

## EDITORIAL

# That Was Then — This Is Now

There was no question about how we should respond to the death of David Curtis. The date and time of a memorial service was announced and we attended in droves. I didn't hesitate for a second to rearrange my schedule so that my daughter and I could be present when David's friends, family, and colleagues gathered to celebrate his life and mourn the loss they were experiencing. We know what to do when we want to demonstrate our respect and grief.

We're not nearly so unified or confident when it comes to facing hate at its ugliest. In the week before the Westboro Baptist Church came to visit, we gathered together in several different groups and places to discuss what, if anything, to do about it. Personally, although there was no question that I would cover it, I was enraged to think that those vitriolic jerks would be able to get me out of bed early enough to make it from Middlebury to Montpelier by 7:00 am.

This wasn't laziness on my part. Like many others, I liked the 'What-if-Fred-gave-a-party-and-no-one-came' approach and just couldn't condone giving obviously hate-filled outsiders

that much control and power over our lives. I went to Montpelier that morning with great trepidation, afraid that emotions would get out of control and something terrible would happen — fears that went unrealized.

In fact, I must admit that I'm glad I was there to experience for myself the positive energy that swelled over the hate from the Westboro Baptist message. The message of open-minded love and consideration for everyone wasn't an attitude the counter-demonstrators assumed for a day. It was genuine and awe-inspiring and a memory I'll carry with me always.

### But What Have We Done Lately?

Through the uproar, many of our community leaders asked us to concentrate not on what we would do that one Tuesday morning in August, but on what we should do the next morning and every day after that to effect a real change and make a real difference.

And in the days between the announcement of the impending visit from the Topeka folks and the event itself, energy, emotion,

discussion, and activity were all high. People who had previously proclaimed themselves "not political" were driven by shock and anger to get involved. I got calls from several people asking "what can I do?" and "how can I help?" Some were just looking for direction on the demonstration itself; others were moved to connect with a volunteer organization within our community. As a matter of fact, a huge portion of last month's *Out in the Mountains* distribution got done because two women wanted to "do something" — and they showed up and did it. I've heard that several other groups saw an upsurge of volunteerism during that same time.

That was a month ago. What will happen to the energy generated by our loss and by our self-defense? Strong feelings and good intentions got us out of our beds and our routines on both occasions. Have we acted on those feelings and good intentions since then? Have we signed a petition supporting one of our causes? Have we volunteered with or donated to the worthy organization of our choice? Have we come out to someone? Have we taken opportunities to educate the people we spend our

normal days with about issues important to us? Are we tuning in to the more polished, more palatable assaults on our community? Remember the letter from Hawaii?

No single organization is THE group to join. Our community is beautiful in its diversity and its varying opportunities for each of us to make a difference. Have we made the most of it? What will we do today? Tomorrow?

What better way to honor David Curtis' memory than to further strengthen the communities he worked so hard for? Even those of us who didn't know David personally live better lives because of the work he did. His death caused many of us to stop and grieve, reflect on how he affected our lives, and wonder what the future would be like without him. One of the people who spoke at the memorial service wondered whether there is anyone of David's caliber to carry on.

But the truth is that David lived his convictions, and that's all any of us need to do to make a difference.

So — with no rally to attend, what are you going to do today? ▼

### OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

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### STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of *Out in the Mountains* is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgendered people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see *OITM* as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

### EDITORIAL POLICY

We will consider for publication any material which broadens our understanding of our lifestyles and of each other. Views and opinions appearing in the paper do not necessarily represent those of *Out in the Mountains*. This paper cannot and will not endorse any candidates or actions of public officials on issues of importance to lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgendered persons. We reserve the right not to publish any material deemed to be overtly racist, sexist, anti-Semitic, ageist, classist, xenophobic, or homophobic.

Writers' guidelines are available on request. All materials submitted must include a name and a contact number. However, within the pages of the newspaper, articles may appear anonymously upon request, and strict confidentiality will be observed.

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