Senior Outreach Services

Happy New Year from Senior Outreach! Welcome to 2002! Lavender Seniors Outreach Services is now entering its third year of reaching out to LGBT elders living in Alameda County and West Contra Costa. The project is officially on the aging network map, and month by month there is increased visibility among the various service providers.

On January 11, there will be a community education presentation by the Volunteer Panel Speakers at Area Agency On Aging Information & Referral Roundtable meeting. Approximately 60 to 70 service providers in Alameda County meet to share knowledge and to learn about agency services for seniors. Our volunteers will tell their personal stories being a lesbian, gay, bisexual senior, the need for service providers to have a better understanding of LGBT culture, and how the experience of Lavender Seniors can provide understanding and suggestions on how to serve LGBT elders. Many LGBT persons, especially those 65+ who have lived very closeted lives, are hidden not only in mainstream society, but also in the larger gay community.

The overall mission of Lavender Seniors is to improve the quality of life for all LGBT Seniors living in the East Bay by building community and providing outreach services to isolated, at-risk elders through friendly visiting, telephone reassurance and assistance with shopping, etc. The Bay Area has been a mecca since the mid-20th century, attracting LGBT’s of all ethnicities and cultural diversity—a microcosm of California’s unique position of being the most culturally diverse state in the nation.

The presence of Lavender Seniors within the Alameda County aging network during the year of 2001 coincides with the federal Office On Aging and its proclamation recognizing that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender elders are a significant population of Older Americans who are largely underserved within the mainstream senior services. This action at the national level marks a profound shift in a deeply entrenched societal attitude toward aging homosexuals and reflects the hard-won recognition over the years by the gay rights movement. Many of the pioneers in the civil rights movement of the last 50 years are now LGBT Senior Citizens!

‘Outreach Report’ on page 2

Introducing...

She was born in 1970 in Sacramento, where she grew up sharing with two older brothers. Her parents are still together and are extremely supportive of all three of their children.

She came to the shocking conclusion she was gay in college (Wellesley, an all-women’s college in Massachusetts). She gave formal notice to her parents finally in 1999, although she thinks they were certainly aware before. (By the way, they are still supportive!)

While attending Santa Clara University School of Law, she clerked with the Honorable LaDoris H. Cordell, an African-American gay, female judge in Santa Clara County.

She became an attorney and worked in San Jose for about five years. She specializes in labor and employment law, specifically employee benefits, and has moved to Wendel Rosen Black & Dean LLP in Oakland. She is the coordinator of her firm’s lawyers in the library program, which staffs a clinic once a month providing legal counseling to patrons of the Oakland Public Library.

‘Board member bio’ on page 3

President’s Report

The Advisory Board is focusing this month on the important goal of recruiting new Board members. We presently have nine members, and we’d like to increase that number substantially. What do Board members do? A little history is in order here.

When Lavender Seniors started seven years ago, the Board (then called Steering Committee) had the fairly easy task of seeing that the monthly potlucks and the newsletter continued to be as interesting and useful as possible. After we started offering the Friendly Visiting and Speakers Panel services in 1999, much of the work of keeping those services going was done by the Collaborative Board and its fund developer.

But when the Collaborative was reorganized a year ago, stopped its fundraising, and became a programmatic collaboration, the work of the Lavender Senior Board became more challenging. Working closely with the Project Director, we became actively involved in all aspects of Lavender Seniors.

One important duty is fiscal oversight. Since the Tides Center became our sponsor last February, we’ve been able to see exactly where the money is going. Our current expense, about $3,000 per month and are for essential items: the salaries of our two part-time employees, the rent of the office, Lavender Seniors provides a Volunteer Services Program to isolated gay and lesbian seniors. It also presents LGBT educational panels to care providers who offer services to all seniors. Lavender Seniors is a member of the Lesbian and Gay Senior Services Collaborative along with New Leaf Outreach to Elders in San Francisco, Senior Spectrum in Marin. Lavender Seniors is funded in part by Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, the East Bay Community Foundation, Gateway Initiative of the SF Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Horizons Foundation, The Jay Cohen Philanthropic Fund and The Nathan Cummings Foundation. We gratefully acknowledge this support and that from all other donors.
Outreach Report
(from page one)

The same spirit is part of the work that the many Volunteers in Lavender Seniors do on a regular basis: being willing to organize, go to meetings, teach and learn new skills to serve others in the LGBT communities, combat ageism, come out of the closet to mainstream groups, share personal struggles and triumphs of their lives, reach out to strangers in need, be there physically and emotionally for LGBT elders experiencing a health crisis and are home-bound or need a ride to the doctor, doing community education, telephone reassurance — the list goes on and the nitty-gritty work of improving the quality of life for LGBT elders gets done by Lavender Seniors members.

Identifying hidden, isolated LGBT elders is not easy, as you are aware, but we know the need exists. Throughout the year, there has been a continuous plea in Lavender Notes for new Outreach Volunteers. By year's end we gained new friendly visitor volunteers, one telephone reassurance volunteer and three new panel volunteers, bringing the grand total to 28 persons. In December, Pat K., Brenda and Julie joined the team. Eleven senior participants are being served currently in their homes with visits, phone calls and assistance for shopping and errands. The geographics of the very large county of Alameda presents a challenge in matching volunteers to a senior in their geographic area to help keep costs down as well as convenience for the parties involved.

The need for gaining new volunteers is ongoing. So if you haven't volunteered at Lavender Seniors, you might want to consider joining in this year!
—Joyce Pierson, Senior Outreach Volunteer Coordinator

Monthly Senior Outreach Meeting
Meets 3rd Saturday every month
January 19, 9:30 - 11:30 A.M.
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro

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Farewell from Joyce

As your site coordinator for the past two years, I want to extend my best wishes and personal thanks to all, and let everyone know that I am leaving my job at Lavender Seniors as of this month to pursue work with the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) as the Elder Law Project Coordinator. It was not an easy decision as I have very much enjoyed working for Lavender Seniors and getting to know so many of you on a personal level. The nature of the Outreach Services is close relationship development — that of working with each volunteer and with the senior participant, matching personalities and trying to keep up with each and every one.

My hope for Lavender Seniors is that the funding base continues to grow to meet the ever-growing needs of LGBT elders in the East Bay. There is a solid base in the Outreach Services, and the reality is that we’ve only scratched the surface of locating isolated LGBT elders in need. I look forward to becoming a volunteer comrade in Lavender Seniors in the coming year. My heartfelt thanks to everyone for making my employment with Lavender Seniors enjoyable and worthwhile. Love to all.—Joyce Pierson

Subscription Renewals
When renewing your subscription, please make the check payable to The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors

This newsletter is available in Adobe Acrobat Reader via E-mail; request: hendriksen@aol.com
510-652-6906
Books

Legal Affairs: Essential Advice For Same-sex Couples
By Frederick Hertz
Henry Holt & Co. Paperback — $17.95

In the past twenty years there has been a tidal wave of social upheaval. In the area of gay and lesbian rights, strides are taken that would have been inconceivable twenty years ago. Couples are adopting children, gaining domestic rights, and holding commitment ceremonies. This has led to a maze of new twists and turns in the legal landscape.

Frederick Hertz, an Oakland attorney, has carved a name for himself in gay family law. His observations have appeared in the New York Times, the Advocate, and he has appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show.

Hertz removes all shadow romanticism and tells you that marriage is life, not a Las Vegas sideshow that never stops. He is brutally honest about the problems and solutions. He begins by surveying a curious history of marriage and divorce in western civilization. We learn that until the 17th century couples simply lived together. Matrimony was unknown. Divorce, when it finally developed, existed for the convenience of the man of the house.

Hertz informs us that, yes, having a partner is wonderful and reassuring, but legally you are responsible for the debts of the other party, even if he or she doesn’t contribute directly. Domestic partners legislation is powerful, but legal marriage confers advantages that are hard to do without. Tax benefits are denied, possession of your children is threatened, social security is denied a survivor. So, a partnership agreement must be drawn up that lays out everything in detail.

Hertz explores the different types of ownership, the legal problems involved with children, and practical matters like credit cards, life insurance and taxes. A major portion of the book is devoted to the messes encountered when a couple breaks up. Here we learn the intimate details of mediation services, law suits, homophobic judges. The best advice seems to be, don’t divorce in the first place. The price can be severe if children are part of the picture. Hertz points out that gay and lesbian couples do not have the advantages of divorce courts where clear-cut rules exist. We are forced to work through the civil courts instead.

Hopefully in the years to come further legislation and education will enable couples to enjoy the same rights as our heterosexual brothers and sisters. Marriage and family can offer a form of psychological cement that cannot be found elsewhere. In the meantime, Frederick Hertz has blazed a trail we would do well to heed.

—Frank Howell, Reviewer

Ventriloquist Charms Lavender Audience

Ron Coulter and his wooden companion, Sidney Star, were the hit of the annual Christmas Potluck at the San Leandro Community Church. It all reminded us of Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy when they were the hit of movies and TV. There is always a battle going on between these two. Sidney is not the dummy he appears to be. He constantly attempts to yank his straight man out of the closet — and he usually succeeds.

Ron has been perfecting the delicate art of throwing his voice for some fifty years. He has toured the Orient for the State Department, taught college theater, directed scores of theater productions and conducted workshops. He is working on producing an evening of one act plays for ventriloquists and puppets called A Last Act For Walter Gordon.

Oops!

In June, Barbara Turk, SAGE Board member, and Glenn Stancroff, SAGE volunteer, attended a workshop at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, New York entitled, “From Age-ing to Sage-ing,” sponsored by the Spiritual Eldering Institute. The workshop title is based on a book by the same name, written by Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi and Ron Miller.

The purpose of “From Age-ing to Sage-ing” was to explore the steps necessary for “conscious aging”:

• Overcoming the desire to remain in denial of aging
• Coming to terms with one’s mortality
• Acquiring the skills for contemplation through meditation and journal work
• Paying attention to the body, feelings, mind and spirit, and maintaining them in the right tone, mood and attitude
• Taking practical steps to prepare a will and testaments
• Doing forgiveness work to release oneself from vindictiveness and anger
• Raising questions about the purpose and meaning of our lives;
• Serving as a mentor to others
• Preparing for a serene death

In the larger picture, the goal is to bring together members of the LGBT communities who are prepared to identify with being old, out and proud. Only then will we be able to serve as role models to the younger society at large in fighting ageism, homophobia and racism, knowing that we are comfortable in demanding acceptance on our own terms.

—Barbara Turk / Glenn Stancroff

* Old + Out + Proud = Sexy
Homeowners Beware!
Watch For These Common Scams

Are you aware that if you are a senior homeowner in Alameda County you may be a target for con artists trying to swindle you out of your home?

Home equity loan fraud is on the rise, and seniors, especially those living on a low fixed income, are the main victims. If you have paid off the mortgage on your home, you are sitting on a gold mine — your equity in the property. Guard it carefully!

Senior homeowners should be extremely cautious in entering into any agreement involving their homes. Be sure you know exactly what you are signing; have someone else review documents if you have questions; and never let anyone rush you into signing anything without reading it carefully first. Foreclosure problems are very easy to get into, and very difficult to get out of.

Home Repairs: One very common scam begins with a home improvement salesman who goes door to door, looking for homes that need repairs and are owned by seniors (because seniors are most likely to own their homes free and clear). A salesman may knock on the door, convince you that you need a paint job, a new roof, or vinyl siding on your house, and offer to arrange for “easy financing” to pay for the work. The contractor will then call in a “hard money lender,” a non-institutional private lender who will arrange for a mortgage, secured by the house, usually at a very high interest rate, and often charging 15 or 20 points. (A point is one percent of the amount of the loan. Points are what a lender charges for making a loan.)

Family Members: Many seniors have been swindled by a family member, who persuaded the senior to sign documents without reading them — documents that turn out to involve the senior’s home as security for a loan, eventually resulting in foreclosure. Lenders: Many non-institutional lenders will make a loan to you even if your income is so low that you clearly cannot afford to make the monthly payments. Sometimes there is a “balloon payment” written into the loan agreement, so that the entire loan amount is due after a year or two — often this payment will be so high that you will never be able to make it. These are possible problems that will not be explained to you when you take out the loan.

If you fall behind in the payments on your loan (default), the lender will foreclose on your home. Lenders like this do not care if you don’t pay the loan back — in fact, they are happy to take your house instead. It will be put up for sale at a foreclosure auction, and you will have no say as to whether the house is sold, or what the sale price is.

If you default on a loan, it is possible to lose your home and not receive a penny of your equity. That is because, very frequently, the people who bid successfully to buy your house only pay what you owe on the loan, even though the house may be worth a lot more. All of this can happen without any court proceedings at all — and it can happen within four months of your default. This happens because when you took out your home equity loan, the lender had you sign a form called a deed of trust which contained a “power of sale” — allowing the lender to put your home up for auction without a court order if you default on your payments. If your home is sold, you can be evicted in a few weeks, just as if you were a tenant who didn’t pay the rent. §

Source: A handout written by Legal Assistance for Seniors and underwritten by the Bank of America and the Alameda County Department of Aging with funds from Title VII of the Older Americans Act.

Two old women are driving along in a car and they go through a stop sign. The passenger notices but decides not to mention it. Then they go through a red light and that’s too much so she turns to her friend and says, “Do you realize you’ve just gone through a stop sign and a red light?” The other woman answers, “Oh, am I driving?”

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!
Presentation of the Month: Bill Reiter and Sima Schoen of Family Caregiver Alliance (FCA) will talk about community programs and services that support those caring for an older adult who has memory loss or a chronic, disabling health condition. FCA, celebrating its 25th anniversary of working with Bay Area caregivers, provides information, classes and workshops, one to one consultation and assistance with arranging for a break from caregiving. All their services are free or low-cost. FCA will be launching new programs and services specifically for LGBT caregivers in Spring 2002, including an on-line support group, information about legal issues for LGBT caregivers and a survey of LGBT caregiver needs. If you have any questions about caregiving, you can call (800) 445-8106 or check out their website at www.caregiver.org. Join us to learn all about what's available for caregivers.

Saturday, 12 Noon • Monthly Potluck Meeting • Program at 1 P.M. • January 12
If your name begins with the letters A through H — Bring a Salad
I through P — Bring a Dessert
Q through Z — Bring a Main Dish

Board Member Bio (from page one)
In addition to the Lavender Seniors, she sits on the Board of Directors for the Oakland Ballet; is a volunteer attorney for the Workers' Rights Clinic of the Legal Aid Society's Employment Law Center in San Francisco, and is a member of Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom.

After switching her employment from San Jose to Oakland, she and her partner of almost six years, Jennifer Sprinkles (also an attorney), purchased a home in San Leandro. If you try to reach them on a Saturday or Sunday morning, you will have to wait until they return from their run with their two dogs. They also share the home with two cats.

By now you should have figured out that we are talking about our newest (and youngest) Board Member, Jeanine DeBacker. Welcome Jeanine!
—Bobbie Jarvis

President's Report (from page one)
and operating expenses such as phone, postage, copying, Internet access, office supplies, etc. Another duty of the Board is to be involved in "strategic planning": determining the vision and goals of this organization, how can we help it grow.

The fiscal oversight and strategic planning come together in the most vital duty of the Board: to raise the funds that make it possible for Lavender Seniors to continue its mission, which in its broadest terms is to serve LGBT seniors in the East Bay. One thing we can say for sure, nobody else will do if we don't.

As a Board member, you will be committed to furthering the goals of Lavender Seniors, to help raising funds in whatever ways fit your talents and interests, to attend our monthly Board meeting and serve on one of our committees, to attend occasional board retreats or other special meetings and events, and to engage in outreach to the LGBT community and other agencies involved in services to seniors.

The rewards? Working for the benefit of our community side by side with a fine group of dedicated individuals, bringing services to the LGBT seniors who need them the most, and letting potential friends and allies in the straight community know who we are and what we stand for.

Perhaps you yourself will want to explore becoming a member of our Advisory Board or perhaps you know of a friend, acquaintance, or colleague who might have the skills we need. If so, please call us at 510-667-9655, and leave a message for Frank Howell, our Board Development Committee chair, our Project Director, Dotty Fowler, or any member of the Board.

Thank you very much for your support and interest.—John Ellefson, President

Our Mailing List Lavender Seniors does not lend, sell or give away its mailing list to any outside organization.

Your support is crucial to enable the Lavender Seniors to continue its role as a vital resource to our community. Please take a moment and send your donation today.

Here's my gift of: $10  $25  $50  $75 $100 other ________

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City _____________________________
State _____ Zip Code _____________
Home Telephone ___________________
E-mail address ____________________

Please make checks payable to The Tides Center/Lavender Seniors and mail to: Lavender Seniors 1395 Bancroft Avenue San Leandro, CA 94577

Thank you for your generosity!

☐ Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will. ☐ Please contact me to volunteer.
Women Over Fifty and Friends
WOFF
Meets Saturday, January 5
Pot Luck is one hour earlier, starting @ 5 P.M.
San Leandro Community Church
Fireside Room
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro
Hosting: Cam & Cheryl (530) 432-4860
Iris (510) 841-4776

Southern Alameda County
Gay and Lesbian
2002 Film Festival
Plans are underway for the Sixth Annual Southern
Alameda County Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. The dates for the event are sched-
uled for March 8 & 9, 2002 at Chabot College's Little Theater. We are looking for
volunteers to help screen movies and plan the event. Come join the fun! The
planning committee meets every Thursday at 6:00 P.M. at CommPre (22652 Sec-
ond St., at the corner of C St., only a few blocks from the Lighthouse Community
Center). The next meeting will be January 3. If you would like to get involved or
get more information, please call David Cota at (510) 247-8215, or visit the website
www.plasticcow.com/filmfest and send an email. CommPre sponsors the film fest-
ival to provide an alcohol-free alternative for the gay, lesbian, bisexual and
transgender community.

Senior Men's Afternoon
1:30 – 3:30 P.M.
2nd and 4th Thursdays
January 10 and 24
2712 Telegraph Avenue,
Berkeley
Co-sponsored by Pacific Center
and Lavender Seniors

East Bay Women's Support Group
Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays each
month
January 11 and 25: 1:15 – 3 P.M.
Meets at Pacific Center,
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Fellows of East Bay
Second Sunday, 5:30 – 8:30 P.M.
Social Club for mature men and their
admirers. Monthly Potluck dinner and
social held the second Sunday of every
month at Oak Center Towers, 1515
Market Street, Oakland.
Bring food and drink to share and a
$4 donation.
Sunday, January 13

Internet Resource
Here's another item for our internet resource list – thanks to Gerard Koskovich.
— Natalie

In a message dated 11/30/01, G. Koskovich wrote:
“Lesbian & Gay Aging Issues
NetworkAmerican Society on Aging
www.asaging.org/lgain

“The LGAIN home page offers extensive resources on LGBT aging — includ-
ing selected articles from our quarterly newsletter, a monthly update with news
and events announcements, and a web guide with over 200 annotated listingsfor
sites offering information on LGBT aging.”

NZarchin@cs.com

Roommate Wanted
Room for rent in elderly Gay
Man's charming home, $250/mo in
exchange for help with shopping,
meals and some chores.
Wants mature, reliable male tenant.
No drugs, alcohol, smoking. Must like
Richmond area.