



around vermont

V-F-M-T-F-B-I-N-G-O

WEST BRATTLEBORO — The second annual Bingo, an evening of camp, candor, and fabulous prizes to benefit Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, will be held on May 29 at the West Village Meeting House in West Brattleboro.

This fundraiser will help to offset costs of Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force's educational work in southern Vermont and throughout the state. The group regularly provides speakers and panelists to forums and panels across the state.

Callers Mark Herman (aka Mama) and Bill McDaniels

(Kitty) will combine camp and quick wit to create a fun-filled evening for everyone. Many folks will recognize them from their shows at the Rainbow Cattle Co. as well as from their help with Bingo last year.

Area business have donated prizes including overnight stays at the Saxtons River Inn and Chester House Inn, office visits at Brattleboro Naturopathic Clinic and Saxtons River Family Chiropractic, windshield wiper blades, seedling flowers and vegetables and gift certificates to many local stores and service providers.

Doors open at 7pm. Admission is \$10 and includes 10

chances at prizes. There will be light snacks and beverages available. All are welcome, but advised to come early, as seating is limited.

Help Throw the Lifeline

CONCORD, NH — The Gay Info Line of New Hampshire is seeking distribution help with its directory of resources for the GLBT community of VT and NH.

The Gay Lifeline directory, the result of more than a year's work, will be available in late May. More than 400 social groups, accommodations, therapists, lawyers, internet sites, and gay

bars are listed and described in the volume.

Because the information in the directory is time sensitive, the GIL is looking for individuals and groups to distribute directories at events and bars. Alternative retail outlets are also encouraged to participate.

Boxes of directories will be available at discounts off the \$5 cover price, and the GIL will cover shipping and handling.

For more information, contact the organization at 603-224-1686 or email gayinfoh@aol.com.

Eyes on the Prize

HINESBURG — The Samara Foundation of Vermont received

letters of inquiry from 18 GLBTA organizations requesting a total of \$120,000 in grants this spring.

Eleven of those organizations have received invitations to submit full grant proposals to the committee by May 10.

The foundation was pleased by the response to the request for letters of intent for its first competitive grant cycle, but can't fulfill all the requests. "We have between \$15,000 and \$20,000 to grant this year, so the process is still competitive," says Bill Lippert, Samara's executive director.

They hope to announce the results of the selection process by July 1, 1999. ▽

Diverse Responses to Diversity Report

WITH FILES FROM CAROLYN ASHBY

A long-awaited and controversial report on diversity at Middlebury College is garnering mixed reactions from students, faculty, and staff.

On March 29, the President's Office at Middlebury College released the Human Relations Committee Diversity Report. The Committee, which met twice weekly from September 1998 through January 1999, examined issues brought up by student protests in April 1998.

The report discusses and makes specific recommendations in 12 areas of college life, including admissions and financial aid, curriculum, faculty recruitment, housing, spiritual life, and administrative leadership.

Based on interviews with individuals, student organizations and other colleges, and previous College reports, it calls for the creation of both an office and a dean handling diversity matters, curricular changes, and non-permanent 'special interest' suites in student residences.

German professor Roman Graf was "very confident that the report will be received and responded to in a positive and active way." Spanish instructor Miguel Fernandez told the Middlebury campus paper on April 20 that feedback so far has been positive. "The recommendations in the report are 'do-able.' What we have suggested has real substance."

Not everyone agrees. Mary Duffy, Women's Studies Coordinator, felt "it is a strong document and address many important issues frankly," but "the effect may seem muted, certainly some criticisms could be made in stronger terms."

Former Middlebury student Russell Plato believed that instead of making powerful recommendations and facilitating change, the HRC succumbed to political pressure and narrow focus.

His specific criticisms included

lack of effort by some committee members to include GLBT issues in the process, "snobbish" neglect of socioeconomic issues except in cases of students of color, and tactless and unnecessary accommodation of the administration. "It lies when it talks about Middlebury's past progress and commitment to diversity."

Although an acknowledged active participant in the process, Plato was not appointed to the committee. Neither was Kevin Moss, Professor of Russian and faculty advisor to the GLBT student group for the last decade. "I was one of the first to hear [the HRC] was being reconstituted, and one of the first to submit an application [but was] not appointed to the core group."

In fact, many felt those who were more outspoken were passed over for "people who wouldn't stir things up too much," and were instead placed on the secondary 'resource' committees.

College President McCardell maintained that "this committee must be broadly representative of the student, faculty, and staff, if its recommendations are to have credibility. Thus, I did not limit appointments to those who expressed an interest."

The primary demand at the April 29, 1998 protest was a diversity affairs office "dedicated to addressing the needs of students of color; gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender students; non-traditional students; international students; students from differing economic and cultural backgrounds; and differently-abled students."

Consulting schools such as Williams, Amherst, Dartmouth, and Swarthmore, the committee found that Middlebury was the only one without such an office or cultural center. The report accordingly recommends "an Office of Diversity Affairs in the new Student Center with a staff to work with cultural organizations [and] be the hub of the wheel of diversity programs and activities occurring across campus."

Noting that "the administration does not mirror the composition of the community" a fact that "presents a visual contradiction to its stated values," the report also proposes creation of a new position. The dean of institutional diversity would possess full faculty credentials, oversee diversity matters regarding faculty and curriculum, work to resolve politically charged events, and visibly represent the administration's commitment to and understanding of issues of race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and disabilities.

Calling this "the most radical proposal in the report," Graf emphasized its importance in implementing visual strategies to create a diverse campus. "Diversity has to be integral to the campus, not just the Campus Center. Walking onto campus, one should immediately feel one is in a multicultural environment."

Student David Gramling also believed these points to be key. "Diversity of students is fast outpacing the administration's ability to interpret and serve that diversity on a policy level," he said. "We're doing better in demographics, but that is masked by a lack of public representation of those cultures."

In response to complaints from students — mostly female and/or GLBT — who feel unsafe in residence halls, recommendations advocate considering a way to gauge openness to having a GLBT roommate, providing more single rooms for freshmen, and providing on-request non-permanent 'special interest' suites within the dorms.

This last recommendation disappointed advocates of the Gender Studies House as a permanent residential and educational space for the GLBT community. Former Student Government Association President and Community Council member Bryan Stratton wanted something "more positive toward the Gender Studies House. ['Special interest' suites within dorms] isn't the

Spring 1998...The Controversy Begins

April 1 April Fool's Day issue of *The Campus* contains racially offensive ad, which also contains the word "pansy"

April 8 President McCardell sends letter to community announcing the *ad hoc* reconstitution of the Human Relations Committee (HRC)

April 13 Rally held to protest "silencing" of students based on difference of all kinds

April 19 *Rutland Herald* prints front-page article "Middlebury Struggles with Gay Issues"

April 29 Protest organized by Student Coalition for Community to demand the establishment of Diversity Affairs Office

May 11 Appointments to HRC announced by President McCardell

answer. Creating an atmosphere which allows for group identity while maintaining a strong sense of community is what is needed."

There were also strong criticisms of the curricular, faculty recruitment, and student and faculty retention recommendations. Despite assertions by Dean of the Faculty Robert Schine and HRC Chair Arlinda Wickland that "the curriculum is the most potent tool at our disposal for teaching about [diversity]," none of the 20 official recommendations and suggestions specifically address GLBT curricular content in the, gay and lesbian studies, or ways to attract and retain GLBT faculty and staff.

Chaplain Laurel Macaulay Jordan pointed out that time kept the committee from accomplishing everything it might have. "There were always more things that we thought about doing or including...but we had to recognize how long the document was getting and how close to the deadline we were."

Perhaps the strongest concern is not about the report's content, but its use.

Student Kate Landis worried that "it's under the rug in the sense that now it's on paper, and to

Middlebury, that's as good as gone."

Similar reports in 1968, 1982, 1987, and 1991 made the same recommendations regarding racial diversity, but despite significant steps in 1992, enough continuing discomfort was felt to put it on the table again in 1999. The report itself acknowledges that "many good ideas, innovative programs, and valuable reports are generated at the College, but we seem to lose track of them."

Many, including Leroy Nesbitt, Special Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs, have echoed Mary Duffy's sentiment that "the most important element in this process now is the College's commitment in terms of resources, personnel and willingness to open various systems ... to a strong shot of diversity and prejudice reduction training."

In a letter to the community accompanying the report, President McCardell vowed that it would "not gather dust on a shelf of interesting institutional historical documents. Rather, I mean for it to shape our actions on matters of diversity in the years to come."

So far, that promise is intact. The committee has held three