

**news**

# More Funding Plans for Vermont Organizations

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

A national organization wants to make \$300,000 available to the Vermont GLBT community over the next two years – and it wants most of the money to come from straight allies.

The Vermont Community Foundation, in partnership with the Samara Foundation of Vermont, has been selected by the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership Fund – a project of Astraea Foundation – to receive a 1:2 challenge grant. In order to receive the \$100,000 grant, Samara and VCF will have to garner \$200,000 in matching contributions from local sources.

“The spirit of the grant,”

said VCF director David Rahr, “is to attract new donors, particularly from the straight community.” The Funding Partnership is set up to reach communities through the existing structure of community foundations.

Samara Foundation teamed up with the eligible Vermont Community Foundation to bring the opportunity to Vermont.

Calling VCF the “premier public charity in Vermont,” Samara director Bill Lippert said the Middlebury-based organization’s pursuit of this grant “demonstrates an awareness of the value of the GLBT community and raises visibility of our needs.”

Rahr calls the pairing of the two organizations a natural partnership. “We’re not going

to move the needle against the tough issues in our society without this kind of spirit of cooperation.”

To start the process, the organizations will set up an advisory board. This group will be made up of 15 community leaders and business people and should be in place by May. The intent is for the members of this group to be diverse in age, gender, and geographic representation.

That group will document the financial needs of the Vermont GLBT community. This assessment will be used both in soliciting donors and as a guideline in the re-granting of the funds.

The priority for fundraisers will be corporate and foundation donors first, then the het-

erosexual community, and finally the GLBT community. “The goal is to educate philanthropists that are not already donors to GLBT causes,” said Rahr.

The granting process will most likely begin in late 2000 or early 2001. “This first year is full of organizational issues,” said Lippert. “Once the advisory board is in place, the rest of the process will be clearer.” The only restriction placed by the Partnership Fund upon the regranting process is that these funds not be used for HIV/AIDS support. The Astraea Foundation operates a separate fund for such causes.

In late January of this year, the Funding Partnership announced its selections for the current cycle of challenge

grants. Vermont was one of only three sites chosen this year. Community foundations in Oak Park, IL and Toronto were also selected.

In 1997 less than one-third of one percent of the annual philanthropic dollars of major national foundations were granted to address GLBT issues. In 1997, only 47 of the 12,823 foundations listed in the Foundations Directory made grants to fund GLBT issues.

Members of the Funding Partnership include The Collin Higgins Foundation, Columbia Foundation, David Geffen Foundation, Levi Strauss Foundation, Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation, Gill Foundation, and the Open Society Foundation. ▼

Photo Barbara Dozetos



(Foreground right to left) Rob Larabee, of the Vermont People With AIDS Coalition, Deb Kutzko from the Comprehensive Care Clinics, and Susan Bell, director of Brattleboro Area AIDS Project joined more than 50 people who attended AIDS Awareness Day at the Statehouse on February 16. All three were also in attendance at the collaboration meeting between the ASOs and other care givers in South Royalton earlier in the month.

## ASOs Begin Talks to Settle Differences

BY BARBARA DOZETOS

Staff and board members of Vermont’s AIDS Service Organizations and other agencies that provide care to people living with HIV and AIDS met last month to start working out their differences.

The so-called collaboration meeting, held February 10 in South Royalton, was a first step in working out philosophical disagreements that have plagued the groups – sometimes boiling over into public feuds – for more than a year.

The group included representatives from the Brattleboro Area AIDS Project, Vermont CARES, AIDS Community Resource Network, Vermont People With AIDS Coalition, Dartmouth Hitchcock Hospital, Twin States Women’s Network, and the Comprehensive Care Clinics, and their expectations were varied going into the meeting.

“I wanted a commitment from everyone at the table,” said Susan Bell, BAAP executive director, “that we all had a common interest – the well-being of people living with HIV – and that common interest transcends any issues of money, power, control.”

Vermont CARES executive director Tim Palmer said he tried to go without preconceptions. “I was hopeful that we could find a way of making sure that whatever arrangement we could develop would have people living with the virus as the key decision makers,” he said.

He and other CARES representatives expressed concerns with the make-up and operation of the AIDS Care Consortium, an organization intended to balance the interests of the Vermont Health Department and HIV/AIDS consumers in the state.

They asked that 51 percent of the Consortium board be HIV-positive, that board members with conflicts of interest due to fiduciary responsibilities in their own organizations not be in voting positions, and that the balance of the board be case workers or other people who work closely with people living with the virus.

Palmer said the next step seems to be the next Consortium meeting on March 9, and that he will encourage HIV-positive individuals to attend.

Although tangible progress was slight, delegates were pleased to have gotten issues out in the open and seemed generally optimistic about the direction of talks.

Deb Kutzko of the Comprehensive Care Clinics called the meeting a first step toward a resolution. She said she hoped the VPWAC would convene another collaboration meeting, aside from the scheduled Consortium meeting, in order to keep the dialogue going.

“We just need to keep talking,” said Kutzko.

Bell agreed.

“There were disagreements here,” she said, “but at least there was a table.” ▼

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