

news

AIDS Czar to Appear at Conference

BY DOUG EBELING

Senator James Jeffords will host a day-long conference on HIV and the workplace on Friday, August 25 at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier.

The conference's focus is on the issues faced by those living with HIV who return to work after being on disability. Workshop topics include accommodation, benefits and insurance considerations in returning to work, confidentiality issues, new treatment options, along with vocational counseling.

This is "a chance to make a serious commitment to doing more around employment issues for people living with HIV," said Greg Voorheis, chair of conference planning. It "gives Vermont an opportunity to really move ahead."

Though the workshops are aimed at the needs of vocational counselors, case managers, and health care providers, there will also be a panel designed to address consumer issues. This panel will include speakers who will share their personal experiences of working and HIV.

Another major highlight is the scheduled appearance of

keynote speaker Sandra Thurman, the director of the Clinton Administration's Office for AIDS policy. Ms. Thurman is slated to appear at a free reception in Burlington on the evening of August 24.

The conference is sponsored by a variety of Vermont State agencies, among them the UVM College of Medicine, and groups such as the Vermont PWA Coalition, the Vermont AIDS Education and Training Center, the Vermont HIV/AIDS Consortium, and Fletcher Allen.

The August 24 reception at which Thurman will speak is being held at the Radisson in Burlington, and is free and open to the public.

The conference on August 25 at the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier is \$30 in advance, \$40 on the day of the event.

Registration information is available by contacting Lori Yarrow at Vocational Rehab, at (802) 241-2201. Scholarships for consumers are available through the PWA Coalition. Call (800) 698-8792 for information or visit their Web site at www.vtpwac.org.

Local Organizations Get Training

BY JASON WHIPPLE

A cooperative program between a national foundation and Vermont-based foundation is getting good reviews from local participants.

OutGiving, a project of the Colorado-based Gill Foundation, is being hosted locally by the Samara Foundation of Vermont. This series of nearly free workshops provides training and intensive coaching to organizations to help them become better fundraisers and stronger institutions. The program is intended for both non-profit GLBT and non-GLBT ally organizations.

Three presentations have been held so far. The first two workshops – focusing on the fundamentals of fundraising – were presented by Donna Red Wing. Forty-five people attended, representing 22 organizations, 10 of which were GLBT or HIV/AIDS organizations. In the third workshop, concentration was on development planning; there were 30 people present, 6 representing non-profit organizations that had not been present at the first two workshops.

Susan Baker, from the Nature Conservancy in Montpelier, attended the first

workshop despite her extensive professional background. "I went to be supportive," she said, "and found it to be an excellent overview of fundraising. It's incredible that the Samara Foundation and the Gill Foundation are working so closely together to bring these opportunities to Vermont residents."

Naomi and Bill Corey of Bennington are so far impressed with the collective effort. "We plan to use this information to enrich our current experience and to help us out in the future." At an excellent price – five dollars per person to cover the cost of refreshments – they found it to be an equally excellent opportunity. Despite the lengthy commute, they plan to attend the remaining workshops scheduled for the series.

"We believe that learning and working together builds bridges, breaks barriers and enhances collaboration among groups that have little or no prior relationship." Bill Lippert, executive director of the Samara Foundation, is already witnessing the materialization of these Gill Foundation goals as he sees networking opportunities develop throughout the state. "It's more than I expected. I'm

thrilled that the response has been so gratifying," he said.

"One of the best things about the workshops is the Outgiving manual you receive that has the basic outline of all the workshops," said Roland Palmer of Mountain Pride Media. "I have already pulled things from it to share with our board of directors and committees."

There will be six more workshops this year. "Build a Better Board" and "Mail for Money" have already been scheduled for September 9 and 23.

Other upcoming sessions include "Recruit! And Reward Volunteers," "Fix Your Fundraising Events," and "Breathe Life into Planned Giving." At least one of these will be offered on Vermont Interactive Television.

"We are taking risks and trying new ideas, challenging non-profits to embrace new business models and helping people think differently about philanthropy," says the Gill Foundation annual report.

The foundation chose the entire state of Vermont as one of nine OutGiving InCommunity sites for 2000, marking the first time an entire state has been chosen for the project.

Photo: Bari Shamas



Annette Cappy, Brattleboro Town Clerk, issued a civil union license to Thomas Lang and Alexander Westerhoff of Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA at 12:30am July 1.

Controversy surrounds youth programs continued from page one

contacted by a school and invited in to give the presentation. According to Elston, the invitation most often comes because educators become aware of the use of "antigay epithets" or because a student, or the parent of a student, complains about harassment incidents. Outright will discuss "general respect for differences" and try to help educators work towards a safer environment for all of their students.

Outright receives money from the state education budget to cover the costs associated with providing the Safer Schools presentations. There is approximately \$12,000 available to the agency, although it is not delivered to the group up front. The agency receives the money on an invoice basis for their actual program expenses, such as travel and materials used in the presentation.

A second, separate program is "HIV/AIDS Risk Reduction and Prevention." This program is never presented in schools. It is offered on-site at the Outright center in Burlington on a monthly basis. This presentation includes frank and

explicit talk about sex, and the risk and prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. Elston says that they talk about sex, provide condoms, and "make no apologies for that."

According to Elston, the audience for this program are those already served by Outright, and the agency doesn't "make decisions about whether what they are doing is good or bad; we give them the information to make decisions for themselves."

The HIV/AIDS presentations are funded by a \$25,000 grant from the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In order to receive the money, Outright must meet specific objectives and make detailed reports to the CDC regarding the number of programs offered, the number of youth who attend, and the number of new attendees to the program.

This presentation also includes the use of a one-page quiz to gauge attendees' knowledge of sexually transmitted diseases. This information is used to tailor the presentation to address any specific

misinformation or misunderstandings.

Elston believes that civil union opponents are intentionally combining aspects of both of these programs, and taking aspects of them out of context, in order to fan the flames of the angry reaction to civil unions among some Vermonters.

"Unfortunately," he said, "who they are really affecting are youth who desperately need a safe place to find support, ask questions, and find friends."

Tawnya McDonald, a member of the volunteer governing board, said that the reaction of the youth served by Outright is "anger that they are being misrepresented. We wouldn't be facing these attacks if it wasn't for civil unions and it wasn't an election year."

McDonald said some of the youth served by Outright are able to vote, and that these attacks may have the impact of energizing and empowering them to get involved.

She hoped that others would take action also: "It is time for the community to support our youth." ▼

INSIDE *oitm* departments

World News Briefs3
 Op-Ed8
 Letters8
 Milestones18
 Health & Wellbeing23
 The Source.....26
 Community Compass28
 Calendar29
 Arts & Entertainment31
 Travel.....34
 Gayity37

columns

Crow's Caws17
 Faith Matters25
 Legal Briefs.....21
 Stonehenge to Stonewall20