

letters

When assimilation becomes more important to the gay community than taking a stand against homophobia we are in trouble. In the letters responding to my article about homophobia at the Women's Council not one addresses the substance of my article. That is because it is all factual and the letter writers have no first hand knowledge of the issues. Renfrew came to one meeting there with her mind made up before she came. None of them have spoken to any lesbians on the BWC. Contrary to Judy Murphy's letter I don't name call. What my piece did was list a long string of homophobic behaviors supported by members of the Council.

Peter Kurth, of course, has no real knowledge of the BWC but that doesn't stop him from blathering on in ignorance for a whole page. Consensus decision making is not the dictionary definition of consensus and actually allows for differing points of view to be heard. Kurth must have a crick in his neck from always looking down his nose at the world. His specialty is attacking dykes (there is no lesbian faction at the BWC) and then saying when they respond "oh they're so angry". Well it is annoying to have sexism printed in a paper that says that's against its editorial policy. I refer to Kurth's infantilizing myself and Matthews for having disagreements.

Of concern to the whole community is that the lesbian task force at NOW has made no effort to find out from lesbians on the BWC what is going on. Instead they blindly defend a NOW member with no facts. Obviously this is not a task force to benefit lesbians but merely to give NOW the appearance of caring about us. Virginia Renfrew is supposed to represent the gay community. She approached me in a hostile manner after the one meeting she attended and clearly had come only to support Jennifer not to find out what is going on for lesbians at the BWC. It seems political alliances have become more important than actual lesbian lives. This is a repeat of what is happening at the BWC; political career concerns have

taken precedence over women. Now some in the gay community are putting political alliances over addressing homophobia/heterosexism wherever it exists.

Towards liberation,
Peggy Luhrs

I want to thank Peggy Luhrs (the former director of the Burlington Women's Council). I have known Peggy for many years. During that time Peggy has been a constant voice and activist for Women's Rights. Some people may say "tactics" used in the 70s are no longer necessary, but I know that I live a much more comfortable life, because Peggy has always pushed the edge of the circle so that there is more tolerance, respect, and acceptance within. Thanks Peggy!

Näri E. Penson

In the October issue of *Out in the Mountains*, an editorial by Chris Moes stated that "Vermont currently has waiting list for people living with AIDS to get protease inhibitors..."

As the AIDS Program Director for the State of Vermont I would like to correct this statement to clarify what is going on in with the AIDS Medication Assistance Program. There is **NO** waiting list for our AIDS Medication Assistance Program, and there has been none since March 31st of this year. More important, when the waiting list did exist (only four months) **ALL** Vermonters needing protease inhibitors were granted access to them through the hard-working efforts of AMAP Coordinator Mary Pierce, who negoti-

ated directly with the pharmaceutical companies to ensure the drugs' availability through compassionate care programs. No one was - or ever has been - turned away from AMAP who met the financial eligibility guidelines.

The reality of the situation is that AMAP has nearly doubled its member participation during this past year, and the demand for combination therapies (including protease inhibitors) has seen AMAP's budget leap from \$60,000 per year to \$450,000 for 1997.

The collaboration of AIDS activists, people living with the virus, and staff at the Department of Health (including our very supportive Commissioner of Health, Dr. Jan Carney) have made a substantial impact on the lives of all Vermonters living with HIV/AIDS: for the first time in Vermont's history, the legislature voted to allocate \$200,000 to the medication program. This was a milestone in the recognition of how much HIV has come to affect Vermont.

In the future I would invite OITM to include the AIDS Program in community discussions about policies or programs which affect so many of our community. The inclusion of misinformation only heightens the anxiety for people already dealing with more than enough challenges as they face life with HIV/AIDS.

Thank you.
Joshua Noble
AIDS Program Director
Vermont Department of Health

**ed. note: My apologies and I'm glad I was wrong.*

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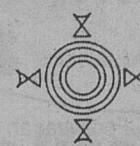
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