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Couple Joined in Civil Union

by David Fowler

Since Vermont passed the bill to legalizing same sex civil unions, there have been over 800 unions performed in the state. One of these was by an area couple that made the journey to Putney, VT in order to formalize their relationship. George DeCarlo and Ryan Reyes of Berkeley Heights, NJ knew when they started dating that when the law was passed, whichever state would be first, they would make the trip and solidify their relationship legally. Both are active members of the Gay & Lesbian Political Action and Support Groups, and particularly, the Task Force for Same Sex Marriages. They were knowledgeable activists fighting for the rights of gay couples in New Jersey, and had followed the progress of other states on this issue.

Upon the implementation of the Vermont law, the couple began to plan for their civil union. They looked to the Internet to prepare themselves for the date, August 17th, and spent time, as any couple would, making decisions for the "big day". They selected a small town in Vermont that was close to the Massachusetts border, so it would be easily accessible and quaint at the same time. They booked their honeymoon vacation in Provincetown, MA and contacted a Justice of the Peace in Putney to perform the union. All the plans were set, and they had all the information they needed so off they headed to the small town nestled in the hills of Vermont.

They arrived in Putney filled with jitters, even though they had done all their homework, made all the arrangements, and had read all the press that this was legal, they still felt more than "pre union nerves" as they searched for the Town Hall. The Town Clerk was very helpful, and soon put them at ease. She did not blink when they asked to file their civil union form (which they had already completed). She even offered for them to view the historical memorabilia in the Town Hall while she completed the



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paperwork and give it the official seal of approval. With the paperwork finished, they settled into the Putney Inn, wandered the town, and enjoyed a nice evening and dinner. The civil union was to take place in the morning.



George and Ryan joined Justice of the Peace Alan Blood at the base of a mountain and the three climbed to the top. With the beautiful valley and river below, George and Ryan were joined in a civil union service conducted by Blood, just the two of them, nature, and their desire to be together. For both it was a

memorable and joyful experience. They spent one more night in the New England town of Putney before heading off to 5 days in Provincetown. Both the men, like they have heard many a straight couple claim, felt excited in their new union, and certainly felt that their relationship was now solidified, and different. They were no longer dating or boyfriends, but rather partners, joined together legally in a civil union, and very happy to be together. In a final statement of their love, the couple's union announcement appeared in 3 different newspapers across NJ, right along side the photos of several straight couples. Their advice to anyone who has wanted to solidify their relationship is "just do it".

For more information on Vermont and civil unions, please visit www.bennington.com or www.sec.state.vt.us or read our article on civil unions in Vermont.

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