

EDITORIAL

Let All Employers Do The Right Thing

A woman who works for the City of Winooski will soon be receiving health insurance coverage for her partner. They will be able to move forward with plans to have children together, comfortable in the knowledge that their medical needs will be taken care of.

It wasn't a simple process; the coverage didn't materialize overnight. But it started with a question: "Can I get domestic partnership health benefits?"

If all goes as planned and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Vermont does indeed begin offering domestic-partner coverage to all employers, regardless of size, on January 1, 2000, it will be because someone asked for it. Even with the road paved, it is unlikely all employers will acquire the coverage without a vested interest.

Maybe the owner of your small place of business has a domestic partner of her own and will jump at the opportunity to sign up on January 1. Maybe you're really lucky and have an employer who empathizes with your situation, regardless of his own, and will seek the newly available coverage because it is the right thing to do. Maybe you work for a person acutely aware of the high cost of recruiting and training new employees who sees the wisdom in adding this benefit to attract and keep good employees.

Then again, maybe not. There's a very good chance you will have to ask your employer to do the right thing. So do it. Let your employer know that you need and want this benefit previously denied to you because you don't have access to legal marriage. Tell the person in charge that this is important to you. In this time of extremely low unemployment rates, you'll find businesses more eager than ever to make their employees happy, particularly when the ground-breaking has already been done.

The Next Step

State Representative Bill Lippert wants to make domestic partnership benefits a mandatory offering from all insurance companies doing business in Vermont. Banking, Insurance, Securities, and Health Care Administration Commissioner Elizabeth Costle says she doesn't think insurers would go ballistic over such legislation, but according to Blue Cross Blue Shield, she is wrong.

"We categorically oppose all mandated benefits," said Bob Opel, vice president and general counsel for BCBS. He warns of high-

er administrative costs to employers that do not get compensated when new coverage is required.

But the bigger issue for the state's largest insurance company is potential lost business. Their fear is that with increased mandatory coverage, larger businesses would opt to self-insure, thereby avoiding the forced coverage. This could put a big dent in the bottom line of insurance companies — if it were to happen.

But would it really happen? In order to self-insure and avoid the forced coverage, the employer would have to have a pretty hefty bottom line. And the four largest employers in

the state already offer domestic partnership benefits.

As a matter of fact, 29 large group companies employing 49,000 Vermonters already take advantage of domestic partnership benefits through BCBS alone.

Apparently, a great number of our large companies agree with Representative Lippert's belief that there's nothing radical about the idea of domestic partnership benefits anymore. It is a good idea and it's time that the smaller employers were given the opportunity to do the right thing by their employees. ▼

A PARTIAL LISTING OF VERMONT EMPLOYERS PROVIDING DOMESTIC PARTNER HEALTH INSURANCE BENEFITS

ACORN
Addison County Parent Child Center
Aetna Life & Casualty Insurance
American Express Financial Advisors
Bell Atlantic
Barnes & Noble
Battenkill Valley Supervisory Union School District
Ben & Jerry's Corporation
Bennington College
Bennington Southwest Supervisory Union School District
Blackwood Associates
Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Vermont
Border's Books
Brattleboro Area AIDS Project
Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
Brattleboro Retreat
Champlain College
Charles Schwab & Co.
City of Burlington
City of Winooski
Concept II
Costco Wholesale
Counseling Service of Addison County
Craftsbury Community Care Center
Digital Equipment Corporation
Fletcher Allen Health Care
Gap, Inc.
Gardener's Supply
Goddard College
Howard Center for Human Services
IBM
IDS Financial Services
IDX Systems Corporation
Landmark College
Langrock Sperry & Wool
Liberty Mutual Insurance Group
Lotus Graphics

Marlboro College
Marriott
Middlebury College
Merrill Lynch
The Nature Conservancy Vermont Chapter
Northeast Cooperatives
Onion River Coop
Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
Principal Financial Group
Putney School
Radisson Hotel Burlington (Wyndam International)
Rutland City Southwest Supervisory Union School District
Saint Michael's College
School for International Training
Spectrum Youth & Family Services
State of Vermont
Sheraton Burlington
Town of Middlebury
United Airlines
University of Vermont
Vermont Adult Learning
Vermont Bar Association
Vermont CARES
Vermont Girl Scouts Council
Vermont Law School
Vermont State Colleges
Vermont State Employees Credit Union
Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC)
Washington Northeast Supervisory Union School District

Compiled by Rep. Bill Lippert - Sept. 15, 1999
To add to this list, email
BillLipper@aol.com or call 482-3528

OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

— EDITOR IN CHIEF —
Barbara Dozetos

— ART DIRECTOR —
Donald Eggert

— EDITORIAL ASSISTANT —
Tina Giangrande

— PRODUCTION ASSISTANT —
Mack Roark

— OFFICE MANAGER —
Carolyn Ashby

— SOURCE / CALENDAR EDITOR —
Gary Smith

— CLASSIFIED MANAGERS —
Pam Kinniburgh & Sandy Reeks

— CIRCULATION MANAGER —
Kevin McAteer

— ADVERTISING —
Mary Bouvier

Columnists: Crow Cohen, Charles Ermond, Rev. Brendan Hadash, Thomas Henning, Rev. Christine Leslie, Susan Murray, Beth Robinson, Esther Rothblum, Miki Thomas

Contributors: Paj Wadley-Bailey, Chuck Colbert, Tim Evans, Butch McKay, Ernie McLeod, Dan Peabody, Cathy Resmer, Larry Rudiger, Maxwell Stroud, Chris Tebbets,

Photographers: Scot Applegate, Mary Bouvier, Sandy Milens, Jordan Silverman

Cartoonists: Alison Bechdel, Robert Kirby, Eric Orner

-MOUNTAIN PRIDE MEDIA- BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Judy Beaulac, Cheryl Carmi, Sarah Harrington, Thomas Henning, Bennett Law, Jim Petrie, Kevin McAteer, Roland Palmer, Carrie Rampp, Joseph Ryan, Richard Slappey

Out in the Mountains was founded in 1986 with start up money from the Haymarket People's Fund. Mountain Pride Media's current funding sources include the Chicago Resource Center, Green Mountain Fund for Popular Struggle, Gill Foundation, Haymarket People's Fund, Physicians Computer Company, Samara Foundation of Vermont, and individual private donations.

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.

Out in the Mountains (ISSN 1081-5562) is published on the last Tuesday of each month by Mountain Pride Media, Inc. It is printed by BD Press. The newspaper maintains offices at 5 Bridge Street in Richmond, Vermont.

The subscription rate is \$20 per year within the United States of America.
©1999, *Out in the Mountains*

Out in the Mountains

PO Box 1078

Richmond VT 05477-1078

TEL (802) 434-OITM

FAX (802) 434-7046

oitm@together.net

What do you take to bed?



Whatever you take along for pleasure, consider this:
We may feel safe in Vermont, but we're not immune
to AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

Don't take a chance...
take a condom

