



Lavender Notes

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July 2019 - Volume 26 Issue 7*

STORIES OF OUR LIVES

Ghazwan Alsharif

Though the off-and-on-again Iraq war – begun with a U.S.-led invasion in March 2003 – has been going on for over 16 years, many Americans don't personally know any Iraqis who have been affected by the conflict. This month's "Stories of Our Lives" describes the effects of that conflict on a now-local gay Iraqi.

Ghazwan Alsharif was born in Baghdad 48 years ago, the first of four children in a three-generation high-profile and powerful Sunni Muslim family. His grandfather – Saddam Hussein's Minister of Defense and Baath Party Official – was assassinated in 1973, when Ghazwan was only two years old. His father – one of 14 siblings – was a diplomat who served in Czechoslovakia and the U.K. Ghazwan was the first grandchild on his mother's side of the family, where she was one of 13 siblings.

Ghazwan's younger siblings – one brother and two sisters – still live in Iraq. His brother – a political science professor – and one sister are married and have families; the other sister still lives with their parents, since the Sunni culture demands that a female child remain with her parents until she's married.

Ghazwan describes his childhood as being quite pampered and emotional.

"I was a very needy kid," Ghazwan recalls, "who was crying a lot of the time. The things that I loved – like dancing and, particularly, belly-dancing – were

considered inappropriate for a boy. Since I was the first grandchild on my mother's side and the third on my father's side, however, my aunts and uncles adored me, putting me up on a pedestal and letting me get away with a lot of things."

He was plagued for many years by seizure-like incidents, particularly when he was stressed out or feeling hurt, a condition his youngest sister still suffers from and takes medication for.

"Those seizures – where I would just fall down and start shaking – stopped somehow when I was about 19," Ghazwan recounts. "I think part of the problem was that I truly hated school whenever we lived in Iraq. I was bullied a lot for simple things like wearing short pants. Remembering our schools were always segregated – boys kept separate from girls – the other boys always made fun of me for acting like the sissy that I clearly was. So I just cried a lot and was perfectly miserable!"

When he was about six years old, his diplomat father was posted to Prague, Czechoslovakia, where the family lived for about three years. His father was subsequently posted for six years (from Ghazwan's age 9-15) to the U.K. It was during those teenage years that two significant things happened: he became fluent in English and he began to confront his "differentness" and his sexuality.

"I always loved dressing up in my aunts' clothes," Ghazwan recalls. "I spent a lot of time literally 'in the closet', meaning trying on different clothes from their closets. I also loved playing with my sister's Barbie dolls – which she did NOT like – while other boys preferred playing with their GI Joes. When I really became aware of my same-sex attraction, though, was when I saw my first porn magazine as a teenager. It was straight porn, of course, but I only looked at the men and not at the women. I decided then that I would have to deal with this some day."

When the family returned to Iraq in 1986, Ghazwan began exploring sex with other Iraqi men.

"I was this awkward teenager trying to find his way," Ghazwan says, "and anonymous sex was the only game in town. We never talked about what we were doing, before, during or after we had sex, but I knew this was what felt right to me. This is something that NO Iraqi would ever be comfortable talking about with his family – or even with close friends!"

The one exception he made – in 2005 – was to come out to his well-educated academic younger brother.

"I should have known better – it was destined to be an unmitigated disaster," Ghazwan recalls. "He told me I'd better never open my mouth to anybody else about this repulsive idea, that our mother would have a heart attack and die if she ever found out about this shameful and disgraceful thing for our family. And he hasn't spoken to me in the last 14 years since! I've had a bit of contact with his Romanian wife, but nothing from him."

Meanwhile, Ghazwan was posted himself to the Iraqi Embassy in the U.K. At age 30, he began to be nagged by his mother from afar about his marital

status.

"She wanted to know why I wasn't married and whether there was something physically wrong with me," he reports. "She wanted to know if 'something' wasn't working! She told me she didn't want to die without seeing her grandchildren. So she sent me eight or ten photos of eligible Iraqi women, one of whom she matter-of-factly informed me that I had to marry for the family's sake. One of the photos looked exactly like the Barbie doll I had been so taken with earlier in my life: six feet tall, blonde and beautiful – very rare among Middle Eastern women. She was one of my cousin's teachers. So we were united in an 'arranged marriage' in Jordan. Interestingly, one of the things we most liked to do together was have me put her make-up on for her!"



"After the U.S. invasion – since her family was Shi'ite Muslim and my family was Sunni Muslim – there were immediately lines drawn in the sand about mixed loyalties," Ghazwan recalls. "We were considered by them to be the Nazis of Iraq, her family began calling our tribe evil and insisting she follow them into exile in Jordan. Because of my proficiency in English, I became sought after as a translator and guide by the U.S. occupation forces. I felt extremely conflicted, but I wanted to help with resolving the problems in our country so I agreed to start doing that."

Ghazwan frequently wore a cowboy hat, so the Americans nick-named him "Tex." They began relying on him regularly in situations where the GIs couldn't communicate with the locals.

"For several years, I was risking my life – and relationships with my family, who strongly disagreed with my decision to assist the U.S. military," Ghazwan recalls. "It was clear that the Americans had no idea how to approach the Iraqi people – not just linguistically, but also from a cultural standpoint. So I became quite indispensable to some of the American-led forces in various trouble-spots around the country. Meanwhile, I lost my entire family."



Ghazwan – known as “Tex” to many GIs – assisted the American military for several years as a translator, guide and troubleshooter

Meanwhile, in June 2002, Ghazwan’s wife gave birth to their son, after which her family insisted that she divorce him and leave with them for Jordan.

“I went to the hospital to see her and the baby,” Ghazwan recalls with some sadness. “I gave the boy a name, but her family insisted on changing the name to something more suitable for a Shi’ite child. And then came the divorce – ‘because of tribal differences’ – and there was no contact for six years. I was devastated.”

After several years of assisting the U.S. military, through some fluke, grudge or another, “Tex” was arrested, charged with being a ‘double agent’, tortured and put in solitary for 75 days.

“I was afraid I would never get out of that hell-hole alive,” Ghazwan recalls with considerable emotion. “If it hadn’t been for one of the officers I’d helped up in Tikrit – Colonel Robert Nicholson – I might not have come out of there alive. He wondered out loud one day about what had happened to ‘Tex,’ was told I had been taken into custody and was being tortured by the very forces I’d been assisting!”

When Col. Nicholson went through the chain of command and supported Ghazwan’s story, the ‘prisoner’ was ultimately released and fled to Amman, Jordan, where he met up with the man who had assisted in his emancipation.



"The one slightly-positive thing from the months of torture and interrogation," Ghazwan recalls, "was that one of my interrogators kept asking me what my 'secret' was – he said he could tell I had a 'secret'! As it turns out, he was the first person on the planet that I came out to as gay. I think he was a Latino who seemed to accept my gayness and never bothered to interrogate me again, I guess figuring that was probably the worst secret I could be hiding!"

In 2008, when Ghazwan's son was six years old, he finally convinced his ex-wife to let him see his son again – happening in Jordan before Ghazwan found his way to the U.S. in 2008.



Ghazwan and his son - meeting in Jordan six years after their first meeting the day he was born.

"When I met that little guy for the first time in six years, it was very bittersweet," Ghazwan recalls fondly. "Though her family – and mine – had absolutely no use for me because I was seen as a traitor, betraying the Iraqi people by helping the Americans, I was still filled with tears of joy. I was surprised when she suggested we re-marry. Then – when I said I didn't want to be married again – she told me I should take my son, since she would want to marry somebody else. She said she was tired of raising him. So for four wonderful days, I had him with me and I finally knew what it was like to be a father! Unfortunately, I received a call from the police accusing me of kidnapping the boy, her family came to get him and I didn't see him again for 11 years!"

With the assistance of various organizations, including the International Rescue Committee, the Center for Immigrant Protection LGBT Asylum Project, the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM) and the Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society, Ghazwan finally found his way to the U.S. in 2008.

"It was an exhilarating, frustrating and exhausting process," Ghazwan recalls, "punctuated with regular bouts of depression and thoughts of hurting myself. Some days I was so despondent, I could barely get out of bed. I tried seeing a therapist and attending groups, like SWANABAQ (the Southwest Asian and North African Bay Area Queers) and Muslim-focused groups like Paul Asfour's Gay Middle Eastern Men's Support Group at UCSF Medical Center, all of which helped to some extent. But I realized this was something I had to work

through mostly on my own.”



Ghazwan (in white robe) with SWANABAG at Gay Pride March – and with two belly-dancers at an Asheq party he hosted

Ghazwan invoked his primary passions – cooking, party-planning and his son – to focus on in order to pull himself up out of the morass he faced for the first few years in this country.

“I was a cook for Project Open Hand for three years – my first ‘family’ in the U.S. – working my way up to production manager,” Ghazwan recalls. “I’ve worked at UC-Berkeley, Stanford and in various other food-preparation capacities before I was lucky enough to land at the San Francisco Academy of Sciences and Museum, where I have been the Executive Chef for nearly three years. I’ve been known to supervise over 70 people when I was doing catering and have a remarkably talented culinary and serving staff who make my life very busy and very fulfilling.”

Ghazwan is also known widely for his many delectable superbly-presented recipes.

“My work and recipes are on Instagram,” he advises, “and includes such interesting dishes as quinoa chipotle chili soup, maple-glazed bacon with cayenne, avocado aioli (using baby spinach instead of romaine), cauliflower curry with roasted vegetables and caramelized onions and a lasagna verdi con formaggio e melanzane, among many other fascinating combinations.”



Executive “Chef G” with some of the sumptuous feasts he prepares regularly

In 2012, when he heard about the Iraqi government rounding up and persecuting men suspected of being gay, Ghazwan felt he could no longer stay in the closet about his being an Arabic-speaking Muslim gay man. He decided to participate in a timely documentary called "From Baghdad to the Bay", describing his difficult journey as a gay Arabic immigrant.

"When I heard about what was happening in Iraq regarding the killing of gay men," he explained, "I decided that I needed to step up and do what I could to help stop the craziness. I took this chance to give a voice to the problem by telling my story. It was a difficult decision, because I know my family has suffered from my professional and social decisions, though only my brother knows about the struggle with my sexuality. I know this could bring repercussions for them, as well, but it was a cause I believed in and felt compelled to do."

Last August, he celebrated another milestone in his life. After a decade of blackouts in communication with his ex-wife (remarried with two other children) and attempts to re-connect with his son, Ghazwan's now-17-year-old son finally came to visit him for 40 delightful days!

"I was so nervous about meeting him as a young adult now, rather than a child," Ghazwan recalls. "As it turns out, it was an amazing time – he's an incredible young man who likes math and is finishing up the equivalent of high school over there. His mother and stepfather are very good to him. He may be interested in coming to the U.S. for university – we'll see how that plays out. Either way, he seemed as delighted with me as I am with him! When we went to play miniature golf, he chose a pink ball for me and a blue ball for himself – I think he's probably googled the movie on line and knows what's going on with me. He certainly didn't seem phased by so many of my friends being gay men and lesbians. Though he hasn't yet met my family, he does speak with them by telephone from time to time. We speak every week and I speak regularly with my Mom now, too. Hopefully, one day soon – maybe for his graduation – we will all meet together in Jordan and finally have a celebration of this grandchild for the whole family! I would love for my mother and my son to finally meet each other!"



Ghazwan and his now-17-year-old son – together again after 11 years

Ghazwan has had one two-year relationship with a man since he arrived in the U.S. and is open to having a long-term relationship, though he is not actively pursuing one.

"My work and friendship network keeps me so busy that I barely have time to think, blink, respond to texts and e-mails, etc." Ghazwan says. "I believe that the fact I work 10- to 12-hour days and come home exhausted nearly every night would probably be prohibitive for most guys who are my 'type'. In fact, as a result of standing for so many hours, I need to regularly consult physical therapists for my back rather than spend too much time returning to the dating scene!"

When asked if he had any advice for similarly-situated LGBTQ immigrants seeking refuge in a place where they could live their lives freely, he offered some very simple words:

"We have to believe in ourselves, never give up hope for finding a better life, be as patient as possible and love ourselves," Ghazwan responded. "How can we expect anybody else to love us if we don't even love ourselves because of some outmoded notion that we are less-than somebody else. Let's celebrate who we are!"

[Editor's Notes: According to the International Rescue Committee, "More people have been forced to flee their homes by conflict and crisis in this decade than at any time since World War II. At the same time, the U.S. is slamming its doors on refugees."

By the end of 2018, the administration was supposed to have allowed 45,000 refugees – particularly those Iraqis who had risked their lives and relationships for the American military. In fact, less than half have been allowed entrance, while an unprecedented number of lives are at risk.

For those wanting more information about Ghazwan's journey, the hyperlink to "From Baghdad to the Bay" – which has been doing the festival circuit and won many awards this past year – is <http://www.frombaghdadtothebay.com>.

The next local showing of the film will be at the Tiburon International Film Festival, 6:30pm, Thursday, 12th September at the Tiburon Library, 1501 Tiburon Blvd. For those interested in knowing more about this showing:

http://www.tiburonfilmfestival.com/filmInfo.php?film_id=9793.

We are hoping that Lavender Seniors can arrange an East Bay showing in the near future, as well.]



BOOK REVIEW

Ike's Mystery Man: The Secret Lives of Robert Cutler

By Peter Shinkle

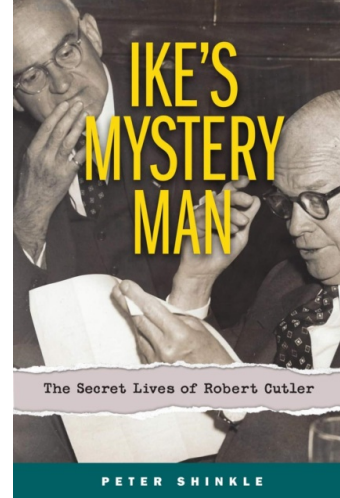
Shinkle tackles the thorny issue of homophobia in the McCarthy era. Cutler was President Eisenhower's National Security Advisor. He also worked with three

Democratic presidents. He kept a six-volume diary and letters.

Shinkle has maintained contacts with many news groups and covered stories of national significance. Cutler was his great uncle.

Cutler helped Ike with vital decisions on issues like atomic weapons strategy. Soviet communism was the major threat. He would never speak to the press and was labeled the mystery man of the White House.

He pretended to be a straight bachelor with no sex life and was known as "Bobby" to J. Edgar Hoover. Hoover was told by his aunt Patricia Cutler Warner that Bobby, who died in 1974, was gay.



The six-volume diary tells about Skip and his love for Cutler.

Historians and gay champions will be stunned and delighted by this intimate account of a compelling gay history. A must read by all who really care.

- Frank J. Howell

[Editor's Note: As noted in the book and movie, "Lavender Scare", Roy Cohn - also a closeted gay man who eventually died of AIDS - convinced Eisenhower to sign an Executive Order in April 1953, calling for seeking out, purging, black-balling and prosecution of LGBT employees at every level, ruining thousands of lives. Clinton rescinded the order 42 years later in 1995. For more info on this dark chapter: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lavender_scare]

CONNECTIONS



Have you moved out of the area, do you want to get in contact with other Lavender Seniors near you or someone you have lost contact with? [Email us](#) and we will try to help out. No information will be shared without your specific permission.

LAVENDER SENIORS FRIENDLY VISITOR PROGRAM HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE.

Volunteers with the Lavender Seniors Friendly Visitor program are background checked, interviewed and trained, after which they are matched with a senior to visit regularly, usually for a couple hours each week. Visitors can share stories, chat about mutual interests and current events, and if both are willing and able, volunteers can take their seniors out for a walk in the park, a bite to eat, a cup of coffee, shopping or maybe a movie or a trip to the museum.

We ask volunteers to make a commitment of at least six months.

If you are in need of a Friendly Visitor, we can help with that too!



Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch July 13 Noon-2:00 pm

All Saints Episcopal Church
911 Dowling Blvd, San Leandro

Program: **SENIORFUSION**

Presentation by Carla Din, CEO & Co-founder

No, this is not a musical group nor exotic new dish on the menu, at least in the expected sense. It is a buffet of **High Tech Gadgets** to help seniors and the disabled to live a fuller, safer life. These technology devices should help in avoiding falls, increasing social connectivity, kitchen safety, voice-activated assistants and emergency response systems.

Have you ever wondered how you're going to remain independent at home while you get older?

Fortunately, technology is being developed specifically for seniors to help create a safe and healthy environment, even as your needs grow. But, *how are the Bay Area's seniors going to learn about those tools?*

An Oakland-based not-for-profit initiative called **SeniorFusion** – established in December 2018 – is intended to connect our seniors to innovative technology that will enhance their quality of life. These solutions include devices that alert you if you leave your stove on; "wearables" to get help if you have a fall; and communication tools to keep you connected to family members and friends who live near and far!

Hands-on demonstrations and videos will be shown at this lively event.

SeniorFusion is an initiative of the American Medical Women's Association, a national nonprofit organization that advances women in medicine and improves women's health (www.seniorfusion.org).

A catered buffet luncheon will begin at noon, followed by announcements and the program at approximately 1:00. Feel free to bring a potluck dish to share if you wish.



Boy Erased

This award-winning 2018 film – based on a true story – concerns the life of a “preacher’s kid,” who suffers from institutionalized (and parental) homophobia in a small town (the type which still exists in communities all over the world).

Jared Eamons (played by Lucas Hedges), the son of a small-town Baptist pastor, must overcome the fallout after being outed as gay to his parents (played brilliantly by Nicole Kidman and Russell Crowe). His father and mother struggle to reconcile their love for their son with their “Christian” beliefs. Fearing a loss of family, friends and community, Jared is pressured into attending a conversion therapy program. While there, Jared comes into conflict with its leader and begins his journey to finding his own voice and accepting his true self.

The DVD version (released in 2019) has the bold motto “The Truth Cannot be Converted” (a bold statement in this country since the 2016 election).

“Boy Erased” premiered at the [Telluride Film Festival](#) on September 1, 2018, and also screened at the [Toronto International Film Festival](#). The film was theatrically released in the United States on November 2, 2018, by [Focus Features](#) and grossed over \$11 million worldwide. It received generally positive reviews from critics, who mostly praised the performances of the cast.

The film and its cast received various award nominations, including two [Golden Globe Award](#) nominations: [Best Actor](#) for Hedges and [Best Original Song](#) for “Revelation”, in addition to a dozen such honors in Australia (Kidman’s home country) and New Zealand (Crowe’s birth country, though he’s lived much of his life in Australia). The film won the [GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Film – Limited Release](#) at the [30th GLAAD Media Awards](#).



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Jared discovers intimacy is possible with another boy; Mom and Dad have serious concerns

One of the interesting features of this film is that openly-gay Australian superstar, Troye Sivan – who wrote and performs the film’s Academy-Award-nominated song, “Revelation” – also plays a significant role in the film as another oppressed gay teenager going through one of the usually-harmful “conversion therapy” programs, now banned in 17 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. One of Troye’s other songs, “Good Times,” plays during the opening “home-movie” scene.



Gay teen singer-actor-composer, Troye Sivan (left), with others being “converted” in the program – and singing for the film

The film series returns to its regular schedule this month, showing at 1pm on the Third Wednesday, 17th July, in the fully-accessible Carnegie Lecture Hall at the San Leandro Public Library, 300 Estudillo. Following the showing, there will be a brief evaluation and discussion of the film.

Attendees are reminded that the theater is frequently chilly, so that a sweater or light jacket is recommended. Library staff report that temperature is controlled automatically and cannot be altered for any one room in the facility – climate control for books more than people.

The library can be reached via BART (five blocks above the San Leandro station), AC-Transit (two blocks above the E. 14th and Estudillo bus-stop), Bancroft Avenue, Highways 580 or 880. Ample two- and three-hour parking is available.

Editors Note: [Hyperlinks to websites available in blue](#)



What the Heck is a GSA, Anyway?

When many of “us” were growing up in big cities, small towns, the suburbs or out on the farm, any number of us may have thought we were the “only one” in the family, at school, in town, in the state, in the country or even in the world! It was never to be spoken of in polite company (for fear of retribution) and became Oscar Wilde’s “the love that dare not speak its name”.

After the Black Cat (52 years ago) and Stonewall (50 years ago), one-by-one, then group-by-group, people began daring to speak the name – to come out of the closet – but frequently with serious consequences, physically, verbally or emotionally, sometimes, unfortunately, resulting in maiming or death.

In the late 1980s, two high-school groups – called Gay-Straight Alliances – were formed in Massachusetts (Concord Academy and Phillips Academy) bringing students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender together with “straight” allies, who could help defend them against discrimination and abuse – to provide a safe place for people to speak about that which dare not speak its name a generation earlier. Within two decades, there were GSAs developed in over 1,000 schools in 40+ states.



GSA Network at Pride 2013 (Photo by Quinn Dombrowski, Berkeley, GSANetwork)

At the behest of many students and faculty in GSAs around the country, the organization changed its name to Genders and Sexualities Alliance Network to better reflect the range of sexualities and gender identities (not just Gay or Straight). The organization, still headquartered in Oakland, provides support services and training nation-wide. The Network currently has staff based in Oakland, Fresno, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Chicago and Miami.

Two staff members from the Oakland office will be on hand at 19th July's Third Friday Lunch Bunch to educate us on what this organization is doing – locally and across the country. Ginna Brelsford, Co-Executive Director – an Alaska native and one of 18 Women of Color LeadStrong Fellows through LeaderSpring Center – will be accompanied by Cielo Flores, Northern California Regional Organizer – a Salvadoran who uses gender-neutral pronouns, they-them-theirs.



Cielo Flores



Ginna Brelsford

Some relevant information from the GSA Network newsletter:

GSA Network is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, trans and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities.

Founded in San Francisco in 1998, GSA Network emerged as a youth-driven organization that connects LGBTQ+ youth and school-based GSA clubs through peer support, leadership development, and community organizing and advocacy. Our youth leadership development model supports youth in starting, strengthening and sustaining GSA clubs to create school communities where all students can be safe from discrimination, harassment, and violence based on their sexual orientation or gender identity. GSA organizing rapidly expanded into a national youth organizing movement that now works at the intersection of racial and gender justice.

In 2016, we formally changed our name to Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (formerly Gay-Straight Alliance Network) after hearing from countless youth leaders who understand their genders and sexualities to be uniquely theirs and have moved beyond the labels of gay and straight, and the limits of a binary gender system. LGBTQ+ students continue to name their individual school-based clubs in a way that reflects the values and identity of its members.

As usual, a nutritious buffet lunch will be served promptly at 12 noon (vegetarian options available), followed by a brief break for community announcements around 12:45. Then the program will be turned over to Ginna and Cielo, followed by adequate time for Q&A. They will be available afterward for answering any personal questions.

The North Oakland Senior Center is located at 5714 MLK Jr Way (corner of 58th Street). Ample parking and entrance are at the rear of the building off of 58th Street.

Lavender Seniors Out & About

During the spring build-up to Pride Month in June, many LGBTQ Seniors were

out and about at various health fairs and Pride events in the East Bay. Here are just a few examples:



Windsor and Beckie at a Hayward Health Fair



Lavender Scrolls on Display at Emeryville Senior Center



Peter and Larry setting up at Pride in Concord



Marion and Larry at Contra Costa Pride in Concord

Though this newsletter has to “go to bed” before San Francisco LGBTQ Pride on 30th June, rumor has it that many LGBTQ seniors are planning to be involved in the Trans March on Friday, the 28th June, and the Dyke March on Pink Saturday, the 29th, as well!



[Lavender Seniors / LGBTQ Community Celebrated by City](#)

San Leandro on Pride Month / Rainbow Flag – Crosswalk

The City of San Leandro acknowledged Pride Month in several ways during the month of June. On the first business day of the month (3rd June), the City Council issued a proclamation, raised the rainbow flag over City Hall and at Root Park (1033 East 14th), plus announced the 19th June ribbon-cutting for the City’s new rainbow crosswalk. In addition, the exterior lighting system at City Hall began to be displayed with rainbow-colored lighting each night throughout the month in honor of Pride Month celebrations.

Mayor Pauline Russo Cutter presented the proclamation – acknowledging Pride Month, Lavender Seniors’ Silver (25th) anniversary this year and the many

contributions of LGBTQ residents to the City's vibrant life over the years. The proclamation was received by one of Lavender Seniors' founders, Frank Howell – a long-time board member – who accepted it with a few words, noting that the organization was founded in San Leandro.



Front row: From Lavender Seniors: Ana Bagtas, Frank Howell, Karen Anderson, Gwen Boozé, John David Dupree, Barbara Jue and Mayor Cutter

Second row: City Council members: Deborah Cox, Victor Aguilar Jr., Pete Ballew, Ed Hernandez, and Corina López

"It is important to welcome and celebrate inclusivity in San Leandro, especially recognizing the diversity of people that make up our community," said Mayor Cutter. "When I was first elected 20 years ago, it was to proactively address LGBTQ issues in our schools. Now, more than a decade later, it's amazing to witness the progress we have made, and it makes me proud to see so many people coming together to celebrate as a kind, caring community."

The ribbon-cutting for San Leandro's rainbow crosswalk in downtown San Leandro, at Parrott Street and Washington Avenue, took place on the 19th June. A crowd gathered for the inauguration of this symbol of LGBTQ celebration in the city.



The crowd gathers for the crosswalk ribbon-cutting



The San Leandro City Council Members cut the ribbon

And, hopefully, a Happy Pride Month was had by all!



Pride is in the Air...let us know about your celebrations!

[San Francisco](#), June 29-30, Civic Center Plaza

[Castro Valley](#), July 13, 12:00 - 5:00 pm at Castro Valley High School.

[Silicon Valley](#), August 24, Plaza de César Chávez Park, 1 Paseo De San Antonio, San Jose, CA

[Oakland](#), September 8, PARADE kicks off 11:00 am at Broadway & 14th St., FESTIVAL 11:00 am-7:00 pm.

Editors Note: Hyperlinks to websites available in blue



2019 ART+PRIDE EXHIBIT

Exhibit Dates: June 22-July 21, 2019

Come Celebrate our LGBTQ - Art+Pride Exhibit/Event, showcasing contemporary artwork at the Harvey Milk Photo Center.

Reception:

June 22, 2019

5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Location:

Harvey Milk Photo Center

50 Scott St. San Francisco

Dave Christensen, Director, Harvey Milk Photo Center
Nicola Bosco-Alvarez, Entertainment Producer

Special Support:



415-554-9522
harveymilphotocenter.org



Illustration by Gordon Silveria

Don't miss this exhibit. Our own Sandy Morris has two photos included.



Well Connected Enriching lives and supporting well-being.

(FORMERLY SENIOR CENTER WITHOUT WALLS)

Community Phone Calls

This award-winning program offers activities, education, support groups, and friendly conversation over the phone or online.

Just a few of the things offered:

LGBTQ Chat 2nd and 4th Mondays, 1:00pm - 2:00pm

This group is open to all LGBTQ older adults to connect with others socially in a supportive environment where participants can share individual and collective experiences. Facilitated by Ariel Mellinger, ASW, Support and Wellness Coordinator, Openhouse SF

Music's Memory Lane Tuesdays, 6:00pm – 6:30pm

Each week we'll discuss a hit song, vintage television variety show, or a memorable musician in music history. From Big Band music to the Beatles, we'll dive into our recollections of concerts, lyricists, and pop culture. Facilitated by Steve Maraccini

Perplexing Questions Sundays, 2:00pm – 2:30pm

Have you ever wondered how a fly can walk upside down on the ceiling? Or how a camel can go so long without water? Find out the answers to some head-scratching questions. Facilitated by Sharon Schwartz

View the Current catalog of community phone calls [here](#). Check the [website](#) for

more information. To participate in these or other Well Connected telephone activities, or to learn more about their programs, call 877-797-7299 or email coviaconnections@covia.org.



LGBT Online Support Group for Caregivers

If you are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender and caring for someone with ongoing health problems...[you are not alone!](#)

Family Caregiver Alliance's online LGBT Caring Community Support Group connects you with others facing the day-to-day challenges of caregiving. If you're assisting someone with Alzheimer's, stroke, Parkinson's, traumatic brain injury, or other chronic health problems, you can get support from the convenience of your home.

Share experiences, resources, and ideas in a supportive, caring environment. Available 24 hours a day, all you need is e-mail, and it's free!

Visit [LGBT Caring Community Online Support Group](#).



JULY

**Save
the
Date**

THIS MONTH'S EVENTS

Out Standing Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 2 & 16 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (1st and 3rd Tuesdays)

Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

[Join Meet-Up](#)

A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

LezBold Peer Support Group

July 18, 12:30 p.m. (1st and 3rd Thursdays)

The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley

Find support and like-minded wonderful people!

Older & Out Therapy Group - Berkeley - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 5, 12, 19, 26, 3:15 p.m. (Fridays)

North Berkeley Senior Center, 901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+

Older & Out Therapy Group - Oakland - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 5, 12, 19, 26 2:15 p.m. (Fridays)

Oakland LGBTQ Community Center, 3207 Lakeshore Ave., Oakland

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+

Older & Out Therapy Group - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 1:15 p.m. (Mondays)

Hayward Senior Center, 22325 N. Third Street, Hayward

Free drop-in therapy group for LGBTQ community members age 60+

Rainbow Seniors - Sponsored by Pacific Center & Lavender Seniors

July 9 & 23, 12:30 - 2:00 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)

San Leandro Senior Center, 13909 E 14th St, San Leandro

A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 9, 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (2nd Tuesdays)

Robert Livermore Community Center Senior Services, 4444 East Avenue, Livermore 94550 [Join Meet-Up](#)

A safe and confidential space for LGBTQ seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.

Lavender Seniors Board Meeting

July 10, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (2nd Wednesday)

4300 Bermuda, Oakland

A portion of this meeting is open to the public.

Senior Gay Men's Group

July 11, 18, 25 1:30 p.m. (Weekly on Thursdays)

The Pacific Center, 2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Co-sponsor: The Pacific Center, 510-548-8283

Feel alone? Need to find space to be yourself and chat with others? Join us!

Lavender Seniors Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch

July 13, noon - 2:00 p.m.

All Saints Episcopal Church, 911 Dowling Blvd., San Leandro

This month's program: "SeniorFusion" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors LGBTQ Film Series

July 17, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. (3rd Wednesday)

San Leandro Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro

This month's movie: "Boy Erased" (see info above)

Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 18, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

City of Dublin Senior Center, 7600 Amador Valley Blvd., Dublin 94568

Join Meet-up

A Peer Support Group is a safe & confidential space for LGBT Seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information & to support one another.

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

Sponsored by City of Oakland Aging/Adult Services & Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

July 19, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m.

North Oakland Senior Center, 5714 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, Oakland

This month's program: "GSA Network" (see info above)

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Directors

President: Victor Aguilar Jr

Vice President: Gwendolyn M. Boozé

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong

Secretary: John David Dupree

Founding Member: Barbara Jue

Communication Director: Melissa West

Member: Ana Bagtas

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

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