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

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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FREE

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Vermonters Come Out for GLBT Pride Day

BY JESSICA STEEL

As they marched up Main street, pride mingled with sweat on every body. Chants such as "1-2-3-4 open up the closet door. 5-6-7-8 don't assume your kids are straight" bounced off the pavement from the enthusiastic GLBT youth groups. The many walking sticks, pickets, T-shirts, banners, buttons, and flags sent messages much stronger than words. June 20th was the fourth annual Pride Day in Burlington, Vermont.

Bread and Puppet led the pack. Groups and organizations such as "Dykes on Trykes," the Rainbow Business Association, the Queer Youth Provider Network, Unitarian Universal Church, and the Radical Faeries composed the proud band of marchers. Last, but not least was a bevy of drag queens from across the three-state area. One brave soul balanced atop a motor home



Priscilla-style, gown blowing in the breeze.

Queer people from all across Vermont rallied together to demonstrate the desperate need for the silence of GLBT people to end and for equality to begin. Several speakers appeared to rally at the waterfront before the Pride Parade. Danielle from TRANS,

Photos by Scot Applegate

Peggy Luhrs formerly of the Burlington's Women's Council, Chris Moes, OITM editor, and Ed Flanagan, Vermont state auditor, were some of the determined few who voiced their opinions and welcome free expression of sexual orientation. The impassioned moti-

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Upper left: Bread & Puppet lead this year's GLBT Pride in Burlington.

Above: A supporter marches for the Unitarian Universalist Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Friends.

Youth at Risk Survey Raises Questions about Safe Schools for GLBTQ Students

BY JESSICA STEEL

"Who have you had sex with?" This was the question asked of high school students on the Vermont Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). Keep in mind that nowhere on the survey were the eighth through twelfth graders asked their sexual orientation. The survey results don't decipher sexual identity and nor does it target any teenagers except Vermont high school students. It didn't reach dropouts, homeless children, imprisoned youths, etc. However, the survey results do show some serious problems that sexually active students are facing.

For example, thirty-four percent of youths who have had sex with the same gender and twelve percent of high schoolers who have had sex with the opposite gender have attempted suicide. Over half of the students who engage in sexual relations smoke cigarettes, binge drink, and use marijuana. Although the survey doesn't indicate sexual orientation, it's apparent that high school students are encountering serious and frightening obstacles.

The most obvious disturbance is the difference between

risk behaviors of students who have had sex with the same gender/sex versus those who

school teenagers.

1995 was the first year that YRBS asked eighth



Many area youths marched in this year's Vermont Pride parade

have experienced sex with the opposite sex/gender. The percentages double, and for some behaviors triple in comparison of the two. Clearly students who are viewed as "different" (the students who have experienced intercourse with the same sex/gender) in their high schools are dealing with internal and external behaviors that are more harmful and severely damaging than the rest of high

through twelfth graders about their sexual experiences. The '95 "statistics were used extensively," says Tami Eldridge, executive director of Outright Vermont. "The results are shocking and continue to shock [us]," Tami explains. On a positive note, most of the numbers from '95 to '97 have dropped. However, areas of

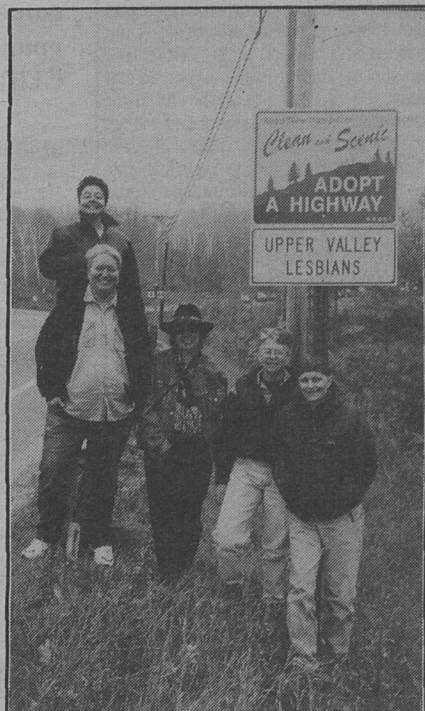
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A Highway of Our Own

BY LYNN FISHER

Mandy Vernalia "just wanted to get the 'L-word' out there" when she decided to spearhead the effort to sponsor a popular stretch of highway in the Upper Valley. As a result, two "Upper Valley Lesbians" signs clearly mark NH Route 4 just east of the I-89 exit 17 interchange, in Lebanon, New Hampshire. And, it's not just the 'L-word' that's out there, it's the 'L-women' as well: Lesbians from Vermont and New Hampshire meet four times a year to don reflective vests and clean the roadside.

A stretch of highway sponsored by, say, Jim-Bob's Auto Repair doesn't generate much reaction, but there's been plenty of reaction to this sign. For the road cleaners there have been stares, smiles, honks, waves, thumbs up, and derisive comments. The sign nearest the interstate has been unscathed, but the easternmost sign has been defaced twice (and subsequently repaired by the state) and has now been moved. Straight friends frequently mention that they "saw the sign," and report conversations about seeing the "Upper Valley Lesbians" cleaning the roadside.



top: Mandy Vernalia; front: (l. to r.) Linda McDonald, Susan Cox, Mary-Lou Bryant, and Sukie Grover

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