

around vermont

Middlebury

■ Matthew Shepard Candlelight Vigil Against Violence

Tuesday November 17th, at 5:45pm members of Middlebury area congregations and others gathered in the Middlebury green to sing and remember Matthew Shepard. About 50 people gathered holding candles in the dark, as cars past honking in support.

The people who gathered called for an end to violence and bigotry. The group that gathered was diverse, ranging from young children with their parents to a few elderly people, a mix of gay and straight, all gathering together to spread the same message of tolerance. ▼

■ Queer Studies Discussion Held At Middlebury College

BY KRISTIN GRAY

On Saturday, November 14, approximately 40 people gathered at the McKinley House on the campus of Middlebury college for a panel discussion on gender studies, women's studies, gay and lesbian studies and queer studies. The panelists were Jonathan Katz, Dwight Fee, and Holley Allen. Katz is an art historian and chair of the Gay and Lesbian Studies department at the City College of San Francisco, as well as founder of the Harvey Milk Institute. Fee and Allen are both professors at Middlebury College.

Katz discussed gay and lesbian studies and queer theory. He has an extensive background in this area being not only the chair of the only gay and lesbian studies department in the nation but also a gay rights activist. He spoke about his department at the City College of San Francisco and the difference between gay and lesbian studies and queer theory.

Katz suggested that gay and lesbian studies as a field arose because of the reluctance of main stream academia to look at the importance of sexuality. It is often interested in looking at history. Queer theory, on the other hand, explores the nature of sexuality as a social construction. Its basic tenet is that sexuality is not stable. In speaking of his department, Katz said that it is called Gay and Lesbian Studies officially, but that the members of the department call it a Queer Studies department among themselves. He said that his department tries to look at gay and lesbian studies from a queer theory viewpoint.

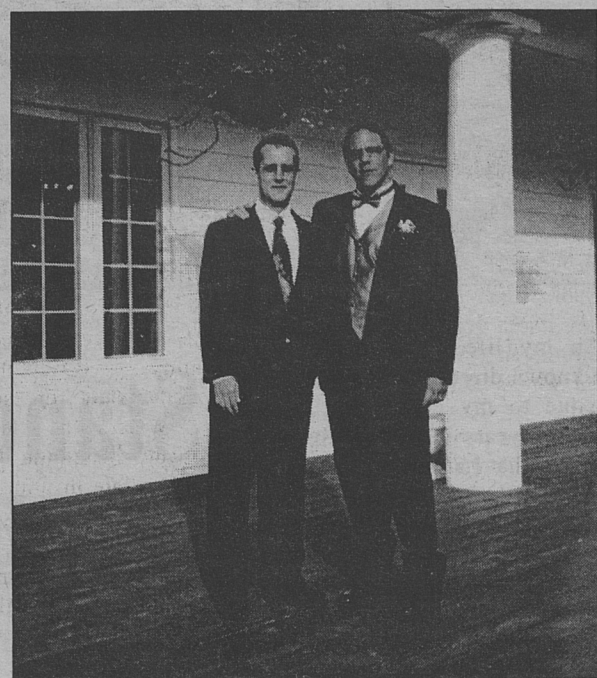
Allen, a feminist cultural historian, spoke about her own research and how it has been influenced by gender studies, women's studies, gay and lesbian studies and queer studies. She spoke mostly about her dissertation,

who regards sexuality critically, regardless of their own sexual identity. Thus, anyone who shares this perspective can be queer. According to this view, not only do we not need to be gay, lesbian, bi or transgender to be queer, but we don't need to be queer to be gay, lesbian, bi or transgender.

To illustrate this point Katz told about an incident that occurred after a speech he made at a PFLAG meeting. A fairly ordinary looking, middle class couple approached him at the end. The woman spoke to him first, "Since we've been talking about our sons sexuality I've grown increasingly uncomfortable in our neighborhood," she said. "It's not that I want to sleep with women, but I think I'm queer, is that OK?" Jonathan Katz reassured her that it was, in fact, OK.

Other topics discussed at the meeting were queer theories, views on gays in the military, and the effects of the looseness of the term, "queer". There is fear that, as the queer can apply to anyone, some may, and do, adopt it superficially.

Although the discussion was very intellectualized and sometimes hard to follow for those with little background knowledge, most in attendance enjoyed themselves and came away better informed. ▼



Brattleboro

■ Brian Stephens and Scott Graham Celebrate 10 Years Together

November 28, 1998: Brian Stephens and Scott Graham celebrated 10 years of committed life together today. They met by chance in Brattleboro, VT when Scott moved from Florida to the tri-state area to do counseling and teach wilderness skills and rock climbing for Outward Bound.

Graham, a licensed alcohol and drug counselor, works for Marathon of Brattleboro and coordinates an Intensive Outpatient Drug and Alcohol Treatment Program for the Vermont Department of Corrections. Stephens works for Applebee's, Inc. and is an Assistant General Manager at their W. Lebanon, NH property. Both volunteer their time extensively with the Monadnock Humane Society's Foster Care Program.

"Even though our relationship is not recognized by legal authorities, it does not diminish our true commitment and love for each other," said Graham. Both Graham and Stephens have taken steps to provide each other with rights that legally married couples enjoy thorough developing a Power of Attorney and Health Care Power of Attorney, but Graham states these provide minimal support in comparison to the privileges of legal marriage. ▼



Marching by candlelight in Middlebury.

Burlington

■ Hate Crime Panel Discussion

On Oct. 26 Men's Health Project hosted a panel at Contois auditorium in Burlington called "Beyond Matthew Sheperd-Hate Crimes in our Community and What We Can Do About Them". It was an interesting evening with an impressively large group of concerned citizens. Lt. Helrich from the Burlington Police Dept, Palmer LeGare from Outright Vermont, Sondra Solomon from UVM Psych Dept., Beth Robinson from Langrock Sperry and Wool, Keith Goslant from Vt. Coalition for L&G Rights, and Tim Palmer from Vt. CARES (who has been the victim of brutal hate attacks), were on the panel.

CCTV cable channel 17 in Burlington taped the event for public broadcast. Air times are as follows: Nov. 30- 7:30 pm and Dec. 1st- 1am, 7am, and 1pm. Copies of the video tape are available. Contact Yolanda at 863-2437.

MHP is in the process of planning more projects that address hate toward the GLBT community, and would like to hear from the community as to what you think would be effective. They hope to collaborate with GLBT organizations to increase community building and awareness. ▼