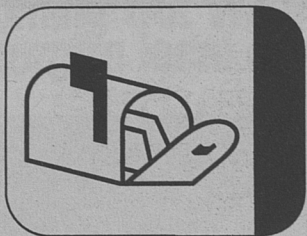


# Letters



OITM, PO Box 1078, Richmond, VT 05477-1078 or oitm@together.net

*Out in the Mountains* welcomes your letters. Although we will withhold names from printing upon request, the letter must be accompanied by a verifiable name and address in order to be considered for publication. We reserve the right to edit for space and clarity. Letters are also subject to the editorial policy stated in the masthead.

## Not All Employers are Eager to Offer DP Benefits

Editor,

Your October editorial suggested *OITM* readers should ask their employers for domestic partnership health care benefits. In addition, the opinion was offered that, "In this time of extremely low unemployment rates, you'll find businesses more eager than ever to make their employees happy." Perhaps that is true for some employers, but not for all. The question then is: Where does one turn for help when one's employer refuses to grant domestic partnership benefits, and bases their refusal on discriminatory state and federal marriage laws?

In June, I asked for, and was denied, domestic partnership health benefits at work. I appealed the decision twice and was denied each time. I then contacted the Vermont Human Rights Commission, the Civil Rights Department of the Vermont Office of the Attorney General, and the ACLU. None was willing to help. The Human Rights Commission told me they "did not have jurisdiction in this matter" and referred me to the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General's Office responded that they only address "employment discrimination and civil hate-crime remedies, [and] therefore [were] unable to assist [me]." They suggested I contact the ACLU. However, the ACLU had already told me they were "sorry that [my] employer does not provide health benefits to domestic partners." They agreed the laws upon which my employer based their opinion (i.e. marriage laws) are "indeed discriminatory." However, they offered no assistance and simply sent me a brochure about a seminar on same-sex marriage and the constitution they were sponsoring.

Where does one turn for help in getting domestic partnership benefits? Who is available to help an employee coordinate efforts, track down similar cases, and present a clear and convincing case before one's employer? Why are the three major routes for

addressing issues of discrimination in Vermont not willing to help in this matter?

Sincerely,  
Alan M. Hultquist, EdD  
West Glover, VT

## Dr. Laura Needs to be Silenced

Editor

This is quite scary, but oh so true. Syndicated talk show host Dr. Laura Schlessinger airs right in our own backyards. According to "Dr. Laura" gay men and lesbians represent "biological developmental errors." This, according to Dr. Laura makes the debate over gay rights nonsensical. She describes two men or two women having a sexual relationship as "sadness" and, according to Dr. Laura, reflects our inability to have a healthy relationship with someone of the opposite sex. She contends that we can be "cured" and thinks it's absolutely wrong for L/G people to adopt or raise children.

My interest in "Dr. Laura" has not been overnight, as I recall reporting on her harmful rhetoric previously on *The Vt. Rainbow Connection* TV show and a previous sister show in New York. However, this past month, receiving information from GLAAD (Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation), refueled my interest in Dr. Laura's comments. We reported on last month's program that GLAAD is asking the GLBT community and allies to write to Dr. Laura as well as local radio stations that air her program. Upon logging onto GLAAD's web page, I thought the most local station to encourage viewers to contact would be in New Hampshire or Massachusetts. Initially I felt good about living in one, perhaps the only state, that didn't carry this ignorant woman's show. However, after doing some research, I've discovered that WKDR 1390AM (Winooski, VT.) airs the "Dr. Laura" show 5 days/week. I have since asked GLAAD to update their web page listing. I said on the TV show that I would have to do some heavy meditating prior to writing my letters, since my knee jerk reaction was one of anger and

I wanted to write a scathing, angry letter. GLAAD's recommendation, however, and one I knew intellectually was correct, is for writers to not "attack," but to instead to express their opinions "rationally and thoughtfully."

Below is the letter I chose to write to WKDR that flowed easily and surprisingly didn't require much editing for harsh, angry counterproductive attacks. I will keep you posted on what kind of response I receive from WKDR. I would like to encourage everyone to take a few minutes and please write to WKDR 1390AM attn: Jeff Nicholson 1 Main street (The Champlain Mill) Winooski, VT. 05404. Also, please log onto GLAAD's web page at [www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org) to read the actual transcripts of what Dr. Laura has to say about you and me.

Dear Jeff Nicholson,

*I am writing to you today with the hope that you will read this letter and truly consider the difference your radio station can make in the lives of listeners. I fluctuate between being saddened and outraged that WKDR 1390AM chooses to carry the Dr. Laura Schlessinger program. The views Dr. Laura expresses regarding Gay & lesbian people are filled with ignorance, fear and plain untruths.*

*Being a Producer/co-anchor of a local news TV show, I value and cherish the right of free speech. Having said that, I also believe that when free speech fans the fires of prejudice and hatred, the responsibility of halting the speech lies on the conscience of networks and radio stations serving the public.*

*One year ago this past week a young man named Matthew Shepherd was brutally beaten, tied to a fence and left to die simply because he was an openly gay man. His attackers held such hatred and ignorance in their hearts regarding Gay/Lesbian people, allowing them, in some misguided way to think they were somehow justified in their attack on Matthew. Matt was not the first victim of such anti-gay violence, nor, I grieve to report, has he been the last. Dr. Laura's ongoing remarks regarding Gay/ Lesbian people, whether she realizes it or*

*not, takes responsibility for them or not, is a catalyst for hatred and violence. Many people who pass along their own fears and myths about Gay and Lesbian people will often insist they are never "telling people to be violent toward someone who is gay," they miss, however the crucial point, that their very words incite hatred and therefore contribute to violence directed toward Gay and Lesbian people.*

*"The Vermont Rainbow Connection" Television show works very hard to dispel the myths and combat the negative stereotypes that continue to plague society, and threaten the safety, equality, and basic human happiness that Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people deserve. Knowing a syndicated radio talk show like "Dr. Laura," airs in our own backyards is both disturbing and frightening to me as a lesbian woman living in Vermont.*

*Please consider the lives of so many GLBT people as well as their families and friends, no doubt many of whom are your neighbors, co-workers and people you trust, respect and interact with daily, whether you are aware of it or not, the next time you air the "Dr. Laura" show. Furthermore, when she makes derogatory remarks regarding Lesbian and Gay people, think about all the innocent, loving, upstanding citizens you are inadvertently harming by promoting her show.*

*Ideally, I wish you would cancel the Dr. Laura Schlessinger program completely, however, if you choose to continue airing the show on your station, will you please also consider allowing myself and some wonderfully articulate community members to speak truthfully about what being G/L/B/T is all about? I assure you we can and will dispel the myths that Dr. Laura puts forth in her show - please give us, at least, that opportunity.*

*I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.*

Sincerely,  
Sharon M. Randall  
Producer/Co-Anchor,  
Vermont Rainbow Connection

## OUT IN THE MOUNTAINS

Established in 1986

EDITOR IN CHIEF  
Barbara Dozelos

ART DIRECTOR  
Donald Egger

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 SALES  
Mary Bouvier

COLUMNISTS: Crow Cohen, Charles Emond, Brendan Hadash, Thomas Henning, Rev. Christine Leslie, Susan Murray, Beth Robinson, Esther Rothblum, Miki Thomas  
CONTRIBUTORS: Chuck Colbert, Stephen Kopstein, Bill Lipperl, Ernie McLeod, Heather Peake, Holly Puterbaugh,  
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Peter, Huoppi, Maxwell Stroud, Chris Wood,  
CARTOONISTS: Allison Bechdel, Robert Kirby, Eric Orner

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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 overly 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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*Out in the Mountains*  
PO Box 1078  
Richmond VT 05477-1078  
TEL (802) 434-OITM  
FAX (802) 434-7046  
oitm@together.net