



LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Volume VII, No. 11 – November 2002

A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center

• 1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 667-9655 •

Medicare Report for 2002

by Del Martin

The Bush administration made changes in Medicare policy to add neglected and much needed services. Coverage includes (1) services of professional nutritionists to help beneficiaries to choose the right diet to avoid or control diabetes of kidney disease; (2) ambulatory blood pressure monitoring, wearing a cuff that automatically records blood pressure over a 24-hour period; (3) services of an M.D. ear specialist to extract wax from the ear canal and perform a hearing test, but not the cost of hearing aids; (4) a reimbursement code allowing doctors to identify themselves as specialists in pain management and make it easier to bill Medicare for services; (5) reimbursement for costs of mental health, hospice or home health care available to those diagnosed with Alzheimer's. The government did not publicize the latter policy because it was considered "a technical matter for Medicare carriers." Later in the year we expect two visits per year to a podiatrist, especially for diabetics whether or not they are on insulin.

As for promises of curbing the high and ever growing costs of prescription drugs, that involves another ugly political saga that needs to be revealed.

Our country has spawned an industry that is so rich and powerful that it can spend millions of dollars to protect patents and extend them when they expire, thereby maintaining high prices of brand-name medicines while making billions of dollars in profits.

Major drug companies receive billions of dollars plus tax breaks in the name of research. They pay CEOs hundreds of millions of dollars in salary and stock options. Drug makers employ "a small army" of lobbyists (more than one for each member of Congress) who average \$12,000 a month in pay. The industry also spends millions to set up phony "consumer" organizations such as "Citizens for a Better Medicare" which lobby against prescription drug reform. A Federal Trade Commission investigation found that brand-name companies paid generic manufacturers millions of dollars per month to delay their version of drugs. Critics of the industry charge, too, that the use of freebies by sales representatives to promote products drives up medical costs by encouraging doctors to see 'Medicare Report' on page 4

Project Director's Report

Fall is upon us now in the cycle of seasons and spending more time indoors brings us closer together.

With that spirit in mind, at Lavender Seniors we look forward to the Volunteer Appreciation Event in November at the Montclair Club. Our volunteers make up the core of our organization in everything we do and we're very pleased to celebrate their efforts every November.

Some of you may know that November is the month we celebrate the birth of Lavender Seniors in 1994. Eight years ago a group of LGBT seniors met for the first time in an empty storefront in a shopping mall in the East Bay to talk about what we wanted to do as a group of seniors. We have come a long way since that time. Soon after that we moved to the San Leandro Community Church for our potluck get-togethers and then eventually opened our office after putting together a program of services in collaboration with two other LGBT agencies in the Bay Area.

That is the same program which has been funded and operates today – friendly visiting and phone reassurance along with an educational outreach program designed to develop awareness of senior LGBT needs in care-providing agencies in our area. Every year Lavender Seniors has been able to expand the program slowly and carefully with the help of our Board, our Collaborative friends and the Tides Center, our fiscal sponsor.

Recently our program received two more small multi-year grants which has enabled us to add hours for the Senior Services Coordinator. Now the Board of Lavender Seniors is planning to hire a Project Director as I will be retiring soon as the volunteer Project Director. Lavender Seniors has been a meaningful, important experience for me and is very close to my heart. And it's also time for me to take it easier, investigate a creative future as an old person and most important, a time for our organization to receive an infusion of new energy and ideas. News of ongoing events will continue as the year ends and a whole new era opens for the Lavender Seniors – and for me!

—Dotty Fowler, Program Director

Vote Because You Can

Vote on November 5

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 California Endowment, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Horizons Foundation, The Jay Cohen Philanthropic Fund, The Nathan Cummings Foundation and Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County. We gratefully acknowledge this support and that from all other donors.

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is the newsletter of
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Mission Statement

The mission of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay is to improve the quality of life of older gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered residents of Alameda and Contra Costa Counties through community outreach, advocacy and education.

Advisory Board

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There are no membership dues. All persons over 55, their partners, and guests are welcome. The cost of mail makes it necessary to request a donation of \$15 dollars per year to receive the newsletter. Visitors or persons interested in learning more about Lavender Seniors may receive the newsletter for three months without charge. None will be turned away for lack of funds.

Signed articles represent the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay.

Inclusion of a name in this newsletter does not necessarily indicate a person's sexual orientation.

www.lavenderseniors.org

Advisory Board Message

Are you receiving all the government benefits you're entitled to? This interesting question was answered at a Senior Services Coalition meeting in September. I am appointed to this coalition as a representative of Lavender Seniors.

We are attempting to send representatives to as many of the various coalitions, agencies, etc. that may impact the work we are doing with Lavender Seniors. A member of the staff of Alameda County Supervisor Nate Miley explained about the program called Benefits Checkup. The National Council on the Aging has a program on the Internet that may help you find out if you can get help to pay for prescription drugs, health care, utilities, and other items or services.

For those of you who have a computer all you need to do is try www.benefitscheckup.org. You should have information about your income, assets and current expenses. There is a short questionnaire that covers age, state and ZIP code, family and health status, veteran status, employment history, current income and assets and household expenses. (It does not require a name, address, telephone number or Social Security number).

When you complete the questionnaire you get a detailed report on the benefits and programs for which you may be eligible. There is information on the database on more than a thousand federal and state programs. It also explains how each program works with eligibility requirements with addresses, telephone numbers, addresses and how to actually apply for the benefits. If you don't have a computer do what Stella and I do, we check with one of our children or friends. They are usually glad to run a program for us. Some people have even found jobs that are available.

This is just one of the benefits of becoming involved in the aging community. Again, try Benefits Checkup at www.benefitscheckup.org. Good luck.

—Ina Mae Murri, Co-Chair

Message from Senior Services Coordinator

Hi everyone! Hope this finds you all healthy and happy. We have been very busy, between going to senior fairs (two since mid-September), giving out information on our services and attending trainings to educate mainstream care providers. A few weeks ago, we visited St. Peter's (in San Leandro), a very diverse facility, and it was a wonderful experience. Very small, intimate with a lot of questions and dialog. As you may be aware, our monthly volunteer meetings have been switched (for the time being) to the **second Saturday** (instead of the third), immediately preceding the potluck. Hopefully, this will entice more of you to come and join the discussion and coffee/tea/goodies. If you will be coming to the potluck anyway, why not arrive at 10 A.M. and join the group?

We're going to resurrect the phone support system very soon, with a few changes. Each volunteer will have only one or two (at the most) participants to call, allowing for more congeniality and support. If any of you have interest in participating in this, please, please let me know, either by phone (667-9655) or e-mail (shoshanna53@hotmail.com). I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our Volunteer Appreciation Event on November 3. It promises to be fun and I'll be glad to be able to honor all of our fabulous volunteers. Thanks a lot – see you soon!

Ciao, Suzi

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

Berkeley's Pacific Center in the Black

by Zak Szymanski, Bay Area Reporter

Five years ago, Berkeley's Pacific Center for Human Growth lost a significant grant that plunged the organization into \$70,000 worth of debt, threatening its very survival.

At the time, the East Bay LGBT support center took emergency steps, including cutting staff and services and implementing a takeover of management by the board of directors. Ralph Thomas became the center's treasurer, and a year later, Frank Gurucharri became the executive director. These new officers, along with the board, worked tirelessly to cultivate new funding sources and develop strategies for avoiding crises. And now, Thomas recently announced, that old debt has been entirely eliminated, putting the center in a position to tackle what looks like a very promising future.

"We still have the common problems of nonprofits, in that we need to keep working year to year to ensure we can provide services to our community," said Thomas, "but we've really taken some necessary steps to, establish some good solid business practices and relationships that didn't exist before."

Thomas credits Gurucharri with initiating and building the relationships that give the Pacific Center a solid financial foundation. For his part, Gurucharri said, it was a matter of realizing that "the center had really gotten lazy with all of its relationships, not just with funding folk."

"We started cleaning up our act, and even though we're a community center, started running ourselves as a lean business," said Gurucharri, who points to improved relationships with the cities of Berkeley and Oakland and Alameda County, and new relationships with community-based resources like the Horizons Foundation, the San Francisco Foundation, the East Bay Community Foundation, the California Endowment, and the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund.

A good example of how all these relationships work together, said Gurucharri, can be demonstrated by a lunch conversation he recently had with a representative from the city of Berkeley. Gurucharri mentioned how people are living longer with HIV/AIDS, and that perhaps more energy should be going toward mobilizing the community around arts and culture projects instead of just disease survival. That led to the city giving the Pacific Center \$50,000 over two years for a new facility that may include affordable housing. Gurucharri then approached the Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund with Berkeley's gift and challenged the organization to match it, which it did.

"I just keep going to different funders and asking them to match what we have, and people then feel part of a whole project," said Gurucharri. "And their money is really maximized."

The center also started working with other community

see "Berkeley's Pacific Center" on page 4

Book Review

The Gay Man's Guide To Growing Older

By John Lockhart

Alyson Books, Paperback – \$15.95

We are surrounded by endless clichés about the youth market and how it must dictate the forces of the marketplace. But recent studies now indicate the reign of the beautiful people will be altered as the baby boomers edge into a leisurely retirement. Many of us possess money and security. Not all of us cling to Social Security.

John Lockhart, who resides in San Diego, has surveyed forty-one gay men who range in age from sixty-five to ninety-one. Lockhart, a former lobbyist and a fierce participant in the gay games, is a keen observer of the senior world, even though he lacks any academic credentials in the social research.

Several of the men who participated in the survey are from the San Francisco Bay Area, including the infamous old gay queen Jose Sarria. Many of the men are retired but several are still working either full- or part-time. Volunteer work has proved a meaningful activity and one man is active in the Prime Timers, a world wide organization for older gay men.

But there are some negative habits found in the lavender sector. Gays probably smoke and drink more than the average person. But social stigma no doubt plays a major role. None of the men use recreational drugs.

There are the usual health issues such as heart surgery and sexual diseases but none of these folks were HIV positive. The majority have health insurance.

Gay males often live alone. Although there are retirement communities the majority prefer to live in their own areas. To date only two lavender retirement communities are thriving, one in Florida and one in Canada.

The people surveyed feel that relations with lesbians is now much better than in the past. They report meeting many attractive lesbian couples.

Some of the gays interviewed report using Viagra. A few say they are having more sex than at any other time in their lives. Ben, for example, tells us that, "Right now, due to my web site and cybersex I feel like I'm a hot old leather daddy."

The males of this new old generation advise the younger men to prepare for the future by developing an investment program and finding a suitable lover.

Charles observes that, "Most young gay people are blatantly rude, sarcastic, unthinking and careless in their remarks" to older folks. On the whole, Lockhart has found his specimens of gay men to be hale and hearty. The water in the pool of human sexuality is warm and inviting. Plunge in and enjoy!— Frank Howell

Get A Flu Shot, Not The Flu

As winter approaches, it's time to get a flu shot – **not** the flu.

Flu shots are effective, and they can prevent 70 to 90 percent of people from getting the flu. Influenza can be a very serious illness, especially in the elderly or in patients who have chronic conditions such as heart or lung disease. Why take the chance? The best medicine is prevention.

Comprehensive flu vaccine campaigns target those at greatest risk. Do you need a flu shot? You should get a flu shot if you are

◇ 65 or older

◇ A child or adult with a chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart or lung disease, liver or kidney disease, sickle cell anemia, cancer, alcoholism, or immunosuppression (including early stages of HIV)

◇ A health care worker

◇ In a chronic care facility

Also, be sure you've had your pneumococcal vaccination if you are 65 or older or have a chronic medical condition.

When to get your flu shot

Although the flu season has been mild for the past two years, it is still very important to get a flu shot this year. In California, flu season usually runs from January through March.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that healthy adults get a flu shot in November or December to be protected all season long. But you can still be protected if you get a flu shot in January.

(From a Kaiser Permanente bulletin)

Berkeley's Pacific Center

(from Page 3)

organizations, such as the SMAAC youth center in Oakland. By combining their programs, said Gurucharri, they were able to share mutual funds from the city of Oakland.

Income sources for the center now consist of about 33 percent from government sources, 38 percent from foundations, 13 percent from fundraising efforts, and 16 percent from services. Its income for the past fiscal year totaled \$458,000, of which \$428,000 was spent. And as the center continues to do outreach to its clients, predicted Gurucharri, individual donations should also continue to grow.

"We now have energy for the future and vision of the center," said Gurucharri. "It feels good."

(For more on the center's program and services, visit www.pacificcenter.org.)

Medicare Report

(from page 1)

prescribe new, more expensive brand-name drugs.

Bush is operating on a deficit budget that is growing. The payments workers make to Social Security and Medicare have literally gone to war, and there is no real prescription drug benefit. **The future looks bleak if we don't act.**

In this electoral year, personal letters from you constituents sent to your U.S. Senator, your Congressional Representative, local newspapers, even the President, from various parts of the country can have an impact.

Excerpted from OLOC (Old Lesbians Organized for Change) Reporter, September, 2002

Happy Birthdays!

Fred Jennings

November 1

Robbie Coles

November 3

Dot Hallinan

November 6

Dick Colton

November 7

Dotty Fowler

November 8

Jeanine DeBacker

Warren Palmtag

November 10

Robert Yates

November 11

Nancy Thompson

November 12

Grant Peterson

November 13

Roger Dougherty

November 20

Edd Dundas

November 22

Betty Dudley

November 25

Raffle Items Needed

Please help in our efforts to raise funds to help support Lavender Seniors programs. Our past raffles have been quite successful and the next one will be in March at the South County GLBT Film Festival. The proceeds this year will go entirely to Lavender Seniors. Won't you help by contributing items to be raffled and buy some tickets, as well?

At our potluck gatherings in the months of November, December, January and February we will accept donations of items for the raffle and sell tickets to participate. You do not need to be present to win – assuming you have a winning ticket, naturally! Prices of the tickets are \$1 each or 6 tickets for \$5.

We thank you for your help and participation.—Ina Mae Murri

Saturday • 12 Noon • Potluck Meeting
• Program at 1 P.M. • November 9 •

Your name begins with the letters

A through G — Bring a Salad

H through M — Bring a Dessert

N through Z — Bring a Main Dish

San Leandro BART station shuttle is available. Call voice mail day before: 667-9655 to arrange pickup.

Presentation of the Month:

Jean Gillette of the *Hemlock Society* will talk about the principles and program of Hemlock.

Jean is a member of Hemlock's political legislation board and an active member of Hemlock's new "Caring Friends" program.

—Ruth Michaels

WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT BEING OLD

Here is the list that participants in the May OLOC retreat compiled:

1. You are still alive.
2. You are eligible for senior rates.
3. You have a sense of having done many things that you wanted to do.
4. You are more free than ever from social constraints.
5. You are more free of responsibilities and the obligation to prove your worth.
6. You are free to volunteer.
7. You can take a nap whenever you want.
8. You can savor the moments rather than keeping up a fast pace. You see more of what is there.
9. You don't have to worry about how your body looks.
10. You get to know your body in a new way.
11. You are no longer hassled by men.
12. You already have worked out a lot of ways of being in the world. You have learned how to live and what is important, and what kind of person you want to be. You have experience to draw on. You see things in perspective.
13. You have a stock of memories and stories.
14. You have had time to come to terms with a lot of your emotional issues.
15. You have done a lot about giving up illusions about yourself, other people, and life, so you have more realistic expectations.
16. It no longer makes sense to postpone pleasure.
17. Because you are nearing the end of your life whatever happens is not as consequential in affecting the direction of your whole life as it was earlier.
18. You can be proud of what you can accomplish despite handicaps.
19. Because you need things from other people you have a special opportunity to feel love and gratitude.
20. Because you need things from other people you provide a special opportunity for others to show their caring.
21. You feel a special unity and community with other old people.
22. Your situation gives you a potential for deeper relationships.
23. You may enjoy the role of grandmother or grandfather.
24. As you watch horrible things happen to the planet, world, and country, you know you probably won't be around to experience more of the same and catastrophic events.

Editor's Note: This was submitted in an effort to give some balance to the oft cited notions (including this newsletter) that being old has mostly negative connotations.

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.

Community Listings

Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

November 14 and 28

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

November 8 & 22: 1:15 – 3 P.M.

Meets at *Pacific Center*,
2712 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley

Three Little Words...

by NeryHartschen

Steve Rubenstein, a writer for the San Francisco Chronicle, has proposed "Three Little Words" based on his brief experience in a telemarketing operation that would stop the nuisance for all time. The three little words are: "Hold on, please." Saying this while putting down your phone and walking off, instead of hanging up immediately, would make each telemarketing call so time-consuming that boiler rooms would grind to a halt.

When you eventually hear the phone company's beep-beep-beep tone you know it's time to go back and hang up your handset, which has effectively completed its task!

From *Senior Update*, September/October 2002, published by the Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging

Women Over Fifty and Friends WOFF

Meets Saturday, November 2

Potluck is at 6 p.m.
(meeting follows)

The Two-Barbara's Home
508 Broadmoor
San Leandro

Cam & Cheryl (530) 432-4860
Iris (510) 841-4776

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.

November 10

Café con Leche

(a new event at the LGBT Center)

2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 10 – 12 A.M.

A time dedicated to our senior community to share, to chat, to laugh and have fun. Share your jokes, your ideas and enjoy your beautiful life with music and people. Spanish and English are very welcome as well as other languages.

Senior Room

LGBT Community Center
1800 Market Street at Octavia
San Francisco

November 13 and 27

'The Laramie Project' at Bishop O'Dowd High School

9500 Stearns Ave., Oakland

November 15, 16, 17

November 22, 23, 24

Fri/Sat – 8 p.m. performances

Sundays at 2 p.m.

Drama Box Office 510 577-9140

Carol Beth urges our participation, especially because the project has been targeted by hate mail about this performance.

In Memory of Margaret Shepherd

One of Lavender Seniors' founding members, Margaret Shepherd, passed away in July 2002 and we will surely miss her. Margaret was born in Fabiola Hospital, now Kaiser, in Oakland and grew up there and in the east, almost always living with her parents. She graduated from UC Berkeley in 1952 and became a social worker for Alameda county, working with children.

Margaret was extremely interested in Scotland, her heritage, and she visited there several times. She also felt a strong connection to animals and their welfare and as her Oakland Tribune obituary notes, "she will be missed by her friends and neighbors, squirrels, bluejays and her cat, Tabby."

Thanks, Margaret, for being such a good friend to so many.