

# OPALGA Bulletin

Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association • 1145 Westgate, Suite 106 • Oak Park, Illinois 60301 • www.opalga.org

## Special Meeting on October 6th

*Ray Johnson, Julie A. Kreiner, OPALGA Co-chairs*

*We have had many thoughts from the annual board retreat which we held on August 19 and 20th, from 9 to 5:30 both days (with 100% board participation). This board is very committed to the future and potential of OPALGA. One of our goals is continued and increased funding for current and future programs.*

*The following is an excerpt of a letter we are sending out in a request for grants. We are including this in the Bulletin, as a introduction to the special meeting we are having at the Longfellow Rec Center on October 6th at 7pm. Many thanks to Jim Aull's professional help.*

OPALGA is an eleven year old not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status, operating in Oak Park and the surrounding west suburban communities. Unlike most organizations that have grown up in the last ten or fifteen years, OPALGA began as an organizing effort on the part of a handful of people to influence the professional and social climate of the area and to affect public policy in a meaningful way. Most organizations began as attempts to meet the social needs of lesbians and gays and advocacy and public policy followed, often as an after thought. OPALGA continues to be on the forefront of public policy issues, and in addition provides a plethora of social opportunities for its constituency. The founding of OPALGA was also unique in that from the start men and women would be equal partners in the organization. Throughout its brief history, the organization has been led, through its board and through its subcommittees, by co-chairs of men and women. It has also invited into its membership and into leadership positions men and women, not gay or lesbian, who are allies and who want to contribute to the organization. OPALGA has depended from the beginning on volunteers to provide the major leadership of the organization. Only recently have a few paid part-time positions been created.

The Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association is at an important point in its development. OPALGA has achieved important benchmarks during the eleven years of its existence, including most

recently the adoption of a domestic partnership registry by the Village of Oak Park. Included in this decade of accomplishment was inclusion of gays and lesbians in non-discrimination policies for the Village and for the high school, and offering benefits to gay and lesbian couples who are employed by the village. In addition, OPALGA has organized programs for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered (LGBT), and questioning youth and young adults in the area (Prism and Spectrum) and has this summer begun an outreach effort to Latino youth. The annual OPAL Gala, now in its fifth year, has raised thousands of dollars, and become the capstone event for the many social activities that go on throughout the year. All these efforts have been done mostly through volunteer efforts so that today only a part-time office administrator and a part-time program director for Prism are paid positions.

If OPALGA is to move forward, it needs to consider and address its areas for growth and change. Membership has leveled out to about 350 members (and a 750+ mailing list) for each of the last five years. If Prism is to grow, major decisions have to be made about space needs and professional leadership. The board of directors, its committees and committee chairs need to reflect on the long range purposes of the organization and the internal structures that must be in place to accomplish long range goals. Should the organization be serving older gays and lesbians? Gay families with children? What outreach should the organization be making to the community? What issues should it currently be advocating or prioritizing?

The Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association is committed to a year-long planning process designed to deal with some of the most fundamental questions an organization can ask itself. It is expected that at the end of the planning process there will be sufficient clarity about the purpose, role, and function of the organization that it can chart a course of growth and development that can lead to better service for the LGBT community specifically, and the greater good of the entire community. The planning process will also identify the direction the organization could go in terms of fundraising. At its recent retreat this past August, the board of directors identified four general areas that it wants to explore in the coming year.

*(cont. on p. 9)*

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145 Westgate, Suite 106



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- Custody/Visitation Planning



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## OPALGA Contacts

OPALGA:  
(24-hr information and message machine)  
708/848.0273

FAX: 708/848.7544

### Officers:

Co-Chairs  
Ray Johnson 386.4851  
Julie A. Kreiner 358.1860  
Secretary  
open  
Treasurer  
Sarah Durbin 386.5334

### Board Members-at-Large

Ethel Cotovsky 524.1323  
Lynne Clark 524.2722  
John Dames 848.0515  
Sam Halferty 383.5268  
Chuck Huffman 524.8943  
Donna Karpavicius 485.8799  
Betsy Ritzman Stith 848.0553  
Mel Wilson 848.7934

### Committee/Task Force Chairs

Education/Outreach  
Chuck Huffman 524.8943  
co-chair open

Communications  
co-chairs open

Cultural Arts  
Lori Hannigan 524.1323  
Jim Baxter

Fundraising  
Jim Kelly 524.2542

Membership  
co-chairs open

Nominating Committee  
Bruce Broerman 524.2542  
Pamela Freese 383.3747

Public Policy  
Lynne Clark 386.4178  
Mel Wilson 524.2663

Social Activities  
John Dames 848.0515

Prism Youth  
Susan Abbott 386.3463

Spectrum Youth  
Rob Ward 524.3386

Office Administrator  
Joyce Daley 848.0273

Graphic Arts Consultant  
Ideas & Resources 383-9513  
JAK Graphic Solutions 358.1530

Liaison, Oak Park Police Dept.  
Geoff Sjostrom 358.5542

## Calendar

### October - November 2000

October 3  
Bungalo organizational meeting at the Berwyn library 2nd flr. board room. Everyone welcome. For more info: 708/216-9723.

October 5  
Chicago Premiere of "That's A Family!" 6:30 VIP Reception with filmmakers, 7:15 Screening at Piper's Alley Theatre, 1601 N. Wells, Chicago.

October 6  
OPALGA Potluck/Membership Meeting at the Longfellow Rec Center (Ridgeland/Jackson) in Oak Park at 7pm. Come share ideas for our future. Pizza, salads, and childcare will be provided. Everyone welcome.

October 7  
West Suburban AIDS Walk at Fox Park. Call 773/386-3383.

October 8  
Fox Valley Community Church, MCC Welcomes Marsha Stevens in concert. 7:00 pm Call 630/499-8090

October 10  
LAST DAY TO REGISTER TO VOTE!

October 11  
NATIONAL COMING OUT DAY!

October 14  
9:00am 3rd Annual Makin' Tracks! 5K Community Run/Walk at Concordia University. Entry form at www.chicagoevents.com.

MidOctober (date to be determined)  
L.O.G. (The Lesbian Outdoor Group) goes Horseback Riding and Apple Picking. Call 773/725-3975.

October 15  
Brunch with Greg Louganis. Greg will be in the Quad Cities as a guest of AIDS Project Quad Cities. Limited seating tickets available for \$50. Call 309/794-9707 or 309/788-5698.

October 18  
The Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce Honors Cocktail Reception and Awards Presentation. Call 773/871-4190 before 10/16. (see pull-out calendar for more info on activities, concerts, etc.)

October 18  
Circle Live! Benefit for Circle Theatre at 19th Century Women's Club in Oak Park. 6 - 10pm. Call Circle Theatre to RSVP before 10/4.

October 21  
Cabaret! Benefit for Howard Brown Health Center at Chicago Hilton & Towers. Call 773/388-1600 to RSVP before 10/9.

October 21  
Bungalo breakfast at Moondance Diner in Westmont at 10:00am. Call 708/216-9723.

October 21  
Project Unity Servathon. Annual Service Day this year will work on a project on west side of Chicago. Call 708/445-6388.

October 21  
Rainbow Family Pride Conference 2000. Oakton Community College in Des Plaines, 9:15am-2:30pm. Call 773/388-1600.

October 28  
Bungalo Halloween Party 7:00pm. Call 708/216-9723.

October 28  
Oak Park Housing Center Annual Benefit at MarLac Banquet Hall. Call 708/848-7150

November 3  
OPALGA Potluck. Call OPALGA office for details.

November 4  
4th Annual Pilgrim Congregational Church of Oak Park Multicultural Gospel Music workshop & concert. Call 708/445-0197.

November 11  
Rainbow Spirit Awards (Previously known as the Rainbow Cotillion). An Award presentation and benefit for MCCI Church and Diverse Communications (LesBiGay Radio). Call 773/973-9965.

Date TBD  
L.O.G. (The Lesbian Outdoor Group) plays Whirlyball. call 773/271-0956.

November 16  
Project Unity Building Bridges Controversial Issue Workshop. 6:30-9:00pm. Call 708/445-6388.



Oak Park Area Lesbian and Gay Association  
1145 Westgate, Suite 106  
Oak Park, Illinois 60301 • www.opalga.org  
Tel: 708.848.0273 / FAX: 708.848.7544  
www.opalga.org

With a paid membership, you will also receive our two publications:

OPALGA *Empower*  
**OPALGA Bulletin**

## OPALGA Membership Form

Domestic partner/families may join together.

New Member/s?  Yes  No    Renewal?  Yes  No    Gift Membership?  Yes  No    DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

Name 1: Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Phones: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City/ST/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Name 2: Ms./Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ Phones: (day) \_\_\_\_\_ (evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ *For Gift Membership Acknowledgement, please provide your gift-giver name(s):* \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me about participating on the following committees:

Communications     Social     Cultural Arts     Public Policy     Youth     Membership  
 Fundraising     Education/Outreach     Other interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional information that helps us raise funds.

If partners provide for both:

Sex (M/F) \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_ Birthyear: \_\_\_\_\_

### PLEASE ENROLL ME AS A MEMBER!

\$200+ Rainbow  
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 \$50 Yellow

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\$40 Blue (Dual/Family)  
 \$40 Violet (Organization)  
 \$25 Green (Individual)  
 \$15 Pink (Youth/Senior Citizen)

May we list your name(s) and donor level in our Quarterly Bulletin?  Yes  No

If paying by credit card please fill out information below:

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Expiration Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ Card #: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (daytime/evening): \_\_\_\_\_

Authorizing signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return this form to: OPALGA, 1145 Westgate, Suite 106, Oak Park, Illinois 60301 / 708.848.0273  
Thank you, and don't forget all contributions are tax-deductible by law, less \$5 for the cost of producing the monthly newsletter and quarterly. OPALGA is an IRS 501(c)3 tax-exempt non-profit organization.

## EDITORIAL DEADLINES!

Deadlines for OPALGA's monthly newsletter *Empower* is the the 3rd Friday of every month. You can email copy to OPALGA@aol.com or FAX to 708/848.7544 (otherwise mail copy to OPALGA office). Calendar information is as soon as you know it, and as far ahead as you can envision (with details on the event)!  
Deadlines for OPALGA's quarterly *Bulletin* are Winter: January 1, Spring: April 1, Summer: July 1, Fall: September 1.

## A "Potpourri"

(cont. from page 3)

perishable food items and bring to all future potlucks.

## Gays and Lesbians in Oak Park - A progress report

Check out anthropologist Jay Ruby's web site at <http://astro.ocis.temple.edu/~ruby/opp/gays.html> for a detailed historical analysis of the Oak Park area lgbt community. Jay is spending the year in the Oak Park area studying diversity and how the lgbt community is part of that diversity. This information is very informative with important historical perspectives. Check it out!

## Prism Painters

Prism members will spend much of October bringing to life a mural they designed under the supervision of a trained mural artist.

Susan Abbott, Prism youth director, said about six members have been working on the project with help from Robinlee Gerber, a mural artist Abbott met at an OPALGA potluck in December.

"The kids, especially those interested in art, have put their heart and soul into this," Abbott said. The mural will be featured on a wall inside the OPALGA office. Painting is scheduled to begin on September 28th.

OPALGA would also like to thank the company that donated all the paint to us so the kids can start painting next week. Dan Drozdek from J.C. Licht Co. at 7051 W

North Avenue in Oak Park and his Benjamin Moore distributor Roger Bain have worked together to provide Prism with close to \$2000.00 worth of paint for the kids' office mural. Thanks to both of them for being so open to our project and supporting our youth!

For a complete story and pictures, see the November newsletter "Empower."

## Domestic Partnership Registry

Recently, the Chicago Tribune, the local Wednesday Journal, and Channel 2 news all have devoted stories to the Oak Park Domestic Partnership Registry. With over 50 lesbian and gay couples now registered in Oak Park, it's always a great reminder to all the couples out there that Oak Park does indeed provide an opportunity for you to receive an important acknowledgement of your relationship and partnership.

To learn more about the details for registering your relationship through the Domestic Partnership Registry, just call our friendly Village of Oak Park Clerk - Sandra Sokol at 708.383.6400.

## Register to Vote!



October 10th is the LAST day to register to vote for this falls presidential election. If you've recently moved, than this is the last day to register to vote in your local precinct. In Oak Park, call Village Clerk Sandra Sokol for voter registra-

tion times - the Oak Park village hall can register any voter within Suburban Cook County. In Chicago, contact the Daley Center for details on voter registration within the city.

## Pilgrim Congregational Church

460 Lake Street, Oak Park

708/848.5860

Worship services:  
Sunday 11 am

## Prism

Youth, 14-18

Social Meeting  
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OPALGA Office

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Sat. 10 A.M. - 12 Noon

## A "Potpourri"

from the OPALGA co-chairs - Ray Johnson and Julie Kreiner

## Boy Scouts of America and OPALGA

Recently, a task force of OPALGA board and committee members, along with Village of Oak Park Community Relation Commission members met with a local Boy Scout scoutmaster to discuss the recent Supreme Court ruling that "banned" an openly gay man from participating in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA).

The scout master we met with gave us a clear indication that he was in disagreement with the approach by the national board. He asked OPALGA for support and collaboration in working together to provide programs for our community youth that does not include the discrimination and bigotry as argued by the national branch of the BSA.

OPALGA has formed a task force to further study this issue and plan strategies that can be proactive and productive for all. More information to follow!

## OOH - OPALGA'S Open House

On Saturday, September 9th, we invited the community to our annual open house, to come see where we work and play (coming up with organizational ideas and actions can be fun!). We had many new faces in the crowd and a few couples who recently moved here from out-of-state after hearing of the quality of lgbt life in Oak Park. It was great getting to meet the new members and also having a chance to sit down with old friends, members and non-members, and just chat away the hours.

## OPALGA 'TEAMS' up for Community Response

Community Response is seeking persons to participate in the first annual West Suburban AIDS Walk. This is a 5K walk to raise awareness about the issues persons face while living with the HIV disease. The walk is also to raise funds for Community Response, the Oak Park based AIDS service organization. Walkers are asked to raise a minimum of \$25.00 in pledges and walk 5K. Walkers raising \$100 or more will receive a FREE event t-shirt. The Walk is

Saturday, October 7, rain or shine with registration and check-in beginning at 8:00 a.m., walk beginning at 9:00 a.m. To pre-register or get additional information, contact Community Response at 708.386.3383.

The walk begins at Fox Park, at the corner of Jackson Blvd. And Oak Park Ave. in Oak Park. The 5K walk will go through the residential neighborhoods of Oak Park and end back at Fox Park.

OPALGA members interested in participating should call the information line at 708.848.0273 and RSVP. We'd love to have a great contingent of OPALGA members supporting this very worthwhile event.

## Oak Park and the Diversity Task Force

Earlier this summer, the Village of Oak Park began a conversation about racial diversity in the Village of Oak Park and the continuing efforts to focus attention on the 30 year objectives of Oak Park remaining a diverse and integrated community. Certainly, the LGBT community and OPALGA has been an integral part of the success and struggles for a truly "diverse" community. Many OPALGA members are involved in the Diversity Task Force (DTF) and the LGBT community has representatives on each of three DTF sub-committees; Housing, Education, and Community Life.

All OPALGA members are strongly encouraged to participate in this important dialogue that will help shape the vision and future of our village leading into the 21st century.

Your opportunity to provide this feedback will be here soon! On October 26th a Town Hall meeting sponsored by the Community Life committee will be held at the 19th Century Club in downtown Oak Park. For details, call the Village Hall at 708.383.6400 or the OPALGA info. Line at 708.848.0273

## YOUR OPALGA

As any organization like OPALGA quickly becomes aware, maintaining the "status quo" simply isn't good enough. We know that OPALGA has great strengths, but we also have great opportunities to do more. Recently, the OPALGA board spent an entire week-end for our annual board retreat, discussing what we would like to see be our vision, mission, goals, objectives, and partnerships with our fellow LGBT citizens and ALL citizens as we move forward into our 2nd decade of pride.

Your OPALGA needs your input - so the First Friday Potluck on October 6th is being planned as your membership meeting - we need to talk to you about our plans - we want your feedback on those plans - and most importantly we want your input on what you would like from your OPALGA.

Please attend the October 6th potluck at Longfellow Rec Center in Oak Park at 7pm, bring friends, and bring your ideas. We'll bring the food so you don't have to! That's right, we'll provide the meal for the evening, and childcare will be provided. See the enclosed flier for more details. We really need ALL of your input and support as we plan our future together - as partners.

In addition, bring two non-perishable food items to the Membership "First Friday" potluck and we'll pass on all donations to the Community Response food pantry. All potlucks going forward will include a food drive, so remember to pick up your non-

(cont. on p. 10)



# OUTLINES Contest Open to LGBTQ Youth Ages 24 & under

Write your very own "Dear Dad" essay to Republican Vice Presidential Runningmate Richard Cheney

If Richard Cheney were your dad, what would you like to say to him about his public stands against homosexuality, but his private acceptance of your life?

During the Republican National Convention, it was revealed that Mary Cheney, one of Richard's daughters, is a lesbian. But while the Cheney family welcomes Mary and her partner, Dick Cheney is against gays serving in the military. He is against civil-rights protection for gays. He is against same-sex marriage. He is against adoption by gay and lesbian couples.

We'd like to hear from gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and questioning

youth, age 24 or under, on what you would write to Richard Cheney if he were your father.

Essays limited to 500 words. Deadline: September 10th Send via e-mail to outlines@suba.com (paste into the actual e-

**1st Prize = \$20000**

mail message), fax (773) 871-7609, or send to Outlines Contest, 1115 W. Belmont, 2-D, Chicago, IL 60657.

Top essays will appear in Outlines Newspaper before the Nov. 7 election. First place essay will receive \$200. Please include the following information with

your essay (if you do not want to complete some information, that is OK):

Name: Age: Grade level: School you attend: Phone: Email:

All information is confidential. We will print winning names with essays, unless on your submission you have a byline "Anonymous."

Thanks for participating!  
From,

Tracy Baim  
Publisher & Managing Editor  
Lambda Publications, Inc.

## Let's Pet: Will appear in the next issue

Dr. John Brancel, D.V.M. of Prairie State Animal Hospital



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## Special Meeting on October 6th

(cont. from page 1)

The areas are:

- Purpose and Structure
- Service (to youth, elders, families)
- Outreach and Advocacy
- Fund raising

The board is committed to a planning process that will systematically study these issues and involve a broad array of Oak Park area allies to participate in the plan. Included in the process is the work of Oak Park-River Forest Community Foundation which recently received a grant from the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership to conduct a needs assessment of gay and lesbian concerns and to support outreach efforts to organizations, agencies, churches, and others, not directly related to the gay and lesbian community, to seek their support and involvement. OPALGA helped to write the proposal to the National Lesbian and Gay Community Funding Partnership and will work in concert with this effort.



The larger issue, however, is how the Oak Park Lesbian and Gay Association will organize itself as it faces the next ten years of its existence and how it will respond to new issues as they are identified and how they will continue to be an advocacy force in the community.

Sincerely,

Co-Chairs  
Ray Johnson, Julie A. Kreiner

Treasurer  
Sarah Durbin

Members-at-Large  
Ethel Cotovsky  
Lynne Clark  
John Dames  
Sam Halferty  
Chuck Huffman  
Donna Karpavicius  
Betsy Ritzman Stith  
Mel Wilson

### Quip of the Quarter

"It's never to late—in fiction or in life—to revise.." -- Nancy Thayer

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## "Bells will ring ...."

(cont. from page 6)

shop with Laferriere while her husband ran the paperwork to Village Hall. An hour later, armed with a bagful of souvenirs courtesy of the gift shop, Susan, Lynn and Grae were back on the road and home "in time for dinner." Susan and Lynn met at work about seven years ago. For the past five years, they have been a couple. They have a son together, and are raising Lynn's 16-year-old daughter, Taylor.

News of the couple's Vermont marriage has spread quickly throughout Chicagoland and early reviews have been

favorable. "My sister was livid because she wasn't there, but overall we've had great reactions to it," Susan said. "People have been asking to see pictures and asking if we're registered. It's really exciting." As part-time director of OPALGA's Prism group, a drop-in program for gay, lesbian, bisexual or questioning youth, Susan said her hope for the future is the legalization of civil unions in all states. "My hope is for everyone to gain equal rights," she said. "We need to become more tolerant as a society and more accepting. People need to learn there are a lot of different families

and there isn't one that is better than another. I just want my children to grow up and live in a world that is less prejudiced." For now, the couple is content sharing the news of their union with family and friends.

"We've talked about a reception, but we haven't planned anything," Lynn said. "Knowing us, we probably won't. We're so lazy."

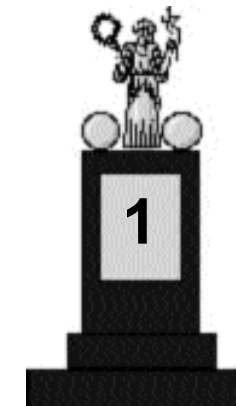
Sounds just like an old-married couple already.

## Volunteer of the Quarter: Lori Hannigan

During the course of this past year, many new ventures have begun, as OPALGA has sought to meet the many diverse interests of its members. Not the least of these ventures has been the rebirth of the cultural arts program. The Coffeehouse Soiree's have been the major program accomplished by the Cultural Arts Committee.

The person who has not only provided the leadership for the committee as co-chair, but has also (almost single-handedly) recruited the musicians, performers and writers for the Soiree programs has been Lori Hannigan.

As you may know, the Soirees take place



on the 2nd Wednesday of every month at the Buzz Cafe in Oak Park. Lori has served as emcee and sound technician for these events in addition to her duties as committee co-chair.

Most important of all: Lori's spirit and enthusiasm have imbued the rebirth of cultural arts as an important aspect of OPALGA's program.

For this reason, we have named her as "Volunteer of the Quarter." Congratulations Lori!

And, thank you!



## Movie night, theater night, game night.

*These are just some of the ideas being tossed around by an ad-hoc group of OPALGA members interested in resurrecting the now-defunct social committee.*



"We're being cautious about being called a committee," said Debbie Lecki, one of about nine people who met Sept. 17 at the OPALGA office. "Many people have expressed an interest in doing more social things other than potluck dinners. We're trying to accomplish that goal."

The first meeting was dubbed a success by Lecki, who said everybody contributed good ideas. Afterward, each person volunteered to find out information about a particular activity and report back to the

group in a few weeks.

The only prerequisite says Lecki is a desire to have fun. "The facilitator of our group, John, said he would only welcome those people who agree this is not to be work," she said. "He told us he only wants us there if we're ready to have fun." Another idea that is being looked into is some type of athletic event, like a bowling night.

"The consensus is people want exposure to different social outlets other than

potluck dinners," said Lecki, adding that some events might be held during the week while others might be held on week-ends to accommodate people's schedules.

**Anybody interested in brainstorming social events should call the OPALGA office at (708) 848-0273 to find out when the next meeting will be held.**

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# "Bells will ring ... Birds will sing ..."

Tami Jensen

OPALGA members Susan Abbott and Lynn Heald returned home from their summer vacation feeling different.

That's because the couple had a civil union certificate to commemorate the trip, along with a bottle of Vermont maple syrup and a refrigerator magnet of a Vermont black bear.

"When we were driving home, it hit us," said Susan, recalling their Aug. 10 nuptials, of sorts. "If we lived in Vermont, then we'd suddenly have equal rights and have all the rights a married couple do. The concept really amazed us." Susan will be the first to admit that while she and Lynn had discussed having a commitment ceremony, it wasn't until they arrived in Maine that they decided to take the plunge.

"When we first started hearing what was going on in Vermont, we always said it would be exciting to take part in something like this," she said. "We knew we were going to Maine and we talked about it, but we didn't plan for it. It wasn't until we were there for a few days, we decided it would be worth the trip."

So, with their 2-year-old son, Grae, in the back seat of their rental car, Susan and Lynn drove four hours from their vacation

spot in Maine, through New Hampshire to the "biggest town over the border" in Vermont - Saint Johnsbury. Once there, they found Village Hall, applied for a license, filled out their paper work and were handed a list of justices of the peace. One woman in particular, Ann Laferriere, was known for performing civil unions for same-sex couples from all over the country.

"We ended up calling this woman and she told us to come down to the end of the hill," recalled Susan. "She and her husband owned a gift shop in town, and our ceremony took place right in their gift shop." Lynn added that Laferriere was "very sweet to the core," setting the couple-to-be at ease. "She was wonderful," she recalled. "She was dragging out news paper articles about her crusade for same-sex unions and the Catholic church's opposition to her beliefs. We thought we might feel awkward, but she made us feel so comfortable."

With her husband as a witness, Laferriere performed the ceremony. About 15 minutes later, Susan and Lynn exchanged vows sim-

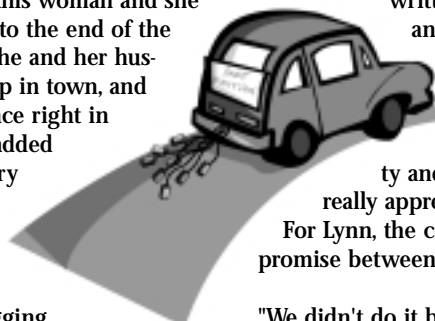
ilar to wedding vows and their union was official.

"Certainly, I'm excited to have my Vermont certificate," Susan said. "It's another affirmation of our relationship and our commitment to one another. I also think this has historic significance, as well, and I'm excited to be a part of that. "We felt it was important to put our names on the books as evidence of our support. We've

written to the legislators there and thanked them for their support, and we thought it was important to take advantage of the opportunity and show Vermont we were really appreciative of their efforts." For Lynn, the ceremony symbolized a promise between she and Susan.

"We didn't do it because we'd have tangible benefits in society," she said. "This was something we did for ourselves. It was very important to Susan and I. We also have two children, and we felt it was important to show them our commitment, as well."

Afterward, the newly committed couple posed for pictures outside the gift shop. *(cont. on p. 8)*





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