LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
Volume VII, No.5 – June 2002
A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center
1395 Bancroft Ave. • San Leandro, CA 94577 • (510) 667-9655

Prez Sayz

My term as “Prez” has come to an end, so this column marks my last as President of the Advisory Board. When I started last June, I had only a general idea — otherwise known as blissful ignorance — of what is involved in being board president. So inevitably the past year has been, as the cliché goes, a “learning experience.” A considerable portion of my time as President has been devoted to the useful but demanding job of writing grant proposals.

One of the features I like about that task is that the results of your work are tangible — and you don’t have to wait forever. Usually within several months’ time, a foundation will either award a grant or turn it down. But even a rejection is valuable experience, and often we can try again in the future, perhaps with more favorable results. I will still be a member of the Advisory Board and continue to focus the major part of my efforts during the coming year on writing yet more grant proposals and grant reports.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Board, who willingly and cheerfully give so much of their time and energy to Lavender Seniors. Many of them have been doing so since we first started meeting as a steering committee way back in 1995. I also appreciate the newer members of the Board who have stepped forward to add ideas and enthusiasm to the work. A special thanks goes to our Project Director, Dotty Fowler. Lavender Seniors simply wouldn’t be able to offer the services we do without her vision, dedication, and incredibly hard work.

Another special thanks goes to Nancy Fugett, our Administrative Assistant, whose organizational skills have become especially vital as our workload grows. Another special thanks goes to our editor, Bert Hendriksen, who every month puts out a very fine newsletter, never knowing until deadline just exactly what he’ll be getting from a varied cast of characters. It’s also been a privilege and pleasure to work closely this past year with our former Service Coordinator, Joyce Pierson. And I look forward to working with our new Coordinator, Suzi Kalmus, whose experience with volunteers and fresh energy will be greatly appreciated.

I will continue to be on the Alameda County Advisory Commission on Aging. As most of you know, we have been

From our new Site Coordinator

Suzi Kalmus

I am thrilled to have the honor of joining Lavender Seniors! I have met many of you and look forward to meeting and working with you all.

I have a wealth of experience in the nonprofit field, in volunteer management, fundraising and publicity, in the LGBT community, as well as theatre and social services. I am hoping that as the program grows, we are able to reach out to many more seniors in our community, to provide support and visibility to the LGBT Aging community within Alameda County.

Thanks so much for the warm and positive welcome. I hope to be seeing more of you at our monthly potlucks, the monthly volunteer meetings, the third Saturday of the month at 9:30 A.M. — and in other settings. My hope is to meet with all volunteers and participants.

If you have any questions, or would like to chat with me, I am usually available during the week on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I look forward to meeting you all!

Shalom!
Suzi Kalmus,
Site Coordinator

June 15
Lavender Seniors
Monthly Volunteer Meetings
3rd Saturday, 9:30 – 11:30 A.M.
San Leandro Community Church
Come to meet other volunteers, the coordinator and to share your friendly-visitor and panel-presentation news.

*Prez Sayz* continues on page 3

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, Gateway Initiative of the SF Foundation, Richard and Rhoda Goisman Fund, Horizons Foundation, The Jay Cohen Philanthropic Fund, The Nathan Cummings Foundation, and “100 Lesbians and Our Friends.” We gratefully acknowledge this support and that from all other donors.
THE PRICE OF INVISIBILITY

by Nancy Flaxman

I am in line at the bank. Poster-size photos promoting the services of the bank are all over. I see a gray-haired man and woman, a handsome couple, advertising the investment possibilities for people who are retired. I think to myself if only once a year, or how about once every five years, I could go into my bank and see a gay or lesbian couple on the wall... I flip through our local newspaper. There, in the Lifestyles section, are photos of eight couples who have each celebrated anniversaries of 40 or 50 or more years. I know gay and lesbian couples who have been together 40 and 50 years, but I see only heterosexual couples on the news page.

No matter at what age, we do not see ourselves in the bank, in the newspaper, at the grocery store, at the Recreation Department dance. As we grow old, we become even more invisible.

We talk about the isolation of the old in our society. We provide nutrition sites, social programs, transportation, companion programs to reduce isolation. But for older gays and lesbians these programs only serve to increase isolation.

A gay man sits down at a senior lunch program. A year ago he lost his partner of 37 years, a loss he feels in his heart every morning that he wakes up and every night that he goes to sleep. The woman eating lunch next to him asks, "Were you ever married?" He says no and continues to eat. He cannot tell them about the love of his life, the trips they took, the garden they loved, the Sunday morning ritual of coffee and the newspaper in bed, the last months of being at his bedside night and day. Though he is among people, he is alone.

For many gays and lesbians, survival has always meant to remain hidden. Yet as we grow more dependent on people and services, to remain hidden can jeopardize our survival. When we do not get needed medical care because we don’t want to reveal our sexual orientation, when we won’t let Meals on Wheels deliver food to our home or won’t ask for a neighbor’s assistance for fear someone will find out, when we do not talk to anyone about the loss of a loved one because they would know — then hiding has interfered with our mental, physical and emotional well-being.

Coming Out-At Every Age

Paul Monette in Last Watch of the Night wrote, "For me it began in a small town in Massachusetts forty years ago — a sickness of the soul about being different. And nothing more important, not breath itself, than the need to keep it secret. The stillborn journey of my life took off at last, the moment I opened the closet door. To know how dark a place you come from into the light of self-acceptance is to enact a sort of survivorship that leaves a trail for those who come after. But you carry that kid with you the rest of your life — wounded as he is by hate and lies — a shadow companion who needs you to free him. And whatever is left of the hurt is washed away the longer you march, arm in arm with a comrade, rallying to the mustering of the tribe. Until there is no dislocation anymore between the broken shadow of your past and the fully human presence you’ve become.”

A 67-year-old lesbian who had never told anyone, now marches in the local gay pride parade. A 70-year-old gay man sits at the Spectrum table at the countywide Senior Fair and "outs" himself to his neighbors who pass by. A 65-year-old gay

see ‘The Price of Invisibility’ on page 4

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

LAVENDER NOTES
is the newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro, CA 94577
510-667-9655
fax 510-667-9909
lavenderseniors@email.msn.com

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.

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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.
under contract since last July with the Area Agency on Aging to provide friendly visiting and related services. Everyone at the Area Agency on Aging, including the Director, Linda Kretz, the Assistant Director, Joe Rodrigues, and our contract officer, Lisa Ho, has been very supportive of our efforts to provide services to LGBT elders. Through the Area Agency on Aging we’ve also established good contacts with many other agencies serving seniors in Alameda County. Lavender Seniors alone could not begin to provide the range of services needed by our elders, so it’s essential to be a visible and active part of the network of senior service providers. Through expanding our Speakers Panel trainings, we’ll be reaching out to more and more providers, helping them to understand our needs and to reduce the discrimination, ignorance, and fear that we still all too often have to face in society.

As I leave the post of President, I’m very pleased to announce that at the Board meeting in May we elected Ina Mae Murri and Frank Howell as co-chairs. Both of them bring proven dedication and many skills to the position that they will share. Bobbie Jarvis, our tax and accounting expert, has agreed to remain as Treasurer, and one of our newest Board members, Jeannine DeBaiker, has volunteered to be our Secretary. I want to thank them all for their willingness to serve as officers. Jeanine put us in touch with a friend of hers, Travis Wise, so thanks to him, we now have our very own website! (See Sidebar)

Another piece of great news! On Sunday, May 5, at the Rainbow Room in Hayward, the Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda Council donated $1,000 to Lavender Seniors to help us continue our work. The Ducal Council has been a supporter of Lavender Seniors for many years. Their tireless fundraising events, which always feature entertainment, support many local organizations that serve LGBT people and people with AIDS. Be sure to attend their fundraising events whenever you can and contribute generously. Next month, we’ll give you more information about their annual gala event, to be held at Centennial Hall in Hayward on Saturday, July 20.

Please join me about 6 P.M. on Saturday, June 8, outside the main entrance to Centennial Hall in Hayward to support the young people who’ll be attending the annual Gay Prom sponsored by the Lambda Youth Project. Because certain misguided souls feel threatened by the fact that LGBTQ youth are proudly asserting their right to be who they are and to enjoy themselves, as straight youth are automatically entitled to do, we want to be there in force to cheer on the youth and protect them from harassment.

In closing, please circle two more dates on your calendar, about which you’ll be getting more information in the July and August newsletters. On Saturday August 17, at Cull Canyon in Castro Valley, will be the annual East Bay Pride Picnic, which is growing by leaps and bounds. And the 2nd annual LGBT Elders Conference will be held Thursday, August 29, at the First Unitarian Church in Oakland. See you there!

—John Ellefsen

¡Happy Birthday!
Jane Buerger
June 2
Kathy McCarter
June 3
John Winn
June 4
Charles Weber
June 6
Ruth Adams
Dolores Huff
June 12
James Silva
June 13
Douglas H. Odermatt
June 15
Don Sullivan
June 20

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

Join our Collaborative Partners
in San Francisco for
Gay Day Parade
June 30!

Ride in the cable car with other celebrating seniors.

Call Kendree at 415 255-2937 ext 308 to make reservations.
All The Rage: The Story of Gay Visibility in America

By Suzanna Danuta Walters
University of Chicago Press

All around us we see evidence of gays and lesbians depicted in all areas of the media. From Will and Grace to Ellen DeGeneres, we are everywhere. But this state of affairs obscures a certain paradox. Despite all the hype and exposure anti-gay violence is on the rise; in 1999 there were 472 pieces of anti-gay legislation introduced into our state legislatures. Suzanna Walters, associate professor of sociology and Director of Women’s Studies at Georgetown University, has taken due note of the situation when she tells us, “The complexity and diversity of the gay and lesbian community needs to be represented, not promoted as simply heterosexuality with a twist.”

The advances in gay freedom have been rather superficial in some ways. Society wants to give us civil rights but not family rights. When can we finally get beyond the basics? Queer As Folk struck many observers as a significant advance in portraying the lavender community, which it certainly was, despite all the backlash against the blatant sex. But QAF is only tolerated as long as it remains within the ghetto of cable television. To air such a program on mainstream television would raise the hackles of homophobic critics.

Theatrical films that show gays as they function in everyday life usually fail at the box office and are confined to art houses (Love, Valor, Compassion). Drag queens and mindless comedy constitutes the only framework in which the public will accept gays and lesbians. At this level the psychological threat is kept at an acceptable low level.

Much attention has been focused on the material wealth of our community. Much of gay history has been the chronicle of civil rights struggles, but in recent years all eyes are on the shopping mall: the gay as consumer now rules. We are being eagerly courted by the corporate world; they finally read the surveys that demonstrate there is money to be made in the pink shades of fashion and trendy upscale furnishings. But does this mean that street demonstrations can only lead to smart shopping at Macys? This can lead to continued oppression of racial minorities within the community.

Foreign governments are openly courting the gay tourist dollars (witness the Gay Expos) but gays in third world countries are still fighting for even basic human rights. The internet technology has vastly increased our political and social clout, but the right wing pressure groups are also taking advantage of the same phenomenon. Gay.com reports five million visitors per month and Planetout claims ten thousand new visitors a week.

All The Rage gives the reader a sweeping view of the latest developments in gay and lesbian media. But Walters cautions us to be careful, lest we sell our souls to the Wall Street devil in the process. A sign carried by a lesbian protestor neatly sums up the times in which we live, “We are your worst Fear, We are your best fantasy.”

—Frank Howell

The Price of Invisibility (from page 2)

man comes out to his adult children. A 74-year-old lesbian, who prided herself on being able to appear what she called “normal” in the straight world, now sits in a support group with heterosexuals and says, “I am a lesbian.”

When we gather our “shadow companions” together, amazing things happen. We all need to know we are not alone.

Using Our Stories to Train Human Service Providers

When we go out into the community to conduct trainings for health and human service providers who serve seniors, we begin by saying that we make two assumptions. The first is that we all work with gays and lesbians as clients and coworkers, whether or not we know it. The second assumption is that, as providers, we want to serve our clients in the best way possible. We acknowledge that sexual orientation is a subject about which people often have strong feelings, and we are not here to change anyone’s mind. We are here to share our knowledge and experience in working with older gay men and lesbians.

We have found support among people I would have thought to be resistant to change. It is important that we too not make assumptions.

Nancy Flaxman is senior program coordinator with Senior Spectrum, a program of Spectrum Center for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Concerns in San Anselmo, Calif. The program has been in existence for two years. From Outword, newsletter of the Lesbian and Gay Aging Issues Network of the American Society on Aging.
Presentation of the Month:
A Closer Look At Long Term Health Care Insurance

Many seniors have been besieged by advertisements about the benefit of health coverage in case of long-time hospital stays. How do we know what to believe? This type of insurance is certainly not cheap and a lot of investigation is needed. Tom Lucas, who works in the Social Services Department of St. Mary’s Hospital, San Francisco, has performed a mountain of research on this vital topic and will share his revealing research with us.

Saturday, 12 Noon • Monthly Potluck Meeting • Program at 1 P.M. • June 8
If your name begins with the letters    A through H — Bring a Main
                               I through P — Bring a Salad
                               Q through Z — Bring a Dessert

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

HEALTH NOTES
National Stroke Awareness

A stroke is a medical emergency requiring immediate treatment and time is truly of the essence in the medical treatment of a stroke. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted. Deprived of oxygen and nutrients provided by the blood, brain cells begin to die. A stroke will injure the brain—so that the stroke victim may never realize what is happening at the time. Knowing the five warning signs and responding in time by dialing 911 to get treatment in a hospital will improve the chances for a complete recovery from a stroke.

Do you know the warning signs for a stroke? These five warnings signs could help you, a family member, or a friend:
1) Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg (especially one side of the body)
2) Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
3) Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
4) Sudden trouble walking, dizziness or loss of balance or coordination, and
5) Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

More than 600,000 Americans suffer from a stroke every year. New research with the drug, t-PA, indicate that the effects of a stroke may be successfully reversed through early t-PA drug intervention. In one study, NINDS reported that at least 30 percent of stroke patients were more likely to recover with little, if any, disability.

The National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS), part of the National Institutes of Health, provide stroke education and information in a new pamphlet they have developed entitled, Know Stroke: Know the Signs. Act in Time. The pamphlet is free and can be ordered by calling NINDS at 1-800-352-9424.

From the Emeryville Senior Center newsletter.

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 ____________________________ Zip Code ______
State _______ Home Telephone _________________
E-mail address __________________________

□ Please contact me about including Lavender Seniors in my will. □ Please contact me to volunteer.

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!
Senior Men’s Afternoon
1:30 – 3:30 P.M.
2nd and 4th Thursdays
June 13 and 27
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
June 14 and 28: 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.
June 9

FREE LEGAL CONSULTATIONS
The Oakland Public Library System
offers free legal consultations through
a program called Lawyers in the Library.
The Golden Gate Branch (510 597-5023) at 5606 San Pablo Avenue and the
Piedmont Branch (510 597-5011) at 160
41st Street have lawyers who will pro-
vide free, fifteen minute, legal consul-
tations usually once, and sometimes,
twice a month between 6 – 8 P.M. The
librarians encourage all interested to
come to the library at least fifteen min-
utes ahead of time.
For more information, please call the
branch closest to you.

Call for Volunteers
Lavender Seniors needs help!
Occasionally we need an extra
hand in the office. Any Volun-
tees?
I would like to have a list of
folks who are able to help on a
week’s notice.
Please call Nancy Fugett,
667-9655

MANAGING YOUR $$$
Though some people may have never
been any good at managing their fi-
nances, this can be a grisly task for many
people in their “golden years.” Many
older adults, unfortunately, are at risk
for significant problems arising from
forgotten bills and/or predatory lenders.
A Bill Payer, however, can help keep
finances in good order. Bay Area Com-
munity Services (BACS) offers this ser-
vice free of charge to frail, low income
($1,630/mo.) older adults through the
use of trained volunteers. They can as-
sist with writing checks to pay bills,
budgeting, and record keeping. If you
or someone you know could use this
help, call BACS at 271-6075.

Women Over Fifty
and Friends WOFF
Meets Saturday, June 1
Pot Luck is @ 6 P.M.
(meeting follows)
San Leandro Community Church
Fireside Room
1395 Bancroft Avenue
San Leandro
Hosting:
Cam & Cheryl (530) 432-4860
Iris (510) 841-4776

Lavender T-shirts
Better get outfitted for
Gay Day
with
Lavender Seniors T-shirts
They are on sale at $10 each.
Call the office at 510 667-9655

Best Chicken Joke Ever
A chicken and an egg are lying in
bed. The chicken is leaning against
the headboard smoking a cigarette
with a satisfied smile on its face.
The egg, looking a bit miffed,
grabs the sheet, rolls over, and says,
“Well, I guess we finally answered
THAT question!!”