Only."

Someone somewhere is vastly overestimating the gay and lesbian viewership by calling us all "mature." Oh, some of us are mature — you included, of course — but the rest of us? Well...we'll take a compliment any way we can, I guess.

But seriously, while I applaud and admire stations like the Sundance Channel for testing the boundaries (by recently airing such gay-themed films as "Swoon," "Ballot Measure 9," and "Parting Glances," to name but a few), I question their prohibitive labeling of such programs.

This was especially true of a recent screening of "Boys Life," a trio of films about young men coming to terms with their sexuality. Shown late at night with the "TV M" rating, the film could hardly reach its intended audience. Though there was

only a brief bit of frontal nudity (a character diving into a pool at night) and sex was limited to awkward (and largely futile) teen-aged attempts, the ratings board decided that anything even hinting at gay sex is an "AS" or "Adult Situation," and therefore merits the strongest warnings possible.

Once again, the youth of America are being told that they are NOT having "those" feelings and that their healthy, natural inclinations are, in fact, evil and dirty. On the other hand, maybe they're really being told to think that heterosexuality is childish, since it doesn't rate as high as homosexuality on the Maturity scale...

The Contributor's Closet

Last month I went on a rant about how gay and lesbian dollars are being targeted by the religious right as yet another homo-conspiracy designed to topple society as we know it. This time around, I'd like to take a look at the topic from the inside out — in other words, how we either financially support or don't support our own community organizations.

As many people know, organizations like *Out in the Mountains* operate on slim budgets with unpaid staff. Even so, community leaders like VCLGR's Co-Liaisons to the legislature are expected to assume an immense burden of responsibility and handle workloads befitting professionals. People grouse that this or that group isn't doing enough in the fight for our rights, and yet when it comes time to take action or pitch in a few dollars to help make events like Pride Day happen, the telethon phone lines are often silent.

In the past few years, however, Vermont CARES has become a fundraising dynamo in the greater Burlington community. Their (paid) staff works hard, along with a whole corps of volunteers, to secure money for a deserving cause, and their success is a testament to their efforts. Whenever a fund-raiser takes place now in Chittenden County's g/l/b/t community, you can almost be certain that the money will go to Vermont CARES.

Meanwhile, the rest of our g/l/b/t groups continue to scrape for spare change. Maybe it's just that people don't want to give money to groups that are blatantly gay and lesbian. Seen from that angle, AIDS agencies are a safe bet, the perfect choice for closet contributors. They're humanitarian charities, not gay or lesbian political groups, and since they serve the straight population as well, any greenbacks donated stay green and don't turn pink.

More and more, gay and lesbian groups in the state are realizing that they need to operate like Vermont CARES, with paid professionals handling fund-raising and programming so that progress is made on a regular basis, not just whenever someone can find a spare moment to sneak in some extra work on one or two of our issues. Reaching this goal isn't easy, however. Many of our groups can't even find the funding necessary to apply for non-profit status, which essentially knocks them out of the running for the big bucks.

This problem demands serious attention if our social and political position here in Vermont is to remain intact. Our leaders can't achieve much without the support and commitment of the rank and file, the constituents who benefit from the hard labor of others. Our community leaders and representatives also need to find ways to work together so that the search for funding and other resources doesn't result in conflict or competition.

The time has come for many of our groups to stop counting on pennies tossed into the wishing well and to start forming business plans which will sustain our community endeavors. We need to recognize the value of the work that we do and stop taking advantage of our brothers and sisters who do that work. After all, if we can't value one another, how can we expect the rest of society to value us? ▼



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