

You've come a long way, baby!

| | Then, year 1..... | and Now, year 10! |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| BUDGET | \$1200 | \$100,000+ |
| YOUTH SERVED | 20? | 275 |
| PRESENTATIONS | 22 | 68 |
| PEOPLE REACHED | 100? | 2250 (15,000 cumul.) |
| Staff | 1 part-time | 3 full-time |
| Library | few dozen volumes/journals | 1500 books, mags, etc |
| GSA's | 0 | 14 and growing |
| Other Providers | 1 | 5 |
| Collaborating Orgs | 0 | 15+ |

But perhaps the most important change of 1996 came when transgender youth were officially added to the mission statement. Josie Juhasz remarked that this was one of the major new developments since Outright's beginnings: "Transgender was not even in the language, that was not part of the [original] conversation." The acknowledgement of that change became one of the deciding factors in the next change of leadership.

In 1997, the Board felt Outright's position was strong enough to be able to undertake a national search for a new director. That search attracted Eldridge, signaling what Brauer calls a "sea-change" for the organization. Eldridge's base of experience and strong grant-writing skills added depth and breadth to the organization's efforts. "Finally, some dreams I had had came to fruition — regular newsletters, a membership structure, a dedicated youth space," says Brauer.

Eldridge herself is quick to credit her "loving, enthusiastic, and dedicated, not to

mention talented" staff, board members who contribute time, energy, and commitment, and volunteers "without whom we could not exist. There is no aspect of Outright that volunteers are not contributing to."

Other community organizations contribute to Outright's success as well. PFLAG, state agencies like the departments of health and education, funders such as the Ben & Jerry's and Vermont Community Foundations, and local churches and synagogues all get credit for support of Outright and its mission.

All that work has led to a community where youth can be comfortable and active. Mike Bensel, the UVM student and Outright volunteer who will become Outright's first Americorps VISTA worker in September noted, "The community that [Outright] has built here is amazing. It allowed me to come out and to thrive." Outright youth Marck May, a Peer Outreach Worker at Spectrum Youth and Family Services, observes, "It's unbeliev-

able that in a state as small as Vermont, GLBTQA youth can do so much. A lot of the credit goes to Outright."

One recent achievement of Vermont GLBTQA youth was a series of historic meetings with state officials. In November 1997, Governor Howard Dean — on his birthday — spent well over the allotted time talking with 17 queer youth from around the state. The meeting was remarkable for several reasons: the uniting of people from schools, provider organizations, and the community, the bravery and confidence of the youth, and the fact that they were heard without adults in the room. But perhaps the most remarkable thing was that the "youth were more awed by being in a room with 16 other queer youth than by meeting the Governor," remembers Eldridge.

A similar meeting was held in March

1998 with then Commissioner of Education Marc Hull. In his letter to those who attended, Hull wrote, "For me it was an eye opening experience that left me with a profound sense of respect for each of you who took the time to share your personal experiences." As a result of this meeting, the Department of Education pegged Shaun Donahue to work part-time coordinating Safe Schools for GLBTQ Youth initiatives.

As well, school gay-straight alliances now number more than a dozen. Eldridge attributes that to "the incredible courage and bravery of young people at schools all over the state who still have to do it for themselves." She also cites the leadership of youth such as Patrick and Kristen in

OUTRIGHT, P15



Group facilitators from 1996

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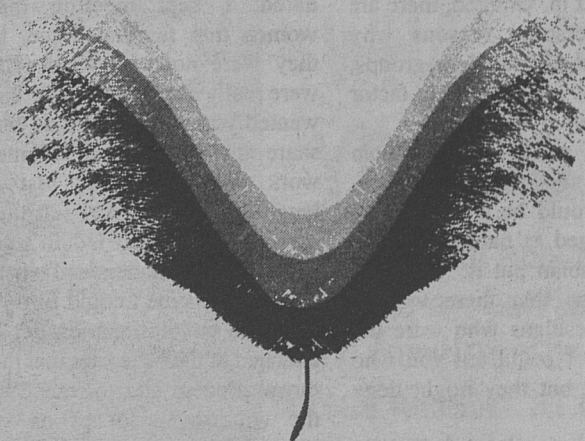
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Our Mission

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.

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