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# OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

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## Queer Leaders Gather for Summit

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

"This is it; this is our history. It's our responsibility to take this back to our community," exhorted Tim Palmer as he spoke to the group of nearly forty of Vermont's GLBT leaders. The occasion was the Organizers' Summit sponsored by *Out in the Mountains* and held at Goddard College on Saturday, July 18.

Palmer's gift for facilitation was called into service as representatives of approximately 25 organizations from all over the state gathered to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of Vermont's queer community, then brainstorm and make plans for building on the strengths and shoring up the weak spots.

The list of strengths was long. Bob Bolyard led off, "The dedication the people in this room have to their causes is tremendous." Bari Shamas spoke of the people who are not queer, "Some of our greatest supporters are straight."

A great deal of the day was devoted to an examination of the community's diversity as both a strength and a weakness. The group acknowledged and applauded the wide range of ages and backgrounds that make up gay Vermont.

The group discussed the possibility of building alliances with other minority organizations in Vermont, such as ALANA. Peggy Luhrs of the Burlington Women's Council said, "Our enemies group us together; we must join together to combat them." The original agenda for the day included a panel discussion on diversity issues, but none of the panel members appeared. However, Yolanda pointed out the constant battle against apathy,



photo by Scot Applegate

Above: Organizers at the Statewide Community Summit broke up into smaller groups such as this one to discuss specific areas of concern like communication, diversity, and resources.

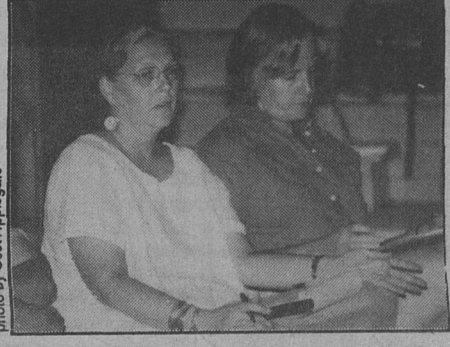


photo by Scot Applegate

Right: Tami Eldridge, Executive Director of Outright VT, and Jane VanBuren, Board President of Vermont Cares were active participants at the summit proceedings.

"Our panel didn't even show up. If we put ourselves out there and nothing happens, what do we do?"

Specific plans of action were adopted such as a diversity film festival, more attention to cross-minority issues in *OITM* and other newsletters, and diversity workshops. The strongest

STATEWIDE, p27

# 99.7%

BY LENNA CUMBERBATCH

99.7% white. That's what the statistics said. Was that possible? I took out an atlas and when I realized that Vermont was on the border of Canada I figured it just might be possible. Anyway those stats were from 1988 and it was 1995. It really didn't matter much to me really. I mean I'm English and I've never been used to being in the majority like I am in DC. Going to Vermont would be like going home.

I guess that was how I felt until I came out. Then it became less of a "where's my community" and more an issue of "Am I the only black dyke in the state?" And I hate being an example. It wasn't that I needed a dating pool (although I wouldn't mind if there was one) and it wasn't that my principles of inclusivity had changed, I just needed to know there was someone else out there like me.

Unfortunately that's not

the easiest thing to find in Vermont and despite the fact that I detest DC (probably has a little to do with my high school experiences) I longed to go back and finally visit Dupont Circle where I knew I could find some of those Bulldaggers that I had heard so much about.

Now it may seem extreme to need to go to DC to satisfy the need to know you're not alone, but think about it. If a youth comes out in Vermont and feels alone and isolated they eventually (we hope) find a community that represents them in a multitude of ways. But for a person of color one important aspect of who they are is left out, and sought voraciously.

For me this need was so important that I passed up the opportunity to hob-nob with some fabulous college-age queers from all over New England, but the conference in Southern Maine conflicted with a Women of Color and Allies Conference in DC sponsored by NOW. I wanted to go to Maine but I knew that I

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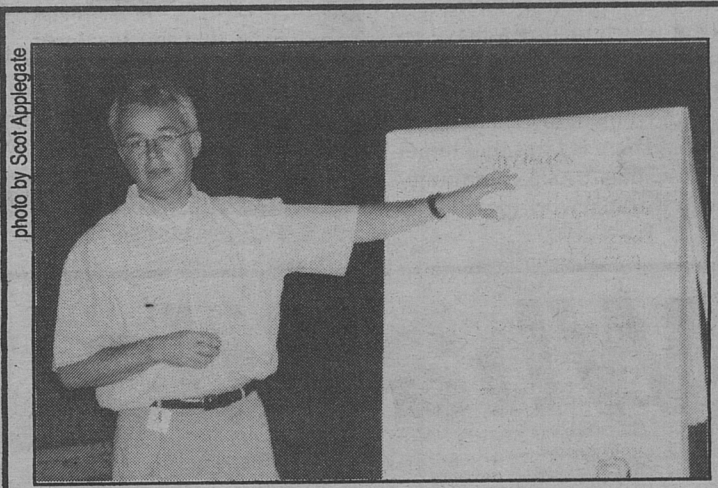


photo by Scot Applegate

## Palmer Announces Senate Candidacy

BURLINGTON - Tim Palmer, Executive Director of Vermont Cares, announced his candidacy for one of the six Chittenden County State Senate seats on Monday, July 20. If successful, Palmer will be the first openly gay member in the history of the Vermont State Senate.

Palmer has been at the helm of Vermont Cares for three years. His professional background is one of problem solving and public policy development, with particular focus on the challenges of rural life. He has worked for or advised the State Legislatures in Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont.

The 48-year-old Hinesburg resident says that he is trying to streamline his work at Cares in order to reduce to usual 80-hour weeks he puts in there to allow time for campaigning.

If he wins the election, he will resign from the post of Executive Director. "I think Vermonters living with HIV

PALMER, p27

## the Poetry & Photography issue

### Need

It's dark in the desert when the rain begins. The armed saguaro drinks. Never been there myself—I know it through you, your words unleashed in a voice so low I have to lean into it. You've seen a fat saguaro, split and scarred after a storm. They're trees, you tell me. Saguaro.

Your eyes are a blue that fills me—each glance a ring in the meat of my trunk that no deep carve can erase.

I'm so ready I feel you before we touch—your arms, your fingers, your tongue—your body like the needle of a phonograph, tracing the grooves to make sound.

—Cathy Resmer

(more beginning on page 13)