



LAVENDER NOTES

Newsletter of Lavender Seniors of the East Bay

Volume VIII, No.6 – June 2003

A Volunteer Services Program — project of The Tides Center

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



Senior Services Coordinator Suzi Kalmus and speakers panel volunteers Bea Howard and Frank Howell (l to r) speak to a group of about 20 service providers at a recent Lavender Seniors training. Marvin Burrows, who took this photo, was also on the panel. To schedule a training for your organization, call the office today.

Alameda County Grant Helps Lavender Seniors Better Serve the Community

The Alameda County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) has awarded a special grant of \$8,939 to Lavender Seniors of the East Bay to upgrade our capacity to serve the community.

"The AAA grant not only helps improve our services for LGBT seniors but is also a ringing endorsement," said Jeff Vessels, MSSW, Project Director of Lavender Seniors. "Clearly, this governmental agency understands the importance of our work and wants to help us succeed, as do a growing number of individual donors and private foundations."

The one-time grant enables Lavender Seniors to purchase a new phone system with voice mail, new computer equipment and networking, improved Internet access, and more. (We apologize for any inconvenience during our recent transition to the new phone system.)

In addition to the grant, Lavender Seniors has a multi-year contract with AAA in support of the Friendly Visitor program, in which our Senior Services Coordinator matches isolated, confined, or bedridden LGBT seniors with helpful volunteers of all ages for in-person and/or telephone support, including shopping assistance. §

Refusing to Accept the Stones

By Jeff Vessels, Project Director

The call came while I was at the Lavender Seniors office: victory in the Boyd County, Kentucky, High School Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) case. Though thousands of miles away now, I felt elation.

It was as satisfying as any win I had during my four years as Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Kentucky. It was perhaps more personally gratifying than most, because I had helped a brave group of LGBT high school students and their friends go to court to gain equal treatment. The local school system had tried everything imaginable to stand in the students' way in this depressed industrial and agricultural community of 30,000 on the West Virginia border.

The newly appointed federal judge, the son of one of Kentucky's Republican U.S. Senators, agreed with us on every point and ordered school officials to allow the GSA to meet. For nearly two years, the school system had refused to officially recognize the club, though the club met every established criterion. For nearly two years, the GSA students had endured threats, harassment, slurs, a minister-led walkout by nearly half of the high school's 2,000 students, and a protest by hate-monger Fred Phelps and his Westboro Baptist Church of Kansas. The school system's superintendent had even gone on a nationally-broadcast Fox TV show to say we at the ACLU were engaging in "legal terrorism" against him.

Ultimately, the school system banned all clubs in all county schools in grades K-12, in an attempt to stop the GSA. However, with a wink and a nod from school officials, other clubs continued to meet though

Stereotypes are weapons meant to undermine our self-esteem

the GSA was denied. A leader of the Christian Athletes club even bragged to a *New York Times* columnist that nothing had really changed for his group since the supposed ban. I worked with attorneys in Kentucky and New York to file suit on behalf of the students, many of their parents, and club sponsor Kaye King. School officials violated the federal Equal Access Act by treating GSA students differently, based on the content of their speech.

The Boyd County High School GSA case has been a legal challenge and a personal one as well.

During my frequent six-hour round-trip drives to meet with the
'Refusing to Accept the Stones' on page 4

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 and Senior Spectrum in Marin. Lavender Seniors is funded by individual donors, Alameda County Area Agency on Aging, Alameda County Leather Corps, The California Endowment, Richard and Rhoda Goldman Fund, Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Horizons Foundation, The True North Foundation, Royal Grand Ducal Council of Alameda County and San Francisco Foundation. We gratefully acknowledge this support and that from all other donors.

LAVENDER NOTES

is the newsletter of
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 San Leandro, CA 94577
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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

Frank Howell & Ina Mae Murri,
 Co-Chairs

Jeanine DeBacker, Secretary

Bobbie Jarvis, Treasurer

Meg Bruynell, John Ellefsen,

Eugene Marangoni

and *Natalie Zarchin*

Next Advisory Board Meeting:

June 10, 7 P.M. at our office

Interested persons are welcome to attend this meeting; public comments will take place at 7 P.M.

Project Director,

Jeff Vessels

Senior Services Coordinator,

Susan Kalmus

Administrator, *Nancy Fugett*

Editor, *Bert Hendriksen*

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 or gender identity.

Subscription Renewals

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

Report from Senior Services Coordinator

by *Suzi Kalmus*, Coordinator

We had a very successful training on May 7; it was a wonderful way to connect with agencies. Because there was a rally in Sacramento on the same day, I'm trying to connect with the agencies that could not come, so we can schedule another one. The agencies that attended were very anxious to have us come to their agencies in the future to do staff training.

We're holding steady with the Friendly Visitor program, but we have some participants who could really use some support (visiting, phone, shopping, etc). If any of you can drive a bit to see a participant, we **need you**. There's one in San Leandro, one in Hayward, a couple in Oakland, all eager to have you visit. Call or e-mail me and we can talk.

I am reorganizing our telephone outreach, so if any of you would like to help with that, we could certainly use and appreciate your time and energy. Again, we're in need of folks who can make a monthly "check in" call, that would be wonderful. Just let me know, either by phone or by e-mail: shoshanna53@hotmail.com.

Looking forward to the busy-ness of June: **San Francisco and East Bay Pride**, the **Dyke March**, the **Film Festival**. Happy Pride everyone! Hope to see you there!

Thanks for all that you do. §

Lavender Seniors Wish List

Make a difference. If you or anyone you know can help us with any of the following items or services, please contact us. Thanks!

Goods:

- Paper and plastic items (plates, napkins, cups, plastic utensils, etc.).
- Reams of white copy paper, 20 lb., 8-1/2 x 11.
- Sodas and bottled water.
- Computer printer ink cartridges, HP inkjet print cartridge #23 (color) and #45 (black).
- Two-drawer file cabinet with working lock.
- Reusable mylar wall calendar.

Services:

- Volunteer for our Friendly Visitor program and be matched with an LGBT senior who has requested in-person and/or telephone support. (Volunteers can be of any age.) Or sign-up if you would like to be matched with a volunteer.
- Work with our Senior Services Coordinator, Suzi Kalmus, to arrange and produce Speakers Panel presentations about LGBT senior issues.
- Interview LGBT seniors and Lavender Seniors volunteers and write an article for our newsletter.
- Work with our Director, Jeff Vessels, to research grant opportunities and prepare grant applications.
- Inquire about positions on our Advisory Board. To expand our diversity, we are particularly seeking candidates who are male, of minority race or ethnicity, and/or have non-profit board experience. §

This newsletter was created in **Adobe PageMaker 6.5**; a PDF file of this and earlier issues are available from our web site for viewing in **Acrobat Reader**. Visit www.lavenderseniors.org/newsletter to view and/or download.

Lavender Seniors to Participate in SF Pride Parade and East Bay Events

Again this year, Lavender Seniors of the East Bay will participate actively in LGBT pride activities throughout the Bay Area.

We will have a presence at the Dyke March on June 28. Call us for more information.

We will participate in the 2003 San Francisco Pride Parade on June 29. To ride on the cable car for LGBT seniors – arranged with leadership from New Leaf – please reserve a spot by June 15 by calling 510-667-9655. In addition, others will walk with the Lavender Seniors banner near the cable car. All are welcome to walk or ride with us.

This year's parade theme is "You've Gotta Give Them Hope," a quote by Harvey Milk.

Celebrated author Armistead Maupin will serve as Grand Marshal of the Parade. This year is the 25th anniversary of the first novel of his six-volume *Tales of the City* series. Originally a groundbreaking daily serial in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Tales* achieved a wider audience in the 1990s as a trio of award-winning television miniseries on PBS and *Showtime*. The Goodman Theatre of Chicago is currently developing a stage musical based on *Tales*. Maupin and his business partner, Terry Anderson, have adapted Maupin's latest novel, *The Night Listener*, as a feature film for HartSharp Entertainment.

Later this summer, Lavender Seniors will also participate in pride activities in the East Bay, including the Pride Picnic on August 9 and East Bay Pride activities in Oakland (tentatively set for August 23). We will publish more details in next month's *Lavender Notes*.§



Armistead Maupin

LGBT Seniors and Housing: Six Critical Questions to Ask

(Excerpted from New York State Office for the Aging materials)

Various federal laws protect against discrimination on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, religion, age, familial status and disability, or provide for affirmative action on the basis of minority status, gender, disability or status as a Vietnam Era veteran. But none of these laws protects against discrimination based upon sexual orientation or gender identity.

Some **local and state** laws provide protection. But it depends on where you live and the language of the specific law.

Where you live is your home, the place where you should feel comfortable and safe being yourself. In retirement and senior housing facilities, where activities and the availability of services often place residents in close daily contact with staff and neighbors, assurances of a reaffirming living environment become particularly important for LGBT residents and those close to them.

While many LGBT seniors choose to keep their identification a private matter, many senior services have welcoming policies and make these policies known.

When considering a housing-relocation decision, the following questions may help you determine how comfortable a particular housing environment might be for you:

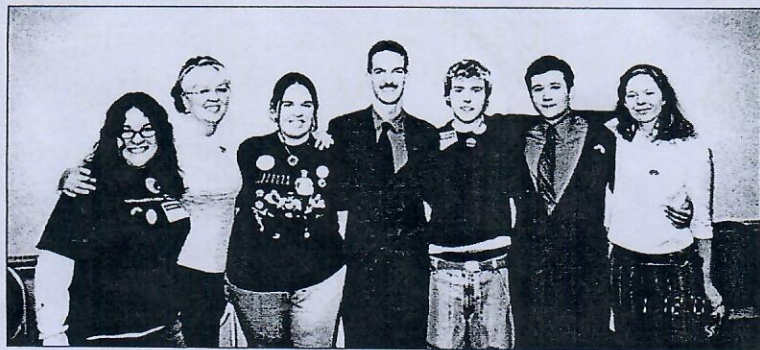
1. Does the facility's or development's residency agreement or lease have a non-discrimination clause that includes sexual orientation and gender identity?
2. Do the housing and service staff receive training in diversity and cultural competence that includes sexual orientation and gender identity?
3. Is there an identified staff member(s) who could be consulted for LGBT-related issues or problems?
4. Does the staff have knowledge of, and access to, LGBT health services and community resources? Is the facility or development accessible to these supportive services and resources?
5. Are intake, assessment and information forms worded to allow for the recognition of non-marital domestic partners or non-biological and non-spousal family relationships (families of choice)? Are such chosen family members welcomed as part of the development's family council or decision-making activities regarding a resident's health and service needs and plans?
6. Are LGBT residents and their family members, friends or visitors welcome in the facility or development and in the development community's social activities?§

(See related housing article on page 5)

In Memoriam

Thanks to those who have sent gifts to
Lavender Seniors of the East Bay
in memory of

Barbara Konecny



"Uncle" Jeff Vessels with Boyd County, Kentucky, High School Gay Straight Alliance members and faculty sponsor.

Refusing to Accept the Stones

(from page 1)

students and their parents and sponsor, I found myself wondering what opponents thought of me.

Did opponents think I, an adult gay man, was somehow corrupting these young people? Some had already accused Kaye – a married, heterosexual history and civics teacher – of doing so. Many people still don't realize the students contacted me first, and I urged patience and the use of litigation only as a last resort.

Did opponents think I was having a sexual relationship with male GSA members? Probably so. Opponents were circulating reports that the GSA was really a sex club and dating service for older gay men to be introduced to high school teens. (They didn't seem concerned about the young women.)

As I wondered, I felt angry that the old stereotypes about us and pedophilia were still alive.

I felt even angrier that I was giving them a second thought.

Stereotypes are weapons meant to undermine our self-esteem by keeping us isolated and hidden in the closet. They are like bags of stones passed from generation to generation, ready to be tied to our necks and intended to sink us. Some of us must navigate additional stereotypes about our age, race, ethnicity, religion, and/or gender identity.

About 30 years ago, America's major psychiatric and psychological professional groups removed homosexuality from their lists of mental illnesses. I was barely a teen at that time. The GSA students were born about ten years after the decision. Many of you reading this were in early- and mid-adulthood. You endured many, many years of living with the professionally sanctioned label of mentally ill and pedophile – labels our enemies still eagerly attempt to apply to us.

It should be no surprise that many LGBT seniors often don't reveal their sexual orientation and gender identity when seeking services they need and deserve. To do so is to stand in defiance of old, shameful stereotypes. To do so is to risk the humiliation of discrimination, often at times of profound vulnerability.

Like the Boyd County High School GSA, we must stick together and with our allies – in what sometimes feels like a wilderness – to claim what rightfully belongs to each of us: equality, love, and dignity. §

¡Happy Birthday!

Jane Buerger

June 2

Kathy McCarter

June 3

John Winn

June 4

Charles Weber

June 6

Nona Hungate

June 7

Ruth Adams

Dolores Huff

June 12

James Silva

June 13

Douglas H. Odermatt

June 15

Don Sullivan

June 20

¡Feliz Cumpleaños!

Lavender Seniors Featured in Bay Area Newspapers

Lavender Seniors of the East Bay and two of its participants were prominently featured in a recent story in ANG newspapers, a group of eight publications covering the East Bay and nearby areas.

Entitled "Gay and Gray," the story focused on our own Peter Hart and Bob

Lindeborg to illustrate issues facing area LGBT seniors. Peter tells the story of his recovery from a major head injury two years ago and the vital, supportive roles that volunteer Bob and others from Lavender Seniors have played in his life since then. A large photograph of Bob cutting Peter's fingernails accompanied the story.

Thank you, Peter and Bob, for helping the larger community gain a better understanding of LGBT senior issues.

For a free copy of the article, or to learn about our activities, programs, and volunteer opportunities, contact Lavender Seniors today. §

Saturday • 12 Noon • Potluck Meeting
• Program at 1 P.M. • June 14 •

Your name begins with the letters

A through G — Bring a Salad

H through M — Bring a Dessert/Fruit

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:

A film will be the feature presentation:

No Secrets Anymore

The film is about the life and times of the renowned lesbian pioneers and long-time residents of the Bay Area, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin.

Florida Seniors Home Rejects Lesbian Couple Despite Non-Discrimination Law

April 1, 2003

A lesbian couple is suing a Tallahassee, Florida retirement center after it rejected them because of their sexuality.

Joy Lewis, 62, and her life-partner Sheila Ortiz-Taylor, 63, have been in a committed relationship for 13 years. They have five children and are the grandmothers to three little boys and two girls. In February 2002, they entered into a civil union in Vermont.

The women said that although they are in good health now, they want to prepare for the future together.

Lewis and Ortiz-Taylor first applied for residency at Westminster Oaks Retirement Community in June 1999. Westminster Oaks denied their application, claiming that it violated their policy that unmarried, non-related couples may not live together in the facility. After reapplying in 2003, Lewis and Ortiz-Taylor were again denied.

"They said, 'if you say that you're cousins or if you say that you are sisters' ... well we're not cousins and we're not sisters," Lewis said. "We haven't lived our lives with tiny lies or big lies."

The National Center for Lesbian Rights, representing the women, has filed charges claiming Westminster officials violated the Leon County Fair Housing Code when it denied housing to the couple, who are otherwise qualified to live there.

"Although we're both in good health right now, we applied to Westminster Oaks because we did not want our children to have to worry about us in our old age," said Lewis. "I guess we were naïve."

Ortiz-Taylor, a noted author, Francis G. Townsend Professor of English at Florida State University, and winner of the university's prestigious Martin Luther King Distinguished Service award added, "Lesbian and gay elders have the same need to plan for our senior years as non-gay people do."

"This is about basic fairness and our desire to protect our children from having to be responsible for us as we age."

The discrimination faced by Ortiz-Taylor and Lewis is not an isolated case.

A national needs assessment recently completed by Senior Action in a Gay Environment (SAGE) confirms this. The study consistently found that the primary concerns of LGBT seniors centered on housing.

According to Amber Hollibaugh, SAGE's Director of Education, Advocacy and Communication, "Housing is the number one issue for many older lesbian and gay people, who fear being stripped of their dignity and pride by invasive and discriminatory housing policies."§

(See related housing article on page 3)

Excerpted from 365Gay.com as reported by East Bay Voice
 (www.eastbayvoice.org)

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

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 8

RONNIE GILBERT celebrates GAY PRIDE!

Singer-performer of international renown, formerly with
The Weavers

Free, everyone invited, for refreshments and song.

Tuesday, July 1 – 1:15 p.m.

North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst (corner Martin Luther King)

For further information call
Norma Ramos, 510-981-5190.

East Bay Women's Support Group

Meets 2nd and 4th Fridays each month

June 13 and 27: 1:15 – 3 P.M.

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

Senior Men's Afternoon

1:30 – 3:30 P.M.

2nd and 4th Thursdays

June 12 and 26

2712 Telegraph Avenue,
Berkeley

Co-sponsored by *Pacific Center*
and *Lavender Seniors*

Nominations now accepted: 2004 Pat Bond Memorial Old Dyke Awards

Sponsored by National Center for
Lesbian Rights

For more information: visit:

www.patbondaward.com

email: patbondaward@yahoo.com

call 415-392-6257 ext. 321

¡Chihuahua! – 'Unit Jabber'

Time between slipping on a peel and smacking the pavement =
1 bananosecond

Weight an evangelist carries with God =
1 billigram

Shortest distance between two jokes =
A straight line

.453.6 graham crackers = **1 pound cake**

1012 Microphones = **1 megaphone**

1 million bicycles = **2 megacycles**

100 rations = **1 C-ration**

2 monograms = **1 diagram**

1021 piccolos = **1 gigolo**

12 planes = **1 terraplane**

3 dents = **1 trident**

3 1/3 tridents = **1 decadent**

2 x 103 millenaries = **4 seminaries**

10-5 dollars = **1 Millicent**

1012 antellas = **1 tarantella**

109 antics = **1 gigantic**

102 tics = **1 hectic**

10 aides = **1 decade**

10-1 mal = **1 decimal**

10-3 female sheep = **1 milieu**

2 doctors = **1 paradox**

100 Senators = **Not 1 decision**

Phisco Senior Services

Assistance to seniors who need help managing their financial affairs.

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