

== news ==



Photo: Max Stroud

Rally, Parade, and Festival Cap 30 Days of Pride

BY CAROLYN ASHBY

Every year since 1983, folks from the diverse communities that make up the GLBT community in Vermont have come together in June in Burlington for Pride Day. As Peggy Luhrs, an organizer of that first gathering of 300 people, quipped, "This is the most color you'll see in Vermont this side of fall foliage." Bold rainbow flags flying over the festival tents lent a bright touch to a cloudy morning, as did the crowd that turned out for the rally, parade, and festive afternoon.

Despite the clouds and bouts of rain, many community members as well as more prominent folks stepped up to the podium. The politicians were out in force, of course. Students contributed original poetry and song. The Freedom to Marry Task Force coordinator, lawyers, and plaintiffs all took the stage. Leaders from Outright Vermont, the Samara Foundation, and the Coalition for Lesbian & Gay Rights echoed the theme of looking to the future. Tom Crowley of the Pride 2000 Committee thanked the City of Burlington, Parks & Rec, and the Church Street Marketplace for their helpfulness and paid special tribute to Lady Zeno, whose "Zingo" nights at 135 Pearl benefited Pride.

The topic of the day, of course, was Vermont's civil union law. Representatives of the Freedom to Marry Task Force and the plaintiffs and attorneys from *Baker v. State* all took the opportunity to celebrate the victory, thank allies in the struggle, and discuss the need for continued political mobilization.

Rep. Bill Lippert hailed his legislative colleagues, their work "which sets an example for the whole world,"

and the GLBT community's "right to claim our place in the family of humankind."

Other speakers all visited the topic in one way or another, even as they announced candidacy for office, spoke about campaign finance reform, or just encouraged celebration.

Amid jokes of a political deal to have the sun move across the lake from Plattsburgh to Burlington, Plattsburgh Mayor Dan Stewart hailed Vermont's ability "to be the leader, to be in the forefront for equality." Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle closed the rally with a thanks "to all of you—gay and lesbian people, and allies—who stood up with courage, civility, compassion" and a proclamation encouraging "all citizens to acknowledge the contributions of gay and lesbian people to our community."

In the spirit of Stonewall, the gathering was not solely focused on celebra-

tion, but also on the struggle for equality.

During the rally, Keith Elston, executive director of Outright Vermont, told the crowd, "the war is not yet over—it has shifted fronts. One of those fronts is Outright Vermont." Anti-gay groups are increasingly attacking Outright's programs in Vermont's schools, pressuring the state to withdraw funding for HIV prevention and sexuality-focused educational presentations.

Speaker after speaker discussed the importance of supporting those who have supported the community in the coming election, in the face of mounting opposition to civil unions and to GLBT rights in general.

Now-perennial protester Brian Pearl stationed himself at the bottom of Main Street to greet the parade. At the rally, Dan Stewart noted his presence by commenting, "It's a travesty that an American flag would be flown on a truck with hate messages on it."

Also during the rally, attorney Beth

Robinson was forced to ask the crowd to "ignore what is going on over there" as a rainbow flag was burned at the edge of the parking lot. That protester left before engaging in any direct confrontation.

However, the opportunity for direct confrontation was too tempting for David Bishop, who left his second-floor apartment to harass parade onlookers. Burlington police charged Bishop, who complained about the "law change" during his arrest, with a disorderly conduct hate crime for spitting on four bystanders.

But incidents like these were few during the speeches, as the colorful procession made its way through Church Street Marketplace and back to Waterfront Park for an afternoon of celebration at the festival.

The celebration was the signature event of a slate of more than 70 held in communities across the state in June -- called 30 Days of Pride. ▼



Photo: Jordan Silverman

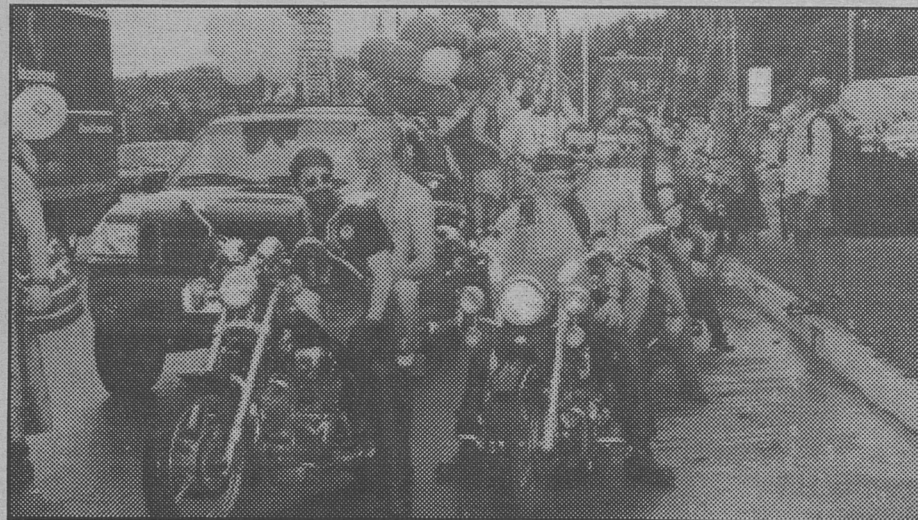


Photo: Max Stroud

*Additional Pride photos
can be found on
www.mountainpridemedia.org*



Photo: Max Stroud

Elizabeth C. Campbell, CPA, PC

Certified Public Accountants

15 East Washington Street, Rutland 05701

802-773-4030 / liz@rallyCPA.com

**Tax specialists serving individuals
and small businesses**

WE OPEN THE DOORS TO HOMES ALL OVER VERMONT!



*Mortgages For People,
Not For Profit*

1-800-865-VDCU(8328)