



# Lavender Notes

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## Rebecca Ann Silverstein

Thought by some to be a “late bloomer” (age 27+) in the active/practicing lesbian community, this month’s featured LGBTQ+ community member has subsequently had a long history of involvement as a key mover and shaker in many West Coast LGBTQ-related organizations, such as Mothertongue Feminist Reader’s Theater, MoonRise Café, Gaylesta and Bay Area Lesbian Archives.

Rebecca Ann Silverstein was born 73 years ago this month in Bronx, New York City. Her younger brother was born six years later. Their father had to drop out of school at age 16 to help his family run their small business, a delicatessen, after his father died. Their mother dealt with chronic depression.

“My childhood was difficult,” Rebecca recalls. “My parents were mismatched and not very happy with each other, to say the least. Because Dad never finished high school, for instance, and was a bit of an intellectual, he never really got to do what he wanted to do – probably being a professor. As a result, he took a lot of that unhappiness out on people around him, including our mother and us kids. He would sometimes drink too much and become

abusive. We moved to the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn when I was two years old. My parents bought a kosher deli, which all of us wound up working in. Running a business was not really my Dad's long suit, though, so the deli eventually failed and he had to get a job in another deli, a job he held until he retired."

The family was considered conservative Jewish, though not religious.

"We were secular Jews," Rebecca says. "I think my parents, especially my father who grew up Orthodox, rejected religion after the Holocaust."



Rebecca – Age 6

"The neighborhood I grew up in from age two to ten was really beautiful," Rebecca recalls. "There were big trees on the block, lots of shops nearby, as well as a short walk to the Brooklyn Public Library, Botanical Gardens, Prospect Park and the Brooklyn Museum. There were tons of kids to play with – five apartment buildings on the street – meaning that in summertime, we were out playing until 10pm. It felt safe. Parents would be watching from the windows – we'd be roller-skating all over the neighborhood. There was a rich mixture of people, racially and ethnically – everybody was something: Jewish,

African-American, Puerto Rican, Italian and Irish. I loved that neighborhood!"

Because of the somewhat troubled home and early work environment, Rebecca's "happy place" was at the neighborhood elementary school.

"I always did very well in school, where I found a lot of satisfaction early on," Rebecca recalls. "I was curious, always wanting to learn, interested in everything, fueled by having access to museums, botanical gardens and libraries. I could imagine myself living in other times, visiting collections of Egyptian, early American and colonial times. It made me very aware of and fascinated by history. I was tall for my age, though I'm considered short now. Even at age eight, I might try to get into the Saturday movie matinee for 35 cents and they wouldn't let me in, because they didn't believe I was under 12 – even if I brought my birth certificate to prove it!"



Rebecca – Age 8

The birth of her brother when she was six had been somewhat traumatizing for the family.

"Mom had been on diet pills – basically speed – trying to lose weight when she got pregnant," Rebecca says. "It affected her moods a lot. My brother was probably exposed to the diet pills during the pregnancy. So he cried a lot during the first few years of his life. Mom had a breakdown and was hospitalized for post-partum depression after my brother's birth. She was subjected to electro-shock therapy, which in the mid-1950s was common for depression. While she was in the hospital, my brother and I stayed with our aunt and uncle. When Mom got out, she was pretty spacey and still depressed. Our grandfather lived with us until I was ten and – since he only spoke Yiddish – it made simple things seem quite complicated. My father's mother also spoke only Yiddish and my mother and aunts had that as a weapon for keeping

secrets from us. They would never let us learn Yiddish, because they considered it a dead language, though I sometimes understood enough that I could translate for my brother and cousins.”

When her family moved closer to the deli – and, thus, a different school – at age ten, it was something of a disaster for Rebecca.

“I had loved my first school so much that this second school was a major let-down for me,” Rebecca recounts. “It was overcrowded and I would say my fifth grade teacher really didn’t like teaching at all. Plus I had to work more at the store now that we lived just a block away.”

Her brother had a difficult time through elementary and secondary school, which exacerbated the family’s stormy home environment.

“His behavior was most erratic in those days,” Rebecca recalls. “He tried to burn down his elementary school, spent time in jail at 17 for selling pot in his high school, stole money from our parents and things like that. He had a breakdown in jail and was originally diagnosed as schizophrenic, but I would say he was bipolar. I don’t know if he was every properly diagnosed. He had periodic bouts of violence. After living on the streets in California for 30 years, he finally decided he was tired of it. He cleaned up his act, got into AA, got off the streets and is clean and sober for many years, living in Oregon now. We’re still in regular contact and have a fairly good relationship, given the different places we’ve been, emotionally, socially and physically.”

Rebecca continued being successful at school, enough so that she skipped the eighth grade.

“I absolutely loved Erasmus Hall High School, a huge school with about 8,000 students,” Rebecca recalls fondly. “There were 1,500 in my graduating class! I was in a college-track curriculum in an academy-like environment. There were four multi-storied buildings – built at different times and not perfectly connected – taking up a whole block. It was a lovely space with gardens in the inner courtyard. Unfortunately, when I was about 15, my parents’ business went under. They filed for bankruptcy, and were both out of work for quite some time until Dad finally found a counter job at Katz’s Deli, where he worked until he retired.”

Because of the family’s precarious financial situation, some of the burden fell on Rebecca.



Rebecca – Age 16

“I always worked part-time,” Rebecca recalls. “At age 15, I was actually considering dropping out of high school to work full-time to help support the family. Luckily, my Mom asked the difficult question, ‘Do you want to end up like your father?’ It was one of a handful of times where she intervened and it made a difference in my life. I didn’t quit school like my Dad had a generation earlier. Though things were financially ‘iffy’ for several years, we scraped by and I was able to go to Brooklyn College, which was basically free, \$63 a semester, something I was able to afford with my after-school jobs. Things continued being unpleasant at home, however, so I finally decided it was time for me to move out. I got my own apartment with

another girl – we had the attic area in a private home – and we became something of a social center for other students.”

Though many of her friends who visited were dropping acid or smoking pot, Rebecca could usually be seen with a book or at the typewriter, writing papers for school. She was feeding a number of her friends, sharing her macrobiotic diet of brown rice and vegetables. Because of her work and school schedule, it took her an extra half-year to finish her degree. She was also becoming politically active at Brooklyn College

“I checked out the SDS,” Rebecca says, “but they seemed like just a bunch of guys talking a lot. I started college in 1966, the height of the Vietnam War. A lot of us from the college would go to Washington, D.C., for the mobilizations against the war every spring and fall. I remember ducking into the entrance to the Smithsonian to get away from the tear gas. A number of us worked on getting African-American studies and Puerto Rican studies on the campus of Brooklyn College.”



Rebecca – Early 20s

Rebecca was aware of her attraction to girls at an early age but didn’t know what to call it or do about it.

“There was one girl in my first grade class that I thought was really cute,” Rebecca recalls. “She invited me to her house one day. She was Puerto Rican and everybody was speaking Spanish. I was sure her Mother didn’t like me. I wonder now if she could tell I had a crush on her daughter. I wasn’t invited back. In third or fourth grade, I had an obsessive crush on a girl that lasted for years. I would fantasize running into her in the hall. Even in college I had major crushes. During rush week at sororities – basically social clubs – I decided I would go wherever this one girl would go so we’d end up in the same sorority. I had a crush on her throughout college. I found out recently she had had a crush on me, but was petrified to say anything. When I started a six-year relationship with a guy, Cary, my freshman year, I told him early on that I thought I was a lesbian. His response was ‘Oh, you’re just bisexual, like the rest of us!’ Either way, I didn’t have time to do anything about that emotional under-current in my life.”

After college graduation at age 21, Rebecca and Cary moved to the top floor of an apartment building in Flatbush, where they and a group of other young people in the building became a family, described as “my first tribe.” By 1972, she was spending time at the Women’s Center in Manhattan, working on abortion rights. Most of the women were lesbians.

“I was still dressing like a hippie with waist-length hair and long skirts,” Rebecca says. “The other women were wearing leather jackets, army fatigues, combat boots, and short hair, looking androgynous. So I was perceived as straight and was pretty much ignored by them. I also joined a couple of consciousness-raising groups, where all but two of us came out as lesbians. I was very shy and didn’t know about the bars or any other places to meet women. Plus I thought that since I didn’t want to buzz cut my hair and wear army fatigues, maybe I wasn’t really a lesbian.”

It was on a 1973 trip to California that she first decided where she wanted to

wind up.

"By then Cary and I had split up but were still friends," Rebecca recalls. "I took a Grey Rabbit to California. It was a Greyhound bus with seats pulled out, mattresses on the floor, hippies driving the bus. I fell in love with San Francisco. He met me there and we camped for a month across the country back to New York. That trip was a real eye-opener. Not only did I see many beautiful parts of this continent – the Rockies, the Southwest, getting a sense of the many landscapes out there, I fell in love with California. I went back to Brooklyn because I was in a relationship with a guy and I wanted to see if it might work out. I wound up getting pregnant, having an abortion, breaking up with him and moving into an apartment in Park Slope. Little did I know it was already a largely lesbian neighborhood. It was my first household of women and the three of us became close friends. It was a fantastic couple of years but I still didn't know what I wanted to do with my life. I was doing kinda mindless typing and secretarial work, for survival. I wanted to be doing something of use but was drifting and unfulfilled."

She worked toward her teaching credential at Brooklyn College, but soon figured out she didn't have the right personality for that. By 1976, she decided it was time to move to San Francisco and start a new life in a new place.

"I knew that whatever my life was going to be would happen there," Rebecca recalls. "I packed up and took a Green Tortoise – like the Grey Rabbit – to San Francisco. I had a great time traveling cross country. I only knew one person when I got there. When Mom told me my radical leftie Aunt Harriet would be visiting her daughter, my cousin, I jumped at the chance to hang out with her. When I arrived, my cousin was making out with her girlfriend, Seena, who was living in a household of lesbians. After driving Aunt Harriet to SFO, we went to A Little More on Potrero in San Francisco, my first lesbian bar! The roommates were involved in organizing a Conference on Violence against Women in December 1976 and I immediately volunteered to help with the organizing. I spent more and more time at the Women's Centers at 63 Brady Street, helping organize three of the workshops. I was in HEAVEN. They welcomed me, in spite of the fact I was still a long-haired hippie. My dreams began to feature me flying through the air and kissing women or swimming in the ocean and seeing all these beautiful naked women welcoming me on the shore!"

During this conference-organizing, Rebecca finally slept with a lesbian.

"Working on the conference, I learned what it meant to be a lesbian-feminist," Rebecca recalls, "and how to define the various aspects of violence – economic, domestic, incarceration, disability, race, class and involuntary commitment to mental institutions. I had my own political framework for working on these structural problems and I wanted to be part of creating a world that I'd want to live in. I wanted to get involved in everything in the community."

This period also ushered in a new look and her first major relationship with another woman.

"Of course, when I officially came out, I cut my hair and got rid of the long skirts," Rebecca says. "My cousin's now ex-girlfriend, Seena, saw me at the





Rebecca coming out at age 27

conference with short hair, in overalls and a flannel shirt – though still femmy – and asked me if I had finally come out. We started dating right after that.”

Rebecca spent about 18 months with Seena, who was much more a homebody than she was.

“She didn’t really want to be out and about like I did,” Rebecca recalls. “The lesbian community was bursting with political and cultural events and I wanted to do everything and meet everybody, attend all the benefit performances, learn everything. I joined a women’s health collective – supporting women with information on breast self-exams, cervical exams, etc. I joined Mothertongue Feminist Reader’s Theater Collective, which gave me an outlet for my writing. I was exhilarated by our performances. Collaborating with other like-minded women on a certain theme – women and work, anger, loving women – we would work together on a script and then perform it. We were on the stage without any real ‘acting credentials’ – what a rush!”

In 1977, she decided to learn how to use a printing press. The Women’s Press Project in San Francisco trained women on offset presses. The experience gave her confidence in her mechanical abilities, although she decided not to pursue printing because of the chemicals involved. Her instructor was Marta, who became her close friend.

“We lived a few blocks from each other and would take the Fillmore bus home, then stand on the corner and talk for hours,” Rebecca recalls. “She moved into my household and her friends became my next ‘tribe.’ Marta was also Jewish from New York, also in relationships with women of color. We had many long talks on race, ethnicity, religion, class, and all the rest in the lesbian community. Was Jewish white or not? What were the differences to be confronted between Jewish, Latina, Black and other Women of Color? These are still things we talk about.”

It was soon time to make her next move.

“At the end of a series of relationships, feeling heart-broken and discouraged, I headed for a lesbian household in Petaluma up in Sonoma County to help sort things out,” Rebecca recalls. “I wanted to be away from cement and on the earth. But I was in cow country. I felt isolated and anxious with few people around. I was used to living in apartment buildings in dense cities. I started hanging out at the MoonRise Café run by a lesbian collective in Santa Rosa. I became lovers with Terésa, a woman I met at the MoonRise and moved in with her in a three-woman household on an apple orchard in Sebastopol. A few months later, she and I went on a camping trip to the southwest with Marta and her girlfriend in search of a lesbian community that we heard was more oriented towards women of color. We didn’t find it. But Terésa loved the land in the Santa Fé area – and ultimately returned there to live.”

When the MoonRise Café collective seemed to be burning out, Rebecca, Terésa and another woman took over as the next collective, expanding its reach, bringing women’s music up from the Bay area and catering Robin

"After our collective burned out a year later, I stayed in Sonoma County," Rebecca says, "though I never felt like I laid down deep roots there. By 1981, I was coming down to San Francisco often, because the Jewish lesbians there were beginning to connect more. I was particularly mobilized the next year when a woman in the household I was living in made a comment about the Holocaust not finishing the job of killing all the Jews. I knew it was time to leave. When Marta was evicted from her flat, I moved back down to SF and we made another household with another lesbian. A few years later, Marta's parents offered her a down payment for a house, and Marta insisted I be on the deed, though I had no money to contribute. Three of us bought a house in Bernal Heights and it became a central household where we hosted parties, Channukah and Passover celebrations for many years. Though I'd been working as a word processor and masseuse, friends suggested I might like the curriculum at JFK University which had an MFT (Marriage and Family Therapist) track. I went to JFK and became a therapist. It's a career that's been extremely enjoyable and has enriched my life in many ways. I still have a part-time practice that's been on Zoom since Covid."



As she was beginning her therapist career, she began a relationship with Linda, a Jewish woman. When the Bernal Heights house was sold, she moved in with her. They were together 24 years. Several significant events took place over the next decades: she and Linda got married at SF City Hall in 2004 (later revoked), she got involved in Gaylesta (Psychotherapist Association for Gender & Sexual Diversity), joined the Gaylesta Board and organized a conference, "Queer Families = Healthy Families", in October of 2008.

"We held the conference a couple weeks before the election," Rebecca recalls. "Initially, the conservative therapists in CAMFT – some of whom still practiced 'conversion therapy' – resisted the idea of supporting marriage equality. Gaylesta did massive education with the therapist organizations, organizing with therapists around the state. Some of us met with the ED of a national MFT organization (AAMFT), resulting in the group's endorsement of marriage equality. I worked with Ralph Brunell on an online curriculum for LGBTQ-affirmative therapy for AAMFT, and was President of the Board of Gaylesta during the fight for marriage equality. We came up with the idea of going to lawmakers to outlaw conversion therapy since the professional organizations couldn't do it, and ultimately California was the first state to pass a law making conversion therapy unlawful for minors.

A major turning-point in Rebecca's life occurred when she met photographer Lenn Keller in 2014 at an OLOC (Old Lesbians Organizing for Change) conference. She sought Lenn's advice on a series of interviews she had been conducting with lesbians. In their first conversations, it seemed destiny that they would become soul-mates and partners in various endeavors. It was clear they shared a concern about the erasure of lesbian history and had similar spiritual and political passions.



Rebecca in her Early 40s

"Lenn had already founded BALA (Bay Area Lesbian



Rebecca – Early 60s

Archives), which was called BALHAP at the time,” Rebecca recalls. “She had already done an event in March 2014 to kick off the organization. She was working with an advisory team to obtain 501(c)3 non-profit status, and asked me to help. She wanted to produce another fundraiser in March 2015 and I jumped in, partly because I enjoyed being around her. We discovered we loved working together, because we had similar work styles, could talk about everything, and have a lot of fun together. We were a dynamite team almost instantly!”

Meanwhile, when the Obergefell decision legalized same-sex marriage, Rebecca and her girlfriend tied the knot in 2015. Within two years, however, the two had drifted apart and the marriage was over.

“I moved to Oakland and revived the therapy practice I had quietly been closing with my clients the previous year in San Francisco,” Rebecca says. “I started dancing and doing other things I’d wanted to do for years. My friendship with Lenn became even closer, best friends, and we worked a lot more on BALA. We saw each other almost every day and talked on the phone for hours. Lenn, BALA and my friends became the focus of my life, outside of my therapy practice. I still love working with clients – and I continue learning about myself in the process.”

Lenn’s deteriorating health soon began to challenge both Lenn and Rebecca.

“Lenn’s health became a central part of my life,” Rebecca recalls. “She asked me to be her witness and advocate with doctors, since the healthcare system for Black women is so abysmal. She’d been dealing with Lyme Disease, had fatigue and mobility issues. In May 2018, she was diagnosed with a rare aggressive endometrial cancer. After surgery, she lived with me for five weeks while she recuperated. Lenn was still committed to building BALA and preserving lesbian history. When she was ready, we doubled down on work, both of us aware that she might not have much time left. Lenn wanted BALA to produce an event in early 2019 celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Aché*, a journal and organization by and for Black lesbians. She worked with the two founders of *Aché* and it was very successful. All the events Lenn organized were really impactful. People still talk about them fondly. This one took more out of her because she was still recuperating. We spent the rest of the year really focused and continued to develop the base for BALA to grow from.”

Meanwhile, the impact of Covid was felt on BALA, as it was everywhere else in the world.

“In the early months of Covid, BALA activity slowed down,” Rebecca says, “and I had just become involved with a wonderful new lover. So Lenn and I were working less and spending less time together. In July 2020, Lenn flew back east to take care of her dying brother, then dealt with closing out his life after he died. When she returned to Oakland in mid-September, she was exhausted and obviously ill. By the end of October, she was alarmingly sick and she agreed to let me take her to the emergency room.





Rebecca and Lenn Keller

That's when we learned that the very aggressive cancer had returned and that she was dying. I put my life on hold to care for her. I set up hospice at her home. A few people helped out. We were still in pre-vaccine Covid, so a lot of people who wanted to help or say goodbye weren't able to come. She died peacefully at home in December 2020."

There was a Zoom memorial for Lenn in February and BALA produced another in May.

"The only thing that kept me from abject despair was staying committed to keeping BALA alive. I spent most of 2021 – a blur – trying to come back to life myself. The many energized volunteers who showed up that year to work with BALA have inspired and motivated me. My partner has been a rock of support and love. By 2022, I felt that I was fully back to myself and now I feel really alive and joyful."



73rd Birthday, June 2022

Encouraged by many new volunteers working to inventory, scan and file the three BALA storage units full of lesbian memorabilia, Rebecca is more determined than ever to carry on Lenn's work. She continues being a half-time therapist and directs BALA's new activities.

"We have had an explosion of interest by younger queer women," Rebecca says, "who realize there isn't a lot of information about lesbian history out there and found their way to BALA. They know this is a place they can learn what they don't know. We are developing new projects so I'm super busy but excited. And I can feel that Lenn is helping us from the other side."

Asked about her current "bucket list", Rebecca was clear about her priorities at age 73.

"I would also like to slow down at some point and work less," Rebecca says. "But I'm not ready yet. My partner just retired at 75. I would like to have more time to write, interview women for BALA's Oral History Project, perhaps travel to my honey's home continent (Africa), to Morocco, Egypt and Europe. We met when I was 70 and she was 72, showing it's never too late to fall in love! We're both the best versions of ourselves we've ever been."

Thanks, Rebecca, for sharing so much of your story with Lavender Seniors and for your ongoing commitment to the LGBTQ+ community. All best for the rest of 2022 and far beyond!



# This Book Is Gay

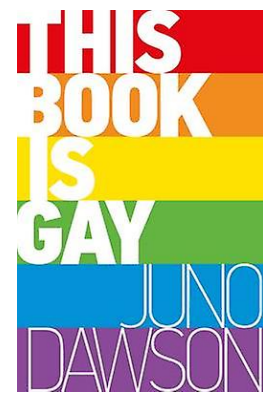
By Juno Dawson

This book was first published several years ago by UCLA's Williams Institute.

Dawson is clever and cute in his graphic surveys. He tells us that we must first identify our sexuality and act on it. The book would be an ideal gift to the young who are just coming out. Dawson attacks all stereotypes. He points to good examples such as the movie *Brokeback Mountain*, an Oscar winner. He gives us a listing of good and positive heroes.

This is a gold mine of books and articles. Don't miss it if you are the new kid on the block.

- Frank J. Howell



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## Bonus Book Review

### We are Everywhere:

**Protest, Power and Pride in the History of Queer Liberation**

Written by Leighton Brown and Matthew Riemer

Reviewed by Dr. John David Dupree



Those of us who have been active in whatever it might've been called along the way – Gay Liberation, Queer Liberation, LGBTQ+ Liberation – would be well-advised to at least spend some time with this amazing book, first published in 2019. The in-depth histories of our community included in this large (9"x12") coffee-table-sized, photo-and-narrative volume provide invaluable background on our "movement" from 1867-1994. I would venture to say that nearly everyone will see someone they know in these 368 information-rich pages.

Based on their on-going "highly-addictive" @lgbt\_history Instagram account, Leighton Brown and Matthew Riemer have gathered tens of thousands of photographs, identified the people, places and incidents depicted in as many as possible and then described their findings in this comprehensive accounting of the movement through 1994. The book is divided into four chronologically-arranged chapters from post-Civil War era, 1867, until mid-AIDS-epidemic 1994. It's obviously more difficult to confirm accuracy of dates, events and personalities from the 19th century, compared with the 20th century. But these authors have been largely successful, particularly in the early 20th century people/events. For instance, the prisoner depicted on the left here from 2014 shows an attractive young man convicted for the "infamous crime vs nature". The middle photograph is of Harry Hay (founder of the Mattachine Society) and his lover, John Burnside, in 1984; and the




photograph on the right is of an early “marriage-equality” protest from 1994, which took another 21 years before Obergefell vs Hodges made same-sex marriage the law of the land.

Height 1 M	5'2"	Head length	19.3	L. Foot	26.2	Circumference	24.5	Age	Born in 18
Eye color	5.9	Head width	14.7	L. Mitt. F.	11.4	Forearm	2	Apparent Age	
Outer A. I. M.	13.6	Clavicle width		L. L. F.	8.4	Neck	10.4	Noti	10.4
Thumb	19.1	R. Ear	5.9	L. Fore A.	14.4	Pecul.	Oc.	10.4	

Remarks: Incident to arrest

Identified



DESCRIPTIVE

Build	5'2"	Build	5'2"	Build	5'2"	Build	5'2"
Weight	133	Weight	133	Weight	133	Weight	133
Height	5'2"	Height	5'2"	Height	5'2"	Height	5'2"
Age	27	Age	27	Age	27	Age	27

Measured at Dec 27 - 1914 by D. SULLIVAN

Re-measured - When and Where



Then there are examples of such injustices as shown on the Congressional Cemetery headstone of Air Force veteran, Sgt. Leonard Matlovich, whose “Gay Vietnam Veteran” epitaph reads: “When I was in the military, they gave me a medal for killing two men and a dishonorable discharge for loving one.” This is indicative of an amorality that makes no sense to those of us in the LGBTQ+ liberation movement.

Though this is definitely NOT a sit-down-and-read-it-through-in-one-evening volume, it is also a must-read for those of us who want/need to know more about the history of our movement. It validates what we already know and tells us so many things we didn’t previously know! Check it out of your library, buy it at your local bookstore, on-line or as an e-book!

-- John David Dupree (he/him/his), Oakland, CA

## 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!

Please contact us at [karen@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:karen@lavenderseniors.org) or (510) 424-7240 and we will be in touch with you soon. Thank You!



## Potential Impact on the LGBTQ+ Community

### Discussion of Recent SCOTUS Decisions

As most of us are aware, the U.S. Supreme Court made some significant decisions during the last week of June that threaten to destroy the very fabric of our Democratic society. The first overturned a New York law regarding the right to carry loaded weapons virtually anywhere in polite society; the second overturned a nearly half-century of constitutional precedent (abiding by such precedent referred to as "stare decisis" – pronounced STAR-ee de-SI-sis) through the 1973 Roe vs Wade decision and its subsequent 1992 decision in Planned Parenthood vs. Casey. Both of those cases – and several more – confirmed that women have the right to access the full spectrum of reproductive health care, including abortion, leaving such decisions up to the pregnant woman, her doctor(s) and significant other(s) in her life. This is the first time in American history that a long-held right – using the right to privacy as its basis – has been overturned after surviving several previous attempts to rescind that right.

Many in the socio-political community have expressed the opinion that any Constitutional rights based on the right to privacy are now at risk. In fact, Justice Clarence Thomas specifically mentioned in his concurrence with the majority that the Court should "reconsider" the right to use contraception (Griswold vs. Connecticut), the right to choose who you will be in a relationship with (Lawrence vs. Texas) and the right to marriage equality for same-sex couples (Obergefell vs. Hodges), since, they allege, those three decisions – like Roe vs. Wade are "demonstrably erroneous decisions" – based on a privacy right not guaranteed in the Constitution.



July's Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch will include a discussion of the potential impact of these decisions – and possible remedies – to minimize their negative effect on the LGBTQ community. Prof. Al Schendan, a Political Science Instructor at San Jose State University and De Anza College, will help walk us through these decisions. He received his MA in Political Science from SF State in 2004. His major specialization is American government and political theory. He has a strong interest in political ideology and

comparative politics. He has been an active member of the Lavender Seniors Speakers Bureau for years.

Here are the Zoom coordinates for Saturday, 9th July, from 12 noon until 2pm. Please note that we have reserved the time/date for the rest of the year through Saturday, 10th December 2022:

Lavender Seniors invites you to a scheduled **Saturday Rainbow Lunch** meeting on Zoom.

Topic: Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch: SCOTUS and the LGBTQ+ Community

Time: Saturday, July 9th, 2022 – 12:00 PM Pacific Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89671026595>

Meeting ID: 896 7102 6595

One tap mobile: +16699009128,,89671026595# US (San Jose)

Dial by your location: +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 896 7102 6595

**Hope to see/hear you there!**



### **Social Security's Commitment to the LGBTQ+ Community**

As part of Pride Month, the Social Security Administration (SSA) renewed its acknowledgment of the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community, celebrating diversity, love, and respect. As most of our readers know, on June 26, 2015, the U.S. Supreme Court issued the Obergefell v. Hodges decision, holding that same-sex couples have a constitutional right to marry in all states. With the recent precedent-denying overturn of Roe vs. Wade two days shy of seven years later (June 24, 2022), many other constitutional rights based on "privacy," including contraceptive use, same-sex relationships, marriage equality and even anti-miscegenation laws are now clearly thought to be at risk. In fact, in his "concurring" opinion, Justice Clarence Thomas specifically mentioned "reconsidering" the first three of those mentioned here, including Obergefell.

Nevertheless, in SSA documentation released in June, SSA officially recognized same-sex couples' marriages in all states, and some non-marital legal relationships (such as some civil unions and domestic partnerships). This recognition is important to determine eligible benefits.

These and other considerations will be discussed at this month's Third Friday Lunch Bunch on 15th July (see Zoom invitation and SSA flyer below for more information on our SSA speakers). Here are five things you should know about SSA benefits for LGBTQ+ individuals and couples:

- Marital status is important — A member of a same-sex couple may be entitled to Social Security benefits when a working spouse retires, becomes disabled, or dies. SSA also considers marital status when determining eligibility and payment amount for Supplemental Security Income.



- What type of benefits you can receive — Social Security taxes pay for three kinds of benefits: retirement, disability, and survivors. If you're entitled to benefits, your spouse and eligible family members might receive benefits, too.
- Children may receive benefits — Your children or stepchildren could be entitled to benefits.
- When you apply for benefits is important — If you're married or have entered a non-marital legal relationship, SSA encourages you to apply right away, even if you're not sure you're eligible. Applying now may protect you against the loss of any potential benefits.
- Report life changes right away — You should let SSA know immediately if you move, marry, separate, divorce, or become parent of a child. Don't wait until SSA benefits review to tell them about changes. You should report changes right away so benefits are paid correctly.

For more information, visit SSA's website for same-sex couples at [www.ssa.gov/people/same-sex-couples](http://www.ssa.gov/people/same-sex-couples). You can also read the publication "What Same-Sex Couples Need to Know" at [www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10014.pdf](http://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10014.pdf).

Following are the Zoom coordinates for this month:

Topic: ***Social Security and the LGBTQ+ Community***

Friday, 15th July 2022 – 12 Noon until 2pm Pacific Daylight Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85235825964?pwd=WmptRG5SU2RDVUNyQ1hFWGM2NlZOQT09>

Meeting ID: 852 3582 5964 – Passcode: 569546

Dial by your location: +1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 852 3582 5964 – Passcode: 569546

We look forward to hearing about this renewed commitment to the LGBTQ+ community from our colleagues at the Social Security Administration.



# Social Security 101

Everything you wanted to know.



Securing today  
and tomorrow

A **FREE** workshop from Social Security.

- When are you eligible to receive retirement benefits?
- How does early retirement affect your benefits?
- Do you qualify for disability, survivors, and spouse benefits?
- How do you get the most from your benefit?
- What is the future of Social Security?
- When should you file for Medicare?

Learn how to use **my Social Security** online account and other online services. You should go to [www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount](http://www.socialsecurity.gov/myaccount) to create a **my Social Security** account and print out your **Social Security Statement** **before** attending the workshop.

[SocialSecurity.gov](http://SocialSecurity.gov)

## Social Security Representatives



Grace Samson

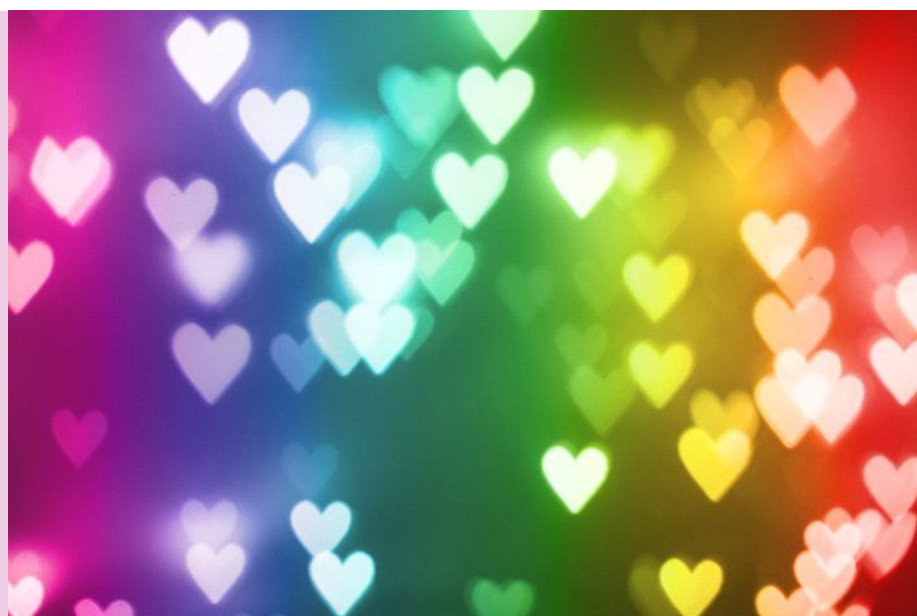


Keith Thompson

Grace Samson serves as the Public Affairs Specialist for the Bay Area. Grace began her career with the Social Security Administration in 2008 as a Claims Specialist. In 2016, she became an Operations Supervisor and gained experience leading staff in a prominent Bay Area District Office. Grace served as a mentor and participated in numerous outreach events throughout the community.

Keith serves as a Public Affairs Specialist for the Social Security Administration for nearly 15 years. He responds to public and media inquiries for the San Francisco Region, which includes California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii, Guam, America Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands.

He previously assisted on the social media team answering Facebook, Twitter and questions from the agency's blog [Social Security Matters](#).



**A free 10-week group to explore issues of aging in the**

## LGBTQ+ community while caring for ourselves or others

This is a free 10 session group focusing on issues of aging for the full spectrum of the senior LGBTQ+ community. Through personal exploration, group support and education, we will explore topics of interest for people caring for someone or for themselves. Such topics include facing medical illness, caring for self while caring for another, planning for your future, and legal issues for LGBTQ+ singles or couples.

**Mondays 2-3:30 PM on Zoom**

**July 18-September 26, 2022**

**October 24-December 26, 2022**

For program information and sign-up, **Call: 1-510-736-5428 or email [BJue@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:BJue@lavenderseniors.org) (Write “Caring Program” on the subject line) leave your phone number, e-mail address, and full name.** Someone from Lavender Seniors will call you to discuss the program.

“This support was critical to my success in caregiving, and critical to my personal well being physically and emotionally while caregiving.”  
“This is beyond peer-to-peer counseling.”

Group facilitator is Dr. Melinda Ginne. She is a clinical psychologist with a 40-year career specializing in geriatrics and the treatment of the psychological aspects of acute chronic and life-threatening medical illness. She is one of the founding instructors in the Professional Program in Aging and Mental Health at UC Berkeley Extension. In the past two decades she has taught a number of classes and workshops in aging as well as in the psychological aspects of medical illness. She has been active in the LGBTQ+ community since 1975.



Sponsors: Amazon Foundation & Give Now Fund of Horizons Foundation



*Celebrating his 100th Birthday and His Life*

## *Memorializing Morris Simpson*

This was not the memorial that many people might have preferred: a service in a favorite place, with lots of hugging, holding and comforting each other, laughing and/or crying in each others' arms. On the other hand, having Lavender Seniors' first memorial on Zoom allowed family members and friends from all over the U.S. to easily attend! On 17th June – just six days before his

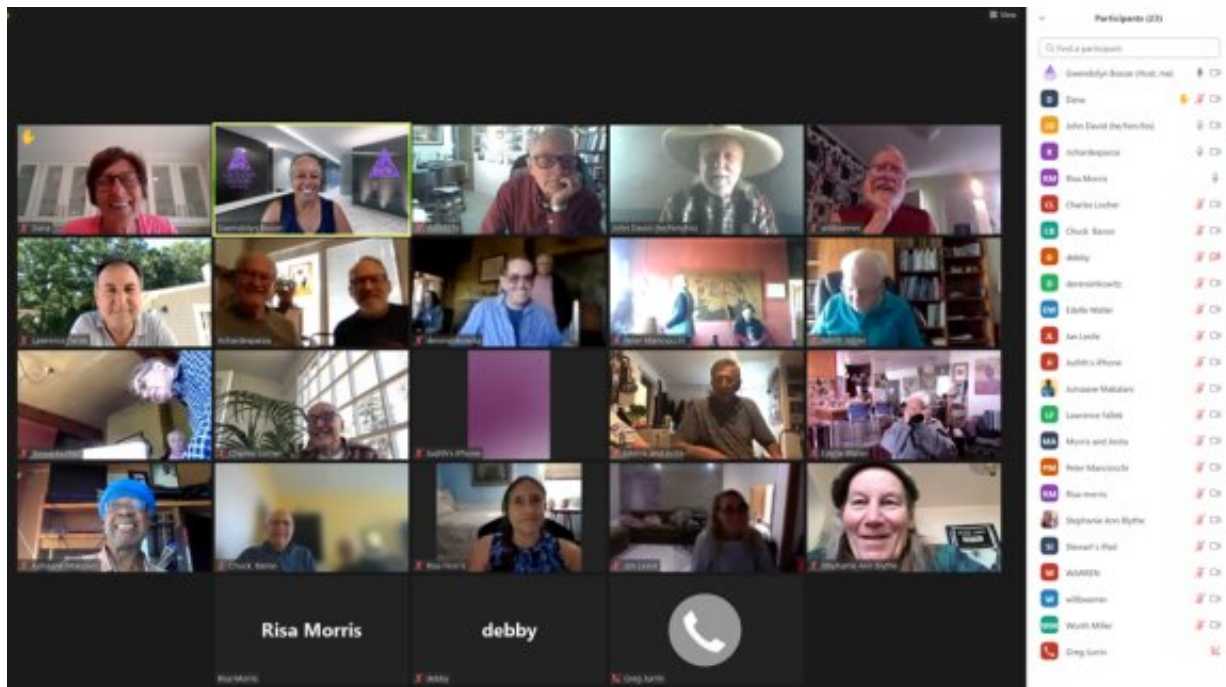


100th birthday – Morris Simpson was memorialized by his remaining sister and brother-in-law (also named Morris), nephews and nieces, grand-nephews and grand-nieces, friends and colleagues he knew well from Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin and San Francisco Counties! At one point in the 2.5-hour memorial, there were 41 people on-line – not counting multiple people at various sites, like Morris’s home in Pt. Richmond – many raising their hands, unmuting, then sharing sweet, poignant and funny memories of one of our local LGBTQ pioneers!



Family members, friends, participants in the “We’re Still Here” and “Third Friday Lunch Bunch,” friends and colleagues in the GMOM (Gay Men of Marin) group at the Spahr Center and attendees in the Senior Programs at Rainbow Community Center gathered for this Fond Farewell Celebration honoring Morris. (Editor’s note: Lavender Seniors apologizes for having erroneously reported in previous newsletter tributes to Morris that his birthday was June 26th instead of the correct date, June 23rd.)

Here are some of the names and faces captured by the Zoom camera at 2:16pm, well after the event was supposed to have been concluded (2pm), well before it actually ended (2:32pm) and after some people had already had to leave:



As Deren, one of Morris’s dear nephews, said in a follow-up e-mail to Lavender Seniors:

**“I think this was wonderful and added some closure for everyone and especially my parents. I know Uncle Morris would have enjoyed it tremendously.”**

We are grateful that so many people – especially Morris’s family members – were able to join us for a couple of hours – on a Friday afternoon, no less! – to pay homage to a special guy who we all continue to miss so much – not only for these three months after he left us – but for the rest of our lives!



2022

## Lavender Seniors Pride around town...



Carrying the Pink Torch from  
Oakland - Eventually to Light  
Up Twin Peaks in San Francisco



The Gang



Gwen



Carmen

---

San Leandro Cherry  
Parade contingent





Local newspaper



Board President, Victor (right)



Board Member, Barbara (left)



Board President, Victor (left)



**LGBTQ+ Flag Raising at  
Hayward City Hall**  
[click for video of the event](#)



Beckie-newsletter editor & her pup



# Oakland/ East Bay Newsletter



*Online meeting, LGBTQ+ mental health resources, and Pride Month events.*

## **June 28th Meeting: Creating "A Gathering Place"**

Our June speaker will be Gayle McWilliams, the proud mom of a lesbian daughter. She is the founder and facilitator of "**A Gathering Place**," a peer support group for people of color. The group includes LGBTQ individuals, their family members, friends and allies. "A Gathering Place" is celebrating their fifth anniversary in September. Gayle will share her story as a proud mom of a lesbian daughter and tell us why "A Gathering Place" exists.



After we hear from Gayle, we will hold space for confidential sharing and support.

No matter what is happening in your life or what your relationship with your LGBTQ+ family member(s) is like, PFLAG is here for you and we will welcome you at our meetings with no judgment and lots of love.

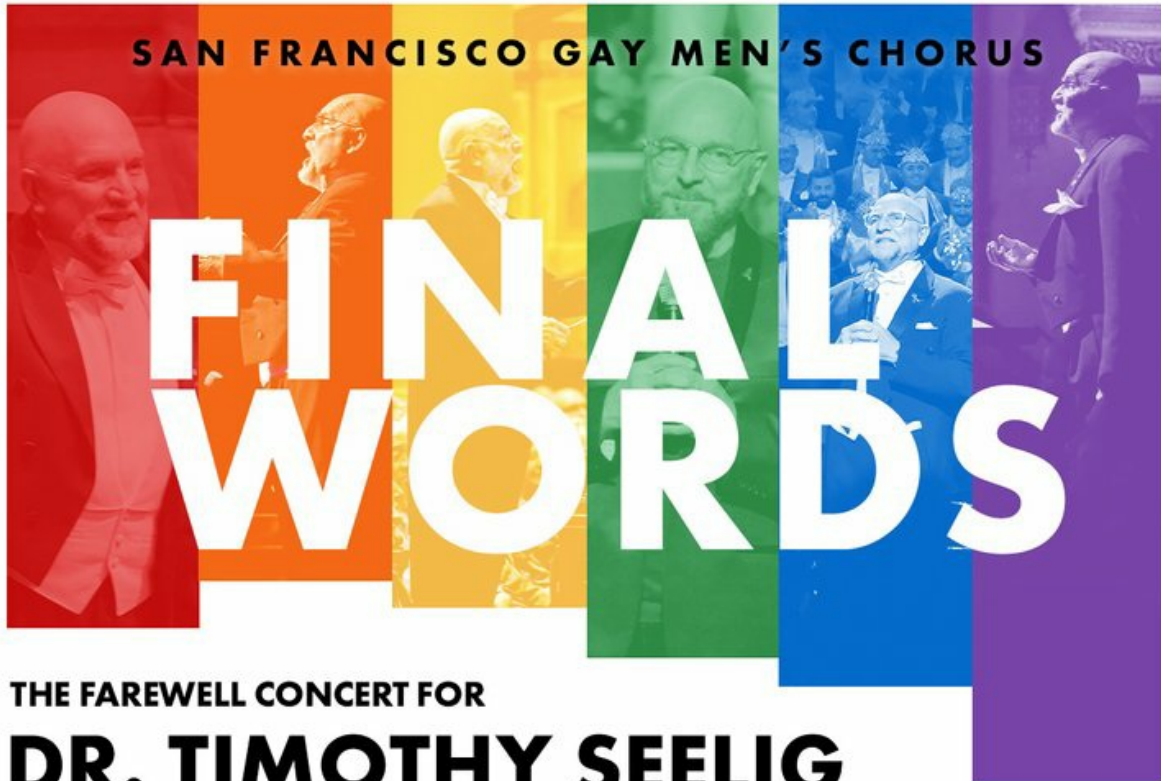
*Please note a few important caveats about meeting online:*

- ***While confidentiality should not be expected on online platforms, we will hold our PFLAG meeting with as much of our shared commitment to confidentiality and mutual respect as possible.***
- *People under age 18 may not join without a parent.*
- *You will need the meeting password to be able to join the meeting.*
- *If you do not communicate to us who you are, you will be removed from the meeting.*
- *Closed captioning will be provided through Zoom.*



If you would like to join us online from **7:00 to 8:30pm on Tuesday, June 28**, please email [pflagoeb@gmail.com](mailto:pflagoeb@gmail.com) to request the meeting password and Zoom login information.

Please know that our board is still here to connect with you one-on-one outside of our scheduled meeting times. Email [pflagoeb@gmail.com](mailto:pflagoeb@gmail.com) or leave us a voicemail at 510-562-7692 and we will call you back.



THE FAREWELL CONCERT FOR  
**DR. TIMOTHY SEELIG**  
WITH THE ICONIC  
**SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY**

AND SPECIAL GUEST  
OAKLAND INTERFAITH GOSPEL CHOIR

**WEDNESDAY**  
**JULY 13**  
**7:30 PM**  
DAVIES SYMPHONY HALL

SPONSORED BY THE TERRENCE D. CHAN FOUNDATION



It's time to get your tickets for the  
**2022 Outfest** Los Angeles LGBTQ  
Film Festival!

**In person and on line.**

This is your chance to reserve your  
spot at one of our many exciting



screenings in our special 40th anniversary lineup.

Earlier this week we announced our full program which includes over 200 films from around the world, including 42 world premieres!

This year's festival will be held July 14 - 24, 2022 returning to multiple locations throughout Los Angeles, including the Directors Guild of America, The Orpheum Theatre, The Theatre at Ace Hotel, The Ford, Harmony Gold, Plaza de la Raza and

REDCAT. 55 of the films will also be made available virtually to US and international audiences.

If you are an Outfest member, be sure to take advantage of the exclusive discounts and free tickets! Not a member? **Become an Outfest member now** to take advantage of these and other perks only for our membership.





August 27-28

SVPRIDE.COM

Plaza de César Chávez Park  
Downtown San José



OAKLAND PRIDE 2022  
SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 10 -  
SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 11, 2022

Oakland Pride is returning in-person for 2022!



## [Mapping Queer Oakland](#)

Stories and histories of LGBTQ+ elders, is live at  
[astbaylgbtqstories.com/mapping](http://astbaylgbtqstories.com/mapping)





Mapping oral histories from LGBTQ+ elders stamps their stories into the geography of Oakland. This project aims to preserve and connect individual stories into a larger narrative of queer history in Oakland. Thanks to support from the [City of Oakland's Cultural Funding](#), this project highlights the stories of 10 fabulous individuals. In addition, there is a beautiful zine, designed and illustrated by Rami KD. Limited print editions will be around Oakland or check it out [online](#).

This was a total labor of love with advisory support from Joe Hawkins from the [Oakland LGBTQ Community Center](#) and Kin Folkz of [Oakland Queer Healing Center](#). Show them some love!

Huge thanks to the fine folks that shared their stories for this project: Kozi, Norma, Janet, Jim, Tupili, Randy, Mali, Pamela, Melanie, Valerie.

Kudos to Rami **KD** for the illustrations, Chanelle Ignant for composing music for the audio stories, Emiliano Villa for editing support. A few of the oral histories were recorded virtually on the [TheirStory](#) platform.

## Get free at-home COVID-19 tests

Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order a 3rd round of free

at-home tests.

Click below to order yours today.

[Order Free At-Home Tests](#)

Need help placing an order for your at-home tests?  
Call [1-800-232-0233](tel:1-800-232-0233) (TTY [1-888-720-7489](tel:1-888-720-7489)).

## WHAT GAY & BISEXUAL MEN NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MONKEYPOX



Cases have been detected among gay and bisexual men but **not exclusively**

### WHAT IS MONKEYPOX?

Monkeypox is a viral infection transmitted through close personal contact, including kissing, sex, and other skin-to-skin contact.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

KEY SYMPTOM



#### RASH, BUMPS, OR BLISTERS

These may appear anywhere on the body, including the genitals. This may look similar to syphilis, herpes, or other common skin rashes.

OTHER SYMPTOMS



FEVER &  
HEADACHES



MUSCLE  
ACHES



SWOLLEN  
LYMPH NODES

Symptom onset ranges from 5-21 days

### WHAT YOU CAN DO



#### STAY INFORMED

Remain calm. This is a rapidly changing situation. Visit CDC or CDPH websites for up-to-date guidance.



#### CONTACT

If you have symptoms, call (do not visit) your health care provider, and ask about testing.



#### TAKE A BREAK

If you have symptoms, stay at home, wear a mask, and cover sores to protect others.



## ANYONE CAN GET MONKEYPOX

Blaming any one community may harm public health efforts and cause providers to miss monkeypox in other people.

Get the latest updates & downloadable files from  
**Gay Sexuality & Social Policy Initiative @ UCLA Luskin**  
[gaysexresearch.com](http://gaysexresearch.com)



**LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER**



# Monkeypox: Get the Facts

- Monkeypox is a rare disease caused by the monkeypox virus
- Monkeypox can make you sick including a rash or sores (pox), often with an earlier flu-like illness
- Monkeypox can spread to anyone through close, personal, often skin-to-skin contact including:
  - Direct contact with monkeypox rash, sores or scabs
  - Contact with objects, fabrics (clothing, bedding, or towels), and surfaces that have been used by someone with monkeypox
  - Through respiratory droplets or oral fluids from a person with monkeypox
- This contact can happen during intimate sexual contact including:
  - Oral, anal, and vaginal sex or touching the genitals or anus of a person with monkeypox
  - Hugging, massage, or kissing and talking closely
  - Touching fabrics and objects during sex that were used by a person with monkeypox, such as bedding, towels and sex toys
- We know the virus can be spread in fluid or pus from monkeypox sores, and are trying to better understand if the virus could be present in semen, vaginal fluids or other body fluids



## What Are the Symptoms?

- Early flu-like symptoms of monkeypox can include:
  - Fever
  - Headache
  - Muscle aches and backache
  - Swollen lymph nodes
  - Chills
  - Exhaustion
- A rash or sores, sometimes located on or near the genitals or anus, but sometimes in other areas like the hands, feet, chest or face – sores will go through several stages before healing
- Sores may be inside the body, including the mouth, vagina, or anus
- Some people experience a rash or sores first, followed by other symptoms and some only experience a rash or sores
- Monkeypox can be spread from the time symptoms start until all sores have healed and a fresh layer of skin has formed – this can take several weeks



## If You Have a New or Unexplained Rash, Sores, or Other Symptoms...

- See your healthcare provider – if you don't have a provider or health insurance, visit a public health clinic near you
- When you see a healthcare provider for possible monkeypox, remind them that this virus is circulating in the community
- Avoid sex or being intimate with anyone until you have been checked out



## If You or Your Partner Have Monkeypox...

- Follow the treatment and prevention recommendations of your healthcare provider
- Avoid sex or being intimate with anyone until all your sores have healed and you have a fresh layer of skin formed.



For more information, please visit [www.cdc.gov/monkeypox](https://www.cdc.gov/monkeypox)

## NEED MORE INFORMATION ON MONKEYPOX?

Email your [newsletter editor](#) for the full webinar pdf.



## 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](#).

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# 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:

(The times are no longer listed in the generic catalog, once you have signed up you will get a link to a catalog with times in your time zone)

#### LGBTQ Chat - Wednesdays,

This group is intended for participants who identify as LGBTQ, and is an opportunity to connect with others socially in a supportive environment, where participants can share individual and collective experiences. We will create an inclusive place to share our stories with each other and build a sense of community. Facilitated by Kay George

#### Newcomers Welcome

##### Mondays,

Are you confused about how to start "connecting" with Well Connected? We will guide you through the process of making that first phone call or how to join online. Learn about what those icons mean in the catalog, or how to take a turn to talk. No question is too silly or simple! Facilitated by Donna Mossholder

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](mailto:coviaconnections@covia.org).

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**Out Standing Seniors - Hayward - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

**July 5 12:30 - 1:30 p.m. (1st Tuesday)**

Meets via Zoom email [outstandingseniors2@gmail.com](mailto:outstandingseniors2@gmail.com) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

**Living OUT in Livermore - Sponsored by Pacific Center**

**July 5 2:00 - 3:30 p.m. (1st Tuesdays)**

Meets via Zoom email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to safely share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

**LezBold Peer Support Group**

**July 7, 2:00 - 3:00 p.m. (1st Thursday)**

Meets via Zoom email [lezboldgroup@pacificcenter.org](mailto:lezboldgroup@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*Find support and like-minded wonderful people!*

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

**July 7,14,21,28 1:00 - 2:30 p.m. (Thursdays)**

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

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

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

**July 6,13,20,27 3:30 - 5:00 p.m. (Wednesdays)**

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

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

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

**July 1,8,15,22,29 - 4:30 p.m. (Fridays)**

email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for current meeting information.

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

**Rainbow Seniors**

**July 12 & 26 12:30 p.m. (2nd & 4th Tuesdays)**

**San Leandro Senior Community Center**

email [rainbowseniors@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowseniors@gmail.com) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

**Lavender Seniors Board Meeting**

**July 13 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. (2nd Wednesday) via Zoom**

*A portion of this meeting is open to the public.*

**Lavender Seniors Second Saturday Rainbow Lunch**

**July 9 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. ("SCOTUS Decisions and LGBTQ+ Community" - see info above for joining us via Zoom)**



Tri-Valley Rainbows - Sponsored by Pacific Center

July 21 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. (3rd Thursday)

Meets via Zoom email [Anne@pacificcenter.org](mailto:Anne@pacificcenter.org) for info.

*A welcoming space for LGBTQI seniors 50+ to share thoughts, feelings, resources, information, and support. FREE, though donations are welcome.*

Oakland Third Friday Lunch Bunch

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

July 15 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. ("Social Security and the LGBTQ+ Community" - see info above for joining us via Zoom)

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay Board of Directors

President: Victor Aguilar Jr

Vice President: Melissa West

Treasurer: Carmen Chiong

Secretary: Dr. John David Dupree

Founding Member: Barbara Jue

Member: Khilynn Fowler

Member: Nolan Quinabo

## Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Message: 510-736-LGBT (510-736-5428)

Friendly Visitor Program: (510) 424-7240 or  
[karen@lavenderseniors.org](mailto:karen@lavenderseniors.org)

Mailing Address:

4100 Redwood Rd, Ste 20A #240  
Oakland, CA 94619

Website: <http://lavenderseniors.org>

Newsletter Editorial  
Board:

Beckie Underwood  
John David Dupree

Contact  
Us

