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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 'How everybody looked after each other and how people
2 found family and found community'

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3 At a program in Bellows Falls, Vermonters reflect on
4 LGBTQ+ spaces, ancestors, and caregiving

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5 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

6 Vermont, the first state in the country to legalize civil
7 unions, has a storied history supporting LGBTQ rights. On Oct.
8 25, a crowd gathered to hear speakers illuminate historical
9 figures who championed the cause, and hear about a gathering
10 place that served as a safe haven for the LGBTQ+ community.

11 The Andrews Inn, run as a restaurant, inn, gay bar, and
12 disco club from 1973 to 1984 at the heart of downtown Bellows
13 Falls, was a magnet for people from all corners of the East Coast
14 and southern Canada.

15 But the inn, which served as a safe space for the
16 LGBTQ+ community in Bellows Falls for a decade, is largely
17 unknown in the collective imagination of Vermont today, said
18 Andrew Ingall.

19 Ingall is a scholar and performer who organized a series
20 of talks this fall, sponsored by the Vermont Humanities 2025 Fall
21 Festival “Resilient Patterns,” on his family history, Andrews Inn,
22 and legacy of LGBTQ+ caregiving in the state.

23 Approximately 45 people poured into the Rockingham
24 Free Public Library to learn about and remember the stories of
25 older LGBTQ+ adults and ancestors in Vermont’s history.

26 Thom Herman, one of the former innkeepers and
27 owners, said the gathering was a cathartic experience,
28 remembering the many joyful and meaningful experiences at the
29 inn such as the Yellow Rose Ball, held to benefit the scholarship
30 fund started in memory of a local high school girl, Alisa Beaudry,
31 who died at age 17 in an automobile accident in 1980.

32 “When I left April Fool’s Day, 1984, and closed the inn, I
33 left with a lot of trauma,” Herman said. “I never would have
34 imagined that 40 years later, people would be celebrating and
35 giving me a chance to heal and appreciate some of the wonderful
36 things, friendships that still are happening to this day.”

37 As much as Andrews Inn was a LGBTQ+ community
38 hub, it also drew detractors and homophobic attacks from the
39 local community. The tension heightened after a male prostitution
40 sting operation played out at the inn in 1983, said Gail Golec, a
41 historian and member of the Bellows Falls Pride group.

42 The news tarnished the Andrews Inn’s reputation and
43 economic viability, even though the inn’s owners did not know
44 about the activities, the subjects of the raid had never visited the
45 inn prior, and all charges were eventually dropped, Golec said.

46 The building shuttered a year later.

47 Golec has produced a [podcast series](#) and is working on
48 an upcoming documentary on the Andrews Inn. She said she was
49 intrigued by the Andrews Inn’s setting in a rural, economically
50 disadvantaged Vermont community amid the AIDS crisis and
51 growing LGBTQ+ rights movement.

52 “I think it’s a fascinating history of the inn, but it’s also
53 the wider story is about how people take care of each other,”
54 Golec said. “It’s about how everybody looked after each other
55 and how people found family and found community.”

56 Jeremy Youst, Herman’s partner and the other former inn
57 owner, said opening the inn in Bellows Falls was “nourishing.”
58 He told the crowd that creating spaces for community
59 connection helps remind people “we’re a part of something
60 bigger than ourselves.”

61 Tracing his own family tree, Ingall found that his father’s
62 cousin, Léon Ingall, settled not far from Bellows Falls in
63 Townshend in 1980 with lifelong partner Warren Kronemeyer.
64 The couple opened a European antique shop called Warlé, which
65 inspired the name of his research, the Warlé Project.

66 Ingall said Léon was a fashion designer who escaped
67 Nazi Germany and enlisted in the U.S. Army. During his service
68 in World War II, Léon met Warren, who worked as a journalist in
69 France. The couple opened an interior decor shop in New York
70 City before moving to Vermont, Ingall said.

71 Ingall said Warren and Léon’s property has been
72 transformed into an affordable senior living community, Valley
73 Village (formerly Valley Cares). The center is LGBTQ+ affirming
74 and inclusive, Ingall said, and a “beautiful legacy” of his ancestor
75 and partner.

76 Ingall also discussed research into a couple named
77 Charity and Sylvia, who were considered a married couple in
78 Weybridge under the term “help-meet” in the 19th century, long
79 before civil unions or gay marriages were legal in the state.

80 In the Shaker tradition, Charity and Sylvia used an adult-
81 sized “granny cradle” to rock their partners during illness — a
82 profound symbol of LGBTQ+ caregiving, Ingall said.

83 An upcoming event on Nov. 8 in Middlebury will
84 highlight the research on Charity and Sylvia, along with bringing
85 the story of Warren, Léon, and the Andrews Inn to life. The event
86 will bring together speakers from the Henry Sheldon Museum of
87 Vermont in Middlebury and performer Maestro Clemmons, best
88 known for his role in the PBS television show *Mister Rogers’*
89 *Neighborhood*. Ingall said he hopes to again weave together
90 these stories to help foster social connection and appreciation of
91 older LGBTQ+ adults and ancestors.

92 Community hubs and spaces like the Andrews Inn
93 serving the LGBTQ+ community in rural Vermont are even more
94 needed today after the loneliness epidemic was declared a public
95 health crisis by the U.S. surgeon general in 2023, Ingall said.

96 Ingall noted there are higher rates of economic
97 insecurity, food insecurity, anxiety, depression, and social
98 isolation for older LGBTQ+ adults, and he hopes the discussion
99 will spark ideas of what community care could look like in the
100 future.

101 “I also see the theme of care and caregiving as a
102 common thread between Warren and Léon, Thom and Jeremy,
103 and Charity and Sylvia,” Ingall said. “These LGBTQ+ folks made
104 their mark in Vermont history, but there are so many others upon
105 whose shoulders we stand, those who aren’t as well known or
106 haven’t yet been discovered.”

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