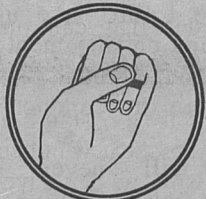


COALITION



NOTES

Future of the Conference Undecided

BY VIRGINIA RENFREW

On October 10, 1998 VCLGR held their sixth annual Conference and Town Meeting at UVM. The turnout for the day was low but the majority of those that did attend felt positive about the day.

The day before the conference I received a call from the Human Rights Campaign telling me that Winnie Stachelberg, our keynote speaker, would be unable to attend. The reason was because of the hate crime that occurred to Matthew Shepard in Wyoming.

Winnie had made arrangements for Nancy Buermeyer to take her place. Nancy has been a leader in HRC's efforts to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Nancy's flight was turned back in New York because of weather. She caught a flight out of Washington to Boston and then connected to Burlington. She did not arrive at 10:30am as she had planned but through her determination to speak at our conference she arrived at 2pm. She spoke at 3:30pm when everyone had come back together for our Town meeting.

When Nancy did not arrive in time for the keynote speaker, Keith explained to everyone what



photo: Scot Applegate

Vermont State Auditor Ed Flanagan led off a series of political speeches. VCLGR Co-liason Keith Goslant provided introductions.

had happened in Wyoming to our brother, Matthew. A moment of silence was held. Keith spoke about Vermont expanding the Hate Crime law. VT passed Hate Crimes legislation in 1988.

A coalition of community leaders, representatives from the Office of Attorney general, Department of Education and Law Enforcement are currently meeting to discuss expansion of the existing statutes. The current proposal is to add Injunctive Relief provisions (restraining orders) to protect victims of bias crimes.

In the absence of the keynote speaker it was decided this would

be a good time to introduce the candidates from our community running for office. VCLGR thanks Ed Flanagan, Tim Palmer, Bill Lippert, and a representative for Steve Howard for filling the hour with very inspiration speeches. Openly gay candidate Brendan Hadash was unable to attend the conference. The one clear message for the day was we need to get out and vote.

A big thank you goes to Karen Cayer, VCLGR board member, for all her help and support. I also want to thank Keith for filling the keynote hour and keeping attendees interested. I want to thank those that helped on the day of the conference; Betsy McLane and Ramona DeCrotir for working the registration table and keeping me calm; UVM students: Liz Sheldon, Alli Lambert, Nick Vargecis, Nancy Ellen, Angela Thibert, and Kate Jerman for making signs, working the registration table, and showing attendees the way. Thank you all who held workshops.

The VCLGR board is deciding whether or not to continue having the conference. We will wait to see what happens over the next six months and then will be asking members for their suggestion on theme, location, date.

I will be attending the Creating Change conference in Pittsburgh next month. I hope to come back with new ideas on bringing our community together. ▼



Nancy Buermeyer filled in for HRC Political Director Winnie Stachelberg as keynote speaker at the conference.

photo: Scot Applegate

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