

## Giving Back

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more than 130 people, it raised upwards of \$2000 for the Pride Committee. This year's Pride fundraiser on May 16 will include entertainment, a silent auction, and "tons of food as usual," says West.

### Just who is Jeff, anyway, and does he play for our team?

West isn't telling. In fact, he doesn't even know Jeff's last name.

Jeff was a brief partner but a lasting namesake, giving over the business shortly after starting it 20 years ago. Since then, it has grown from a seafood-buying run to Maine into a market, bar, and 90-seat restaurant widely considered the best spot for seafood in the state.

Based on that reputation, West and company seem to have all the business they need; getting a table for dinner can sometimes be a challenge. So why worry about broadening the clientele?

"My main thing is, I love to make and serve food; I love people's reactions to good food," he says over a chef's salad at his other favorite spot, Sneaker's, in Winooski where he lives. "That was actually my main reason — I love to do that in general, to the whole spectrum of the public. But I really like to do it when it's my community, when it's gay and lesbian. Because I don't think that happens a lot — especially in the middle of nowhere, in St. Albans."

Also, he adds, "We can really get grass roots at these things. There's nothing more powerful than getting people with the same ideas together, [to discuss] not where they should be going [but] where they deserve to be going."

Negative reactions, if any, have been little more than minor blips on the radar. "At first," West concedes, "I was a little nervous. It wasn't just buying a business; it was buying a business where I'm visible and you have to deal with the public. And if you don't like dealing with the public, you have to pretend. That can be tricky. If you're nervous about divulging your sexuality, then you've got two things you're pretending about."

Business, as it turns out, has only increased. Several local (and presumably non-GLBT) customers have actually begun showing up for events, sometimes even to help out.

As for the future, West plans to remain as busy as ever. He hopes to continue hosting The Main Event as often as possible, to continue donating gift certificates and food where he can, and to continue encouraging people to be as out as they are able.

"People can see, 'wow, he's young and gay and owns a restaurant in a really conservative part of Vermont, and hasn't been run out of town yet, and holds his head up,'" says West. "I hope people look at that and think, 'gee if he can do that, I can do that.'"

And just in case all this doesn't keep his attention, West also thinks about venturing into filmmaking, perhaps someday applying his business acumen to the job of movie producer. "Of course," he says, "that's after I become a rock star." ▼

## Equality Begins At Home Across the Country

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Lori Lipman Brown, author of the bill that repealed the state's sodomy law in 1993, joined Assemblyman David Parks, who introduced an employment non-discrimination bill earlier this year, at a rally for the non-discrimination measure. In Jefferson City, Missouri a crowd of hundreds gathered on the South Lawn of the state capitol in what is said to have been the first rally there GLBT rights. In Columbus, Ohio people braved the wind and cold to hear, among others,

Leslie Sadasivan, the mother of a gay teen who killed himself, read from a poem that her son Robbie wrote about isolation. Ralliers also heard from out GLBT elected officials and cheered the "Radical Cheerleaders" - students from Oberlin College - who in between performances and before speakers from the stage entertained the crowd with catchy political cheers and purposefully dismal choreography!

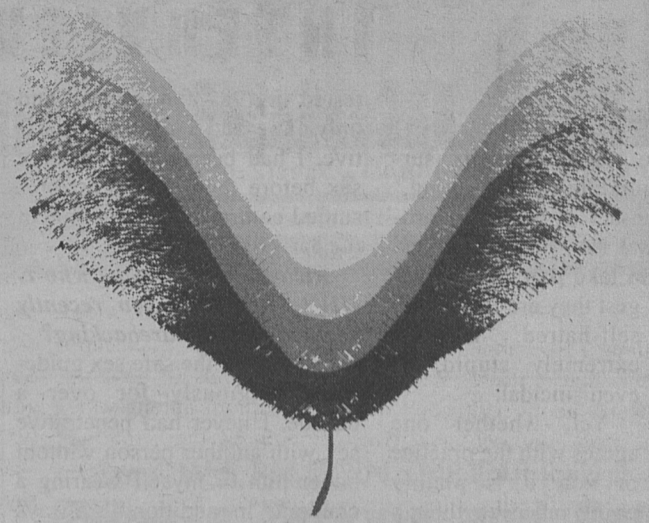
In Sacramento, California, on Sunday, EBAH marked the premier of the new statewide group, the California Alliance for Pride and Equality. The day began with an interfaith service attended by 200 people. A wreath laying by GLB veterans followed. Events culminated in a rally at the capitol with a crowd representing every corner of the state. Tom Amiano of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors was the emcee of the rally.

In Trenton, New Jersey, approximately 300 people rallied in support of GLBT health, safety, youth and families. Speakers included David Nixon, an African-American gay man and self-described transvestite who was the first in New Jersey to bring attention to same-sex teen dating when he took his boyfriend to the senior prom in 1980.

Equality Begins at Home went full tilt in New England. Connecticut's House Majority Leader David Pudlin and his family attended the state capitol flag raising ceremony and benefit brunch, and more than 800 people attended a Connecticut GLBT families conference during the weekend. In Massachusetts, a spirited rally was held at the historic Arlington Street Church in Boston, where the Boston Gay Men's Chorus performed and the names of GLBT elected officials in Massachusetts - more than 20 - were called. After speeches by a number of local luminaries, the Freedom Trail Band played as everyone spilled out into the street to the capitol where candles were lit in honor of GLBT people murdered in anti-gay hate crimes. In Vermont, people gathered to listen to the Samadhi Singers sing freedom songs, to get an update on legislation concerning the GLBT community, and to hear two of the plaintiffs in the marriage lawsuit speak about their decision to challenge the state for the right to marry.

In Norfolk, Virginia, EBAH kicked off with a service at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Afterward, about 200 people held hands in the rain and surrounded the church. On the closing day of Equality Begins at Home, people will gather in Richmond for a prayer breakfast and will join hands and encircle the capitol in support of equality. Elsewhere, GLBT people of faith affirmed their belief in equality through Family Spirituality Day across Nebraska, while rainbow flags flew at supporting congregations in Michigan and GLBT-supportive worship services were held in Iowa.

Equality Begins at Home is coordinated by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and organized by the Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Statewide Political Organizations. ▼



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foundation of vermont

## is pleased to announce our 1999 Granting Process

### Timeline:

April 1 - letters of intent due

May 10 - final applications due for selected candidates

July 1 - final recipients notified

### Guidelines:

Samara Foundation of Vermont awards grants to organizations or projects that primarily serve the needs of Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities.

Organizations requesting funds must be non-profit, i.e. have a section 501(c)(3) tax exempt status or have an organization with such status willing to serve as their fiscal agent, as indicated in a letter attesting to that relationship.

Applications for either general operating support, specific project support, or start-up costs will be considered.

Please contact Samara Foundation of Vermont to receive a copy of the complete granting guidelines and application materials.

### Our Mission

The Samara Foundation of Vermont is a charitable foundation whose mission is to support and strengthen Vermont's gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered communities today and build an endowment for tomorrow.

### How To Contact Us:

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