

photo Barbara Dozetosto
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Young "Heroes" Show Their Pride

■ Event Celebrates GLBTQA Youth

WITH FILES FROM
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Call it a warm-up for Pride; call it a public affirmation of self-esteem; call it a chance to be out *en masse* on Burlington's Church Street. Just make sure you call it a success.

Youth Pride '99, held on May 8 at City Hall in Burlington, featured a public speakout, a march up Church Street, and a prom for

to speakers running the gamut from shy to gregarious, from overwhelmed out-of-state visitors to emcee Palmer Legare, who has been featured in *Time* magazine for his work as a GLBTQ youth activist.

One young woman talked about coming out, pointing out that "just going about the business of being who we are [is a radical act] because there are people out there who say we

25 young people participated in a march from City Hall to the top of the Church Street Marketplace and back. Walking behind a banner that read "Youth for Pride and Pride for Youth," they waved Outright Vermont signs and a rainbow flag as they chanted such gems as "Two, four, six, eight; don't assume your kids are straight!" Pedestrians, sidewalk cafe diners, and even folks hanging out



photo Barbara Dozetos



*"Two, four, six, eight;
don't assume your kids
are straight!"*

gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning youth and their allies.

More than a dozen youth stepped up to the microphone on the steps of City Hall to share experiences and reflections on being GLBTQA, out, and proud. An enthusiastic crowd of more than 75 friends, family members, and passers-by stopped to listen

don't exist." A UVM student shared some of his poetry about coming out and being out. Another speaker shared some of her experiences as the daughter of a lesbian couple, "I can't think of a better way to be raised or a better way to be loved than by two mothers. To me, they've raised the most beautiful family."

After the speakout, more than

of upper-level windows cheered the contingent along its route.

Later that evening, more than 100 youth and adults returned to Contois Auditorium at City Hall for "Heroes & Villains," the first ever Burlington Youth Pride Prom. A blue-sequined Superman worked the door, greeting a crowd decked out in everything from casual wear to

gowns and tuxes to full costume. Among the crowd partaking of the punch, portraits, prizes, and pulsing rhythms were Ken and Barbie, Tank Girl, vampires galore, Liberace and Elton John (who, one observer noted, looked very much like a pair of before-and-after Elton Johns).

The Youth Pride '99 event was a project of the Youth Program Committee of Outright Vermont. Founded in 1989, Outright was the first statewide organization for gay youth in the country. Its fulltime staff of three and its volunteer corps work to support GLBTQ youth and their communities through outreach and education. ▼



Top: Loud and Proud - More than two dozen youth marched up and down Church Street in Burlington to show their pride.

Middle: Spectators cheered on friends and family during the speakout.

Bottom: They walked not-so-softly and carried big sticks with rainbow flags and pink triangles attached.

MMUHS Receives Complaint of Discrimination

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not the case. They insisted that they were prepared for the originally scheduled event and that the tests and break were acknowledged and considered before the Awareness Week dates were set. "The kids are trying to bring enlightenment and healing to the school and he's trying to shut it down," said Ms. Harrison.

Awareness Week was rescheduled to begin on May 20. Yolanda, a Burlington-based transgendered performer, has been asked to make a presentation.

Eldridge says Corsaniti contacted her to ask if she would recommend Yolanda as a presenter for the school's event. "I told him that I would whole-heartedly recommend him as an HIV/AIDS educator and as a performer who genuinely cares about the GLBTQ youth."

The substitution did not satisfy Harrison. "Yolanda's great, but Outright is specifically equipped

to deal with high school-age kids," she said.

She has confronted Conley directly about the issues involved and said she came away with the impression that the only discrimination he is concerned about is that against the Christian deprogrammer. "When I told him that kids are being called 'faggot' every day in his school, he went stony silent. He wasn't horrified or upset by this."

Mother and son both point out that the havoc seems to have come not from the majority of the school or community, but from a select few individuals. They report a great deal of support from students, faculty, and residents of the area, evident in the standing-room-only crowd in attendance at the May 3 meeting. Tut Parmley, a particularly vocal member of the Chittenden East school board, has received public rebuke for his overtly homophobic statements to the press. Some

prominent members of the community have gone so far as to ask for his resignation from the board.

Abram Harrison expressed frustration in attempting to teach the very people whose job it is to teach him. "Imagine how ridiculous it feels to have to actually convince those in charge of our education that sexuality is indeed an important topic to be addressed and homosexuality is in fact an accepted lifestyle."

At the May 3 meeting, the school administration did agree to a suggestion of sensitivity training made by Sandra Limoge, a former Outright Vermont board member. No official announcement has been made since that time. ▼

Editor's Note: As we went to press on May 24, we learned that Outright Vermont had that day received an invitation to participate in the school's Awareness Week on May 27th.

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