

M H P

MEN'S HEALTH PROJECT

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Vermont CARES

MHP wishes you a great

GAY Holiday Season

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<p>1 WORLD AIDS DAY</p> <p>RUTLAND Candlelight Service. Grace Congregational Church, 6PM.</p> <p>BURLINGTON HIV+ Gay Men's Group. For info call 800 649 2437</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3 ST. ALBANS Northern Boys' Club Northwest Hospital Conference Room 8PM.</p>	<p>4 Last Day to Register for 13: Dec Hep B Vaccination</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6 BURLINGTON GAY CHAT ROOM "Having Great Gay Sex" 3-4PM at the VT CARES Office</p>
	<p>7</p>	<p>8 BURLINGTON HIV+ Men's Group.</p> <p>RUTLAND HIV+ Group meets 4-5:30 Call 775 5884 for info.</p> <p>Rutland Can meets at the High School 6-8</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10 RUTLAND VT CARES Holiday Party at Chaffee Art Center, 6-8PM</p> <p>BURLINGTON Rainbow Business Ass. Mixer, 6:30 @ the VT Room of the Raddison, \$10. Call 658 7023 for info.</p>	<p>11 MONTPELIER Men of Montpelier 6:30PM Kellogg- Hubbard Library</p> <p>MONTPELIER Positively Well: Living with HIV as a Chronic, Manageable, Survivable Disease, at the Capital Plaza Conference Center, 9:30-3:30.</p>	<p>12 MIDDLEBURY Youth Aware's Gay Coffeehouse at Starr Mill, 7:30</p> <p>BURLINGTON Hep B Vaccination at VT CARES office, Noon.</p>
<p>14 ST. JOHNSBURY VT CARES Holiday Party</p>	<p>15 ST. ALBANS Franklin CAN</p> <p>WINCOSKI Gay Father's Group. Call for info 879 7883.</p> <p>RUTLAND Chat Room @ Rutland Library 6:30.</p> <p>BURLINGTON HIV+ Men's Group.</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17 BURLINGTON VT CARES Holiday Party 4-7PM</p> <p>JOHNSON Johnson State College Library Conference Room 6:30-8:30PM</p> <p>MIDDLEBURY Addison CAN @ Irlsey Library, 7:30.</p>	<p>18 ST. JOHNSBURY Men of the Kingdom Caledonia Home Health 7-9PM</p> <p>MONTPELIER Washington CAN VT CARES office in Montpelier 7PM</p>	<p>19 MONTPELIER VT CARES Holiday Party 4-7PM</p>	<p>20 OF CARES will be at shopping gifts at Barnes and Noble in Burlington 10:00X to 8:00X</p>
<p>21 OF CARES will be at shopping gifts at Barnes and Noble in Burlington 10:00X to 8:00X</p>	<p>22 BURLINGTON HIV+ Men's Group.</p>	<p>23 HANUKKAH BEGINS AT SUNDOWN</p>	<p>24 CHRISTMAS EVE</p>	<p>25 CHRISTMAS</p>	<p>26 Boxing Day</p>	<p>27 MIDDLEBURY Informal GAY gathering at Middlebury Coffeehouse on Mill Street, 6:30- 8PM.</p>
<p>28 RUTLAND Gay Tea Dance at The Edge, 4-10 Merchants Row</p>	<p>29 RUTLAND HIV+ Group meets 4-5:30 Call 775 5884 for info.</p> <p>BURLINGTON HIV+ Men's Group.</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31 NEW YEAR'S EVE</p>	<h1>M H P</h1> <h2>December</h2>		

Interview with the plaintiffs: Nina Beck and Stacy Jolles

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all, that the state of Vermont was willing to say I could have a legal relationship to Noah but I could not have a legal relationship to my partner. It did not make sense, and think even legally it does not make sense.

Nina Beck: I had been wanting to do it for a long time. I told Stacy we had to get married before we had kids; and part of that was joking around, but part of it was real. The part of it that was very real was that if I could avoid it, I wanted to ensure in as many ways that I could that I didn't become a single parent. That's one way that of course doesn't guarantee anything — there are no guarantees in life — but it's another way that our society has of asking people to make a public commitment to each other. It does ensure that it's a little more difficult to just pick up and leave. SJ: That really keys into one of the AG's (Attorney General) responses....That there's too many deadbeat dads...that kids need two parents. This was an argument against marriage for same sex partners. [And yet] I completely agree with the Attorney General. Yes, let's try and have two parent families for our children whenever possible and why not here as well.

NB: [The response] makes seven basic points, and some of the points you can agree with. Yeah, in general, wherever possible, two parent families probably are healthier, more supportive environments for kids... But you can't see how they get to their conclusion from that opening statement.

OITM: Have you had to deal with criticism of this debate from within the GLBT community?

SJ: One of our lawyers said recently that this is the last legalized discrimination against gays and lesbians.

NB: In this state.

SJ: That hit me so profoundly. I thought, let's just get rid of it if for nothing else. I think that if the gay and lesbian community can understand it that way then we would have to all agree. Let's just get rid of all legalized discrimination. Then if you want to choose to get married it's an option that's available.

OITM: When Noah died, and you being relatively new to Vermont, did you feel like you had the support you needed?

NB: It was amazing. We had more support than we ever could have imagined.

SJ: I would [also] like to say this. We don't have a strong history of gay and lesbian families in our community. Because of that, we don't have some of the same skills that the heterosexual community has about grieving the loss of children or some of the things Nina and I have had to go through and are still going through.

NB: It makes it hard sometimes....particularly in gay and lesbian circles. All of a sudden we realize that we're relating to folks as though we're just a couple and they're relating to us as if we're just a couple and everyone's sort of comfortable cause that's how we're used to being. And all of a sudden we'll wake up and say wait a second, cause we're not just a couple, we're a family and we need you to relate to us as if we're still a family, as though Noah were still here. So sometimes I think we feel lonely in queer circles because we don't feel like his presence is acknowledged.



Noah Jolles

OITM: What is Noah's role in this case?

SJ: The Freedom to Marry Task Force and the other couples have been phenomenal in that Noah is still one hundred percent part of this case to them. This case started with Noah and this case is still about Noah....They never once skipped a beat, like "well now that Noah is gone, maybe we should do this differently." They never did that, which we're so grateful for.

NB: We did a photo shoot for OUT magazine and we insisted that we hold Noah's picture. Then the photographer asked if we could do a few pictures without it and we said no, and the other plaintiffs said no, you can't, he's part of this. I think Noah's role is to represent the children of gay and lesbian families and to be there to address the issues that straight society would like us to answer about how we construct our families.

OITM: Do you think queer families are more threatening to people than queer marriage?

SJ: In the rest of the country, where we have done most of our living, queer families are more threatening. But that doesn't seem to be true in the state of Vermont which is why I think marriage is so possible here.

NB: I don't understand why if it's allowed for us to adopt each other's children and to make legal commitments to being a family in that way, I can't imagine what would then stop the state from allowing us to make a legal commitment to each other. I can't fathom it. It doesn't make any sense to me at all.

OITM: While it's most effective to speak for yourself, you're also being asked to speak for the community at large. How do you feel about that role?

NB: More than I feel like I represent a lot of people, I feel like Noah represents a lot of people. I feel like he represents the children of all of our families.

SJ: As adults we can speak for ourselves; whether we agree with this or whatever. Kids can't speak for themselves. In a way we were doing this battle to bring that voice to it, and he does that in his life and in his death.

OITM: What do you think kids of gay and lesbian parents need?

SJ: Kids of gay and lesbian parents have a lot of baggage they have to deal with in this culture and society. I think that some of that baggage could be lifted by legalizing same sex marriage.

NB: I would like to tell this story about what is it that we're looking for. We were traveling back from Europe. In Amsterdam airport [they ask you some questions before you can get on the plane]... The security agent came, and I had Noah and Stacy was standing next to me. She said, "are you two traveling together." And we said yes. She said, "Are you a family?" And we said yes. And so she took all three of us to her podium and asked us the same questions at the same time. And I almost cried because I felt so seen, so validated and so ordinary in that moment. It was everything I was looking for. It's like that is why I want to be married. I want that feeling in my life on a regular basis.